



## The Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32)

### Delayed Obedience is Better than Disguised Disobedience

Do you respond to God with good intentions and, yet, do not do what He asks? Do you say, “Yes,” then *do* “No.” The Jewish leaders had questioned Jesus’ authority (Matthew 21:23-37). It was most likely Tuesday of Holy Week under one of the Temple porches. Jesus described two sons, each defined by what he says and does.

**(1) Delayed obedience says, “No,” then *does*, “Yes” (Matthew 21:28-29).** The term, *two sons*, alludes to Jews and Gentiles, namely tax collectors and prostitutes. The *vineyard* refers to kingdom work. In Judaism, the father’s request to his son was considered normal. The response, “*I will not*” (Matthew 21:29) relates to the original attitude of the tax collectors and prostitutes toward God. The son’s reluctance to go was considered disobedient and was a punishable offense. Eventually, the son “*changed his mind*,” *metamelomai*, in Greek (Matthew 21:29). The NASB translates this as, *regretted*. Consequently, the son went, honoring his father’s request.

#### *Street Smarts for the Restoration Road*

Has God been prompting you to kingdom work that He designed only for you? Perhaps, there are relationships where you have a unique connection to build an eternal bridge. How are you responding?

**(2) Disguised disobedience says, “Yes,” then *does*, “No” (Matthew 21:30).** The second son responds to his father’s request to go and work in the vineyard with, “I will sir,” but he did not go. In Judaism, a son breaking his word to his father was considered worse than not responding to his father’s request, so Jesus’ audience feels the weight of the second son’s response. It was disguised disobedience.

#### *Street Smarts for the Restoration Road*

Is it time for you to obey and do what God is asking of you? Maybe He’s asking you to walk across a room, a street, a city, a county, a state, a country, or an international border with the message of His kingdom.

**(3) Delayed obedience is better than disguised disobedience (Matthew 21:31-32).** Saying, “No,” then doing, “Yes” with God is better than saying, “Yes,” then doing, “No.” Delayed obedience, saying, “No,” then doing, “Yes,” has a relationship with our heavenly Father. Jesus taught the chief priests and elders, “*I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you*” (Matthew 21:31). Tax collectors and prostitutes were considered the bottom of society and despised by the religious. When encountering either, a first century Jew would move far enough away so that he might not be touched by his or her shadow.

Jesus defined obedience as the behavior of the wise (Matthew 7:24).

Disguised disobedience has no relationship with our heavenly Father (Matthew 21:32). Saying, “Yes,” then doing, “No,” has only an appearance of intimacy with God. Jesus revealed, “*For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him*” (Matthew 21:32). John the Baptist had commanded the Pharisees and Sadducees to repent (Matthew 3:7-10). Ironically, the



chief priests and elders, represented by the Pharisees and Sadducees, had spoken affirmation of John the Baptist (John 5:35). However, they did not actually repent when commanded to do so (Matthew 21:23-27).

Jesus defined disobedience as the behavior of the foolish (Matthew 7:26).

*Street Smarts for the Restoration Road*

Read James 1:22-25; 1 John 3:7-8; and 3 John 11. Do you have an eternal relationship with the Father? You will know by your actions. If you wisely obey Him, by grace through faith in Christ, then you have intimacy with God. If you only speak of it, but maintain control of your own life, then you do not. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His calling for your life and then do what He requests. The Spirit's prompting will be consistent with His Word, His life, and wise counsel from His people.

**Conclusion**

Obey God and become a doer of His Word. You will discover intimacy with Him.