

2026-07-26 Small Group Guide

Small Group Guide: Tug of War -- Choosing Your Authority

Overview

This week's sermon challenged us to examine who or what truly holds authority in our lives. Drawing from Joshua 24, 1 Kings 18, and Matthew 8, the message called us to stop wavering between two opinions and make a deliberate, daily choice to serve God -- not as a designer savior we customize to our liking, but as the Lord he claims to be and demonstrates himself to be.

Key Takeaways

The tug of war in our lives is rooted in the question of authority -- who is actually in charge of your life?

What we think about most and talk about most is what we effectively worship.

God's kindness, not our merit, is what draws us toward repentance and surrender.

A made-up mind -- one that has settled the question of authority -- produces stability, peace, and direction even in difficult circumstances. Choosing Jesus means accepting all of who he is, not selecting the parts that are convenient.

Unforgiveness is one of the most serious ways we reject God's authority over our lives.

Discussion Questions

Opening

When you look back over the past week, what did you think about and talk about most? What does that reveal about what you are currently worshipping?

The sermon described the tug of war as something that is sometimes intense, sometimes subtle, and sometimes something we have simply given up on. Which of those three descriptions best fits where you are right now? Why?

Digging Deeper

Joshua recounted all that God had done for Israel before asking them to choose who they would serve. Why do you think it mattered to remind them of God's track record before calling them to a decision? How does looking back at what God has done affect your ability to trust him going forward?

Elijah asked the people, "How long will you waver between two opinions?" What does wavering look like in a person's everyday life? What are the costs of never fully settling the question of who is in charge?

The centurion in Matthew 8 believed that Jesus only needed to say the word for his servant to be healed. He understood authority because he himself lived under it. What does it practically mean to live under the authority of Jesus? What changes when someone genuinely does that?

The sermon made the point that Jesus taught and acted "as one who had authority" -- and that his authority extended even over demonic spirits. How does knowing that Jesus holds that kind of authority affect the way you approach fear, temptation, or spiritual darkness in your own life?

The sermon said that we want people with authority until they are being authoritative toward us. Where in your life do you find it hardest to let Jesus be Lord -- not just Savior, but Lord?

Getting Personal

The sermon described worship not just as bowing to a statue, but as whatever captures our thoughts and conversation most consistently. What are the most common competitors for your attention and devotion? How do those things crowd out awareness of God?

The sermon was direct about forgiveness -- that people who refuse to forgive are holding onto something God has clearly addressed. Is there anyone in your life you have not forgiven? What is keeping you from

releasing that?

Joshua said, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." What would it look like for you to make that kind of declaration -- not just in words, but in the way your home, your time, and your priorities are actually ordered?

Practical Applications

Choose at least one of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

1. Conduct a worship audit. At the end of each day this week, spend five minutes reviewing what dominated your thoughts and conversations. Write it down without judgment. At the end of the week, look at the pattern and bring what you find to God honestly.

2. Build a gratitude record. Rather than beginning your prayers primarily with requests, spend time each day this week recounting what God has already done -- in your life, your family, or your circumstances. Notice how this shifts your awareness of his presence.

3. Settle the authority question in writing. Take time this week to write out, in your own words, who you are choosing to serve and why. Be specific. If you find yourself unable to write it with conviction, bring that honestly to God and to your group.

4. Take a step toward forgiveness. If the discussion around forgiveness surfaced someone you have not forgiven, take one concrete step this week -- whether that is praying for that person, writing out what forgiveness would look like, or speaking with a trusted friend or pastor about the situation.

5. Pray with awareness. Practice what the sermon described -- talking to God throughout your day, not just in formal prayer times. When you notice yourself anxious, distracted, or pulled in multiple directions, pause and re-

orient toward God before continuing.

Closing Prayer Prompt

Close your group time by praying together around this question: "God, what do I actually believe about you, and does the way I live show it?"

Invite anyone who wants to pray aloud to do so. Close by asking God to make his presence and authority undeniable in each person's life in the week ahead.