

Honest Faith

On one occasion Jesus' authority was questioned by some Jewish leaders and he replied with a question. If they would tell him the source of John's baptism (whether it was from heaven or from men), he would answer their question. With man's wisdom, "they began reasoning among themselves." (Read about this event in Matthew 21.)

This article is not about the wit and wisdom of Jesus. Nor is it about his ability to think quickly on his feet or take control of a situation. Rather, it reveals the value that God places on simple honesty and genuine faith.

Many negative examples of our day teach our children how to hide truth by using rationalizing; how to deceive without using *lying words*; how to twist words and their meaning; how to dodge a question by answering a related but different question of their own choosing. Consider how the media has participated; how politicians have made it their profession; and perhaps how we have even played the game.

A spouse is asked, "What made you late from work?" Or, "What happened to that money in the checking account?"

And he begins to reason . . .

A teen is asked, "Where will you be going?" "Who is going with you?" "Will there be parents there?"

And she begins to reason . . .

A friend is asked, "I thought you were going to come, what happened?" Or, "You actually went to see that movie?"

And she begins to reason . . .

A parent is reminded, "You said you would take us kids to the park."

And he begins to reason . . .

The Jews were trapped. If they admitting that John's authority was from heaven then Jesus would rebuke them for their lack of response. Yet, if they did not, they feared the reaction of the people. So, they rationalized. Their answer was not truthful yet, it was not a blatant lie. *They began to reason* and cleverly responded, "We do not know."

We might be impressed with the way Jesus handled these men. We may turn a slight grin or even chuckle with Jesus' response. (He refused to answer them.) It is almost like a punch line to a joke...but wait! The parable that follows is the *punch line* and it is meant for us!

Read the parable about the two sons who are asked to do work for their father. One agreed but did no work; the other refused but later regretted his answer and did the work. Jesus explained how their *actions* proved to be their true answers. He applied the parable to the people of his day by indicating that those who were hated by society would enter the kingdom ahead of the religious elite.

But, why?

The first son represents the Jewish leaders who questioned Jesus. They claimed to do God's will but did not do it. The second son represents the sinners whose lives were opposed to God at first, yet who ultimately turned to do God's will. But there is more....

The Jews tried to trap Jesus, yet they were already trapped by their own unbelief. They believed in the power of their own intellect and reasoning. In their unbelief they refused the "way of righteousness" when John came. Then, when they were confronted with Jesus they rebelled with rationalizations in order to hide their unbelief. *They began to reason....*

In contrast to the Jewish leaders the sinners, when confronted with Jesus, acted in faith and repented from their former rebellion. The *faith* of both made an honest response toward God. The leaders had no faith and rejected Jesus; but in honest faith the sinners turned to Jesus.

The *reasoning of man* tempts the lips with lies. Yet an honest heart needs no words; it responds to God and His word in faith.

We are all asked by God, "Will you trust Me?"

How will you respond? Will you *begin to reason*? Will you speak at all?

Your actions will always tell the truth and will reveal your faith!

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