

## Discussion Questions – Matthew 12:22–50

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1. In Matthew 12:30, Jesus says, “Whoever is not with me is against me.” We often try to live in the middle: a little surrendered, a little in control—a little obedient, a little compromised—but a divided heart will eventually collapse. We are either following Jesus, or we are not. Where do you see the temptation in your own life to live with a “divided heart,” and what might full surrender actually look like in practice?

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2. How do repeated moments of resisting the Holy Spirit’s conviction shape a person’s heart over time? Can you think of examples where ignoring truth made it harder to respond later?

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3. Jesus teaches in Matthew 12:33–37 that our words reveal our hearts. What do your reactions—especially under stress or in private—suggest about what’s really stored inside you?

***For reflection:** In James 3 the question is asked, “Who can tame the tongue?” His implied answer is that no human being can fully tame it on their own. The solution isn’t just trying harder to say better words—it’s allowing God to transform the heart that produces those words. James contrasts two kinds of wisdom: (1) earthly wisdom, driven by envy and selfish ambition, which leads to disorder and harmful speech, and (2) godly wisdom, which is pure, peace-loving, gentle, full of mercy, and produces life-giving words. As we seek God’s wisdom instead of earthly impulses, our words will follow.*

*In James 4:7–10, James gives a practical path: a humble and surrendered life leads to a transformed inner life—and that reshapes how we speak. We are admonished to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. This creates space for wisdom to guide our words. When the heart is transformed, the tongue follows.*

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4. In Matthew 12:38–42, the Pharisees keep asking for more evidence despite witnessing miracles. How can skepticism sometimes mask a deeper heart issue, and how do we discern the difference between honest doubt and resistant unbelief?

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5. Considering Matthew 12:43–45, why is “empty but clean” not enough for lasting transformation? What does it practically mean to be filled with God’s Spirit and to live surrendered? How do our thoughts, attitudes, and reactions differ when we’re trying to do the right thing by sheer effort versus when we’re actually surrendered to God?

***For reflection:** Simply willing ourselves to do the right thing is driven by our own effort. It’s behavior-focused: “I need to try harder. I just need more discipline. I can fix this if I push myself enough.” That can produce some outward change for a while, but it often leads to exhaustion, pride, or frustration when we fail. It deals mostly with actions, not the deeper source behind them.*

*Surrendering to God and doing the right thing starts in a different place. It’s relationship- and heart-focused: “God, I can’t change this on my own. Align my desires with Yours. Lead me, and I’ll follow.”*

*Instead of forcing behavior, we're allowing God to reshape our heart, desires, and motivations, which then changes our actions from the inside out.*

*A simple way to think about it:*

*Willpower says: "I'll modify my behavior."*

*Surrender says: "God, transform who I am."*

*Willpower relies on your strength.*

*Surrender relies on God's Spirit.*

*Willpower often fights symptoms.*

*Surrender addresses the root.*

*This doesn't mean surrender is passive. We still make choices, practice obedience, and take action—but we're doing it with dependence, not self-reliance. When we ask God to be our Savior, His Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives and begins a transformative work in us, and we learn to yield in obedience to Him.*