

The Gospel of Matthew, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 14: Lord of the Sabbath; the Unforgivable Sin

Matthew 12:1–50

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Matthew 12 carries heavy doctrinal freight, and the teacher should prepare carefully. At its center is the authority and identity of Jesus: He is “lord of the Sabbath” (12:8), greater than the temple, greater than Jonah, greater than Solomon. His lordship over the Sabbath teaches us that the Sabbath, like the rest of the Old Law, was always pointing forward to Him and finds its fulfillment in Him. This is the seedbed of a truth made explicit in the rest of the New Testament: in Christ the Old Covenant is fulfilled and set aside, the Sabbath was a shadow whose substance is Christ (Colossians 2:16–17), and Christians, living under the New Covenant, gather to worship on the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, not under Sabbath law. The chapter also presses the connection between heart and speech, the sign of Jonah pointing to the resurrection, and, most weightily, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Handle each of these with clarity, and the blasphemy passage with great pastoral tenderness.

Yet Matthew 12 is not merely a chapter of controversy and doctrine. It aims squarely at the formation of the heart. It exposes the deadly religion of rule-keeping without mercy and calls us to a faith where mercy comes first. It holds up the tenderness of Christ toward the bruised and smoldering, comforting the weak. It searches our words as the overflow of our hearts. And it refuses us any neutral ground, calling us to wholehearted allegiance to Jesus and to the doing of the Father’s will as the mark of those who truly belong to Him.

So teach for both targets. Send your students home seeing Jesus clearly as the Lord of the Sabbath in whom the Old Law is fulfilled, confident in the resurrection, and clear that they worship under the New Covenant on the Lord’s Day. And send them home with softened, searched hearts: merciful, tender toward the weak, careful with their words, undivided in their loyalty to Christ, and assured of His forgiveness for every fearful, repentant soul.

Question 1

Student Question:

Twice in this chapter Jesus defends His disciples and Himself in Sabbath controversies and declares, “the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath” (12:8). What is Jesus claiming about His own authority, and what does His lordship over the Sabbath reveal about who He is?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin in the grainfield (12:1–8). The disciples pluck heads of grain on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees pounce. Jesus answers with Scripture and with escalating claims. He recalls David

eating the consecrated bread (12:3–4), notes that priests work in the temple on the Sabbath without guilt (12:5), and then makes three staggering statements: “something greater than the temple is here” (12:6), “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice” (12:7), and “the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath” (12:8).

Focus on that last claim. For a faithful Jew, the Sabbath was a sacred institution given by God Himself at creation and at Sinai. To call oneself its Lord is to claim authority over what God had ordained, authority that belongs to God alone. Jesus is not merely reinterpreting the Sabbath; He is declaring His sovereign authority over it. This is a claim to deity, quiet but unmistakable.

Connect this to His other claims in the chapter. He is greater than the temple, the dwelling place of God’s presence (12:6). He is greater than Jonah the prophet and greater than Solomon the king (12:41–42). Matthew is stacking up the evidence that this is no ordinary rabbi. The One walking through the grainfield is the Lord who gave the Sabbath in the first place.

Draw the conclusion for your class. Because Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, He has the authority to fulfill it, to interpret it rightly, and ultimately, as the New Testament will make plain, to bring the whole Old Covenant to its appointed goal in Himself. Establishing His authority here is the foundation for everything else, including how Christians relate to the Sabbath today, which the third question will take up.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Jesus’ claim to be Lord of the Sabbath as a claim to divine authority (12:8)
- Jesus as greater than the temple, Jonah, and Solomon (12:6, 41–42)
- The deity of Christ implied in His sovereignty over what God ordained
- Christ’s authority as the foundation for understanding the Old Law’s fulfillment in Him
- Mercy over mere ritual as God’s deeper desire (Hosea 6:6; Matthew 12:7)

Discussion Prompts

- What is Jesus claiming about Himself when He calls Himself Lord of the Sabbath?
- How do His claims to be greater than the temple, Jonah, and Solomon build the case for who He is?
- How does establishing Christ’s authority shape the way you submit to His teaching?

Question 2

Student Question:

The Pharisees were experts at keeping rules while missing mercy, so that Jesus quotes, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice” (12:7). Where in your own walk are you more careful about religious correctness than about showing mercy to people, and what would change if mercy came first?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the Pharisees' great failure into a mirror for the student. Jesus quotes Hosea: "if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (12:7). The Pharisees were scrupulous about ritual and ruthless toward people. They could keep a thousand rules and still crush a hungry man for plucking grain. Their religion had a precise mechanism and a missing heart.

Help students see that this is a perennial temptation, not just an ancient one. It is far easier to measure ourselves by religious correctness, attendance, knowledge, behavior, the right opinions, than by mercy. Correctness can be tracked and displayed; mercy is costly and quiet. So we drift, almost without noticing, into valuing being right over being kind.

Make it concrete. Ask where each person is more careful about religious performance than about compassion: the family member judged rather than loved, the struggler corrected rather than helped, the stranger ignored, the opinion held more tightly than the person in front of us. Jesus does not pit truth against mercy, but He insists that mercy is near the heart of what God desires.

Move toward change. What would it look like, this week, to let mercy come first, to be as eager to show compassion as to be correct? Encourage students that this is not the abandonment of truth but its proper expression. The God who desires mercy is the same God whose mercy reached down and saved each of us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's desire for mercy over mere ritual correctness (Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:8)
- The danger of a religion precise in rules but missing in compassion
- Truth and mercy held together, with mercy near the heart of God's desire
- Compassion toward people as the overflow of having received God's mercy

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you more careful about being right than about showing mercy?
- Who in your life needs your compassion more than your correction right now?
- What would change this week if mercy came first in how you treat people?

Question 3

Student Question:

Jesus shows that the Sabbath was made for man's good and that He is its Lord, doing good and healing on it (12:10-13). How does Jesus' lordship over the Sabbath point us to the way the Old Law was pointing forward to Him, and what does that mean for how Christians relate to the Sabbath today?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the question where the churches of Christ teaching on the Sabbath and the Lord's Day comes to the surface, so teach it carefully and positively. Start with the text: Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath and declares, "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (12:12). He is not abolishing the Sabbath here; He is recovering its true purpose and demonstrating His lordship over it. The Sabbath was God's gift for the good of His people, not a cage.

Now lift the eyes to the bigger picture. Jesus being Lord of the Sabbath fits a pattern that runs through the whole Bible: the Old Law, including the Sabbath, was always pointing forward to Christ. The Sabbath rest anticipated a deeper rest, the rest for the soul that Jesus offers (11:28–29) and the rest that remains for the people of God in Him (Hebrews 4:9–10). The shadow was always meant to give way to the substance, and the substance is Christ.

Teach plainly what the rest of the New Testament makes explicit, so students are not confused. On the cross, Christ took away the certificate of debt that stood against us, "nailing it to the cross," so that no one should now judge us "with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (Colossians 2:14–17). Christians live under the New Covenant, not the Old (Hebrews 8–10). We are therefore not under Sabbath law; the seventh-day Sabbath was a sign given to Israel, fulfilled in Christ.

Then turn to the positive apostolic pattern. The New Testament shows the church gathering to worship on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, the day Jesus rose. The disciples came together "on the first day of the week to break bread" (Acts 20:7), and Paul directed the collection on "the first day of every week" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Christians honor the Lord on the first day, not as a transferred or Christianized Sabbath under Old Covenant rules, but as the day of resurrection and the apostolic pattern for the church.

Close pastorally and reverently. The point is not to scorn the Sabbath but to marvel that what it pointed to has arrived. We do not lose rest; we gain a deeper one. We rest in the finished work of Christ every day, and we gather joyfully on the Lord's Day around His table. Help your students hold this with both clarity and gratitude.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Sabbath given for man's good and fulfilled in Christ as Lord of the Sabbath (12:8, 12)
- The Old Law, including the Sabbath, as a shadow pointing forward to Christ (Colossians 2:16–17)
- Christians living under the New Covenant, not the Old, and not bound by Sabbath law (Hebrews 8–10)
- The deeper rest in Christ that the Sabbath anticipated (Matthew 11:28–29; Hebrews 4:9–10)
- The apostolic pattern of worship on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2)

- The Lord's Day honored as the day of resurrection, not as a Christianized Sabbath under Old Covenant rules

Discussion Prompts

- How does seeing the Sabbath as a shadow pointing to Christ help you understand the Old Law's purpose?
- Why do Christians gather to worship on the first day of the week rather than keeping the seventh-day Sabbath?
- How can you enter more deeply into the rest Christ offers, both daily and on the Lord's Day?

Question 4

Student Question:

Matthew applies Isaiah's prophecy to Jesus: "a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench" (12:20). When have you felt like a bruised reed or a smoldering wick, and how does the gentleness of Christ toward the weak meet you there?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Amid all the conflict, Matthew pauses to show us the heart of Jesus. He quotes Isaiah at length, and the line that lingers is this: "a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory" (12:20). Picture the images. A reed already bent and cracked, useless to most, He will not snap off. A wick barely glowing, almost out, He will not pinch into darkness. He tends the fragile rather than discarding it.

Set this against the backdrop of the chapter. The Pharisees break bruised reeds for a living; their religion crushes the weak. Jesus is the opposite. The same Lord who silences the proud and confounds His enemies is astonishingly gentle with the broken and the barely-hanging-on. Power and tenderness meet in Him without contradiction.

Now make it personal. Most people in your class have been, or are now, a bruised reed: weakened by failure, grief, sin, exhaustion, or disappointment. Many feel like a smoldering wick, faith down to an ember, barely flickering. The lie they often believe is that Jesus has no patience for such weakness, that He wants only the strong and the impressive.

Speak the comfort plainly. Jesus does not break the bruised or snuff out the smoldering. He draws near to the weak, tends the faint flame, and patiently brings His work to victory. Encourage students to bring their weakness to Him rather than hiding it, and to extend the same gentleness to the bruised reeds around them. The gentleness of Christ is not a sideline to His power; it is how His power most often comes to us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The gentleness of Christ toward the weak and broken (Isaiah 42:1-4; Matthew 12:20)

- Power and tenderness united in Christ without contradiction
- Christ tending faltering faith rather than discarding it
- The call to extend Christ's gentleness to the bruised reeds around us

Discussion Prompts

- When have you felt like a bruised reed or a smoldering wick?
- How does the gentleness of Christ toward the weak meet you in that place?
- Who around you is a bruised reed that needs Christ's gentleness through you?

Question 5

Student Question:

The Pharisees claimed Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebul, and Jesus answered, "if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself," and "if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (12:26, 28). What does this teach about the source of Jesus' power and the presence of the kingdom in His ministry?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here the conflict reaches its sharpest point. Jesus heals a demon-oppressed man, and the Pharisees, unable to deny the miracle, attribute it to the devil: "it is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons" (12:24). Jesus exposes the absurdity: "if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?" (12:26). A kingdom at war with itself collapses; Satan does not undermine his own work.

Then comes the positive claim, and it is enormous: "if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (12:28). Jesus identifies the source of His power as the Holy Spirit of God, and He declares that His exorcisms are visible proof that God's kingdom has broken into the world in His ministry. The strong man, Satan, is being bound, and his house is being plundered (12:29).

Help students see what is at stake. The very works the Pharisees credit to Satan are in fact the works of God's Spirit, the unmistakable signs that the King has come and the kingdom is breaking in. To look at the Spirit's work and call it demonic is to invert good and evil at the deepest level, which sets up the solemn warning Jesus will give next (and which the ninth question will treat fully).

Draw out the encouragement as well. Jesus is stronger than the strong man. The kingdom He brings is more powerful than the forces of darkness. Wherever Christ reigns, the enemy is being plundered. This is the same kingdom established in His church, with Christ now reigning at the right hand of God. The power that cast out demons then is the power that still triumphs over evil in Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Jesus casting out demons by the Spirit of God, not by Satan (12:28)
- The presence of the kingdom of God breaking in through Christ's ministry (12:28)
- Christ as the stronger one who binds the strong man and plunders his house (12:29)
- The kingdom established in Christ, who now reigns over every power (Colossians 1:13; 2:15)
- The absurdity and danger of calling the work of God's Spirit the work of Satan

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that Jesus cast out demons by the Spirit of God?
- How do Jesus' works show that the kingdom of God had come in His ministry?
- How does Christ being stronger than the strong man encourage you in spiritual struggle?

Question 6

Student Question:

Jesus says, "whoever is not with me is against me" (12:30), refusing any neutral middle ground regarding Himself. Where in your life have you been trying to stay neutral or uncommitted toward Christ in some area, and what would wholehearted allegiance look like there instead?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Jesus draws a line that leaves no room for the fence-sitter: "whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters" (12:30). In the context of the Beelzebul controversy, He is saying there is no neutral observer of His work. You are either with Him, gathering, or against Him, scattering. The middle ground is an illusion.

Help students feel how this confronts a very modern instinct. Many people want to admire Jesus from a comfortable distance, to keep Him as one option among many, to remain undecided or to compartmentalize: committed to Christ in some areas of life, carefully neutral in others. Jesus refuses that arrangement. He is Lord of all or He is not honored as Lord at all.

Make it personal and specific. Ask where each person has carved out a zone of neutrality: a relationship, a habit, a financial decision, an area of work, a private opinion, where they have quietly kept Christ at arm's length while remaining devout elsewhere. The line Jesus draws runs through every room of our lives, not just the ones marked religious.

Move toward wholehearted allegiance. The aim is not anxiety but surrender. Ask what undivided loyalty to Christ would actually look like in that neutral zone. Often the call is simply to stop hedging, to let Jesus be Lord there too, and to gather with Him rather than scatter. Wholehearted allegiance is not a burden; it is the freedom of belonging fully to a good King.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ's refusal of any neutral ground; we are either with Him or against Him (12:30)
- The lordship of Christ claiming every area of life, not just the religious
- The danger of compartmentalized, partial allegiance
- Wholehearted devotion to Christ as the call of discipleship (Luke 9:62)

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you tried to stay neutral or uncommitted toward Christ in some area of life?
- What would wholehearted allegiance to Jesus look like in that specific area?
- Why is there finally no neutral ground when it comes to Christ?

Question 7

Student Question:

Jesus teaches that "the good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil," and that we will give account for every careless word (12:33–37). What does this reveal about the connection between the heart and the words we speak?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Jesus turns to the subject of words, and He traces them straight back to the heart. "The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil" (12:35). And the famous diagnosis: "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (12:34). Our words are not random; they are the overflow of what fills us within.

Help students grasp how searching this is. We tend to excuse our speech, especially the careless, cutting, or complaining word, as a slip, not the real us. Jesus says the opposite: the careless word is precisely the real us, leaking out when our guard is down. The mouth is a faithful reporter of the heart. If bitterness, pride, lust, or contempt keeps surfacing in our words, it is because it is stored up inside.

Note the weight Jesus attaches to this: "on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak" (12:36). Words are not weightless. They reveal and they matter eternally. This is sobering, but it is also clarifying: the path to better words is not mainly tighter control of the tongue but a transformed heart, a new treasure within from which good things flow.

Move toward honest self-examination and hope. Invite students to listen to their own recent words as a kind of diagnostic readout of the heart. Where the words are sour, the remedy is to bring the heart to Christ for cleansing and refilling. As the heart is increasingly filled with Christ, the overflow changes. Point them not to mere self-policing but to the renewing work of God within.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Words as the overflow of the heart's true contents (12:34-35)
- Accountability for every careless word at the judgment (12:36-37)
- The transformation of speech flowing from a transformed heart
- The heart as the treasure from which good or evil proceeds (Luke 6:45)

Discussion Prompts

- What have your words this past week revealed about what is filling your heart?
- Why is changing the heart, not just controlling the tongue, the real remedy?
- What would it look like to bring your heart to Christ to be refilled this week?

Question 8

Student Question:

Jesus refuses to give the sign-seekers a spectacle and instead points them to “the sign of the prophet Jonah,” three days and nights in the heart of the earth (12:38-40). Be honest: where are you tempted to demand proof or signs from God on your terms rather than trusting the greatest sign He has already given in the resurrection?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The scribes and Pharisees demand a sign (12:38), even after all they have seen. Jesus refuses to perform on demand, calling them “an evil and adulterous generation” that seeks a sign (12:39). Then He gives the only sign He will offer in advance: “just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (12:40). The sign of Jonah is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Draw out the irony. They wanted a spectacle on their terms, proof tailored to satisfy their curiosity or test. Jesus points them instead to the greatest sign of all, His resurrection, the event that would vindicate every claim He made. The resurrection is God's decisive answer to the question of who Jesus is, and it is the sign on which our faith rests (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 17).

Now turn it on the student. We can fall into the same sign-seeking posture, demanding that God prove Himself on our terms before we will trust or obey: give me this answer, heal this person, open this door, and then I will believe. It is a subtle way of putting ourselves in charge and God in the dock. Faith, by contrast, rests on what God has already shown, supremely the empty tomb.

Be honest and gentle here. It is not wrong to ask God for help or to long for clarity. The danger is the bargaining heart that withholds trust until God performs. Encourage students to anchor their faith not in fresh spectacles but in the resurrection that has already happened, the sign of Jonah fulfilled, attested by witnesses, and preserved for us in the apostles' inspired testimony.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The sign of Jonah as a prophecy of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (12:40)
- The resurrection as God's decisive vindication of Jesus (Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)
- Faith resting on what God has already revealed rather than on signs demanded on our terms
- The danger of a bargaining heart that withholds trust until God performs

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you tempted to demand that God prove Himself on your terms?
- How does the resurrection serve as the great sign that grounds your faith?
- What would it look like to trust the sign God has already given rather than asking for more?

Question 9

Student Question:

Jesus warns that "whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come" (12:31-32). What exactly is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, in the context of the Pharisees attributing the Spirit's work to Satan, and why should a tender heart that fears it has committed this sin take comfort rather than despair?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest and most sensitive passage of the lesson, so slow down, teach it carefully, and lead with tenderness. Jesus says, "every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come" (12:31-32). These words have terrified many sincere believers, often the very people who least need to fear them.

Begin with the context, because context is everything here. Jesus has just healed by the Spirit of God, and the Pharisees, staring straight at the undeniable work of God, deliberately called it the work of Satan (12:24). The blasphemy against the Spirit is not a single careless outburst or a stray bad thought. It is the settled, hardened, persistent posture of these men who saw the Spirit's clear testimony to Christ and, with eyes open, attributed it to the devil. It is a willful, ongoing rejection of the Spirit's witness to Jesus, calling light darkness and good evil.

Explain why such a posture cannot be forgiven. It is not that God runs out of mercy or that this sin is too big for the cross. It is that this hardened rejection cuts the very nerve by which forgiveness is received. The Spirit's work is to testify to Christ and to bring people to repentance and faith. The one who has so thoroughly, knowingly, and finally rejected that testimony has closed the only door through which grace comes. The sin is unforgivable not because grace is too small, but because the heart has hardened itself against the only source of grace and refuses to repent.

Now speak the comfort plainly and directly, because this is the heart of the pastoral task. The very fact that a person is troubled, that they fear they may have committed this sin, is strong evidence that they have not. A hardened, blaspheming heart does not grieve over sin or long for forgiveness; it is unbothered and defiant. The tender soul who trembles, who wants to be right with God, who is reading this with anxiety, is showing exactly the soft, repentant heart that the Spirit is still working in. The Spirit has not abandoned them; their very concern is His work. As long as a person can still repent and turn to Christ, the door is open. No one who genuinely desires to come to Jesus will be turned away (John 6:37).

Close by gathering this into hope and assurance. The warning is real and meant to sober the proud, the willfully hard, the deliberate scoffer who looks at Christ and sneers. It is not meant to crush the fearful and the contrite. If anyone in your class is haunted by this, tell them gently and clearly: a heart that fears having committed the unforgivable sin has, by that very fear, shown it has not. Then turn them toward the open arms of Christ, where every sin and blasphemy of the repentant is washed away in His blood.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The blasphemy against the Spirit understood in context: attributing the Spirit's clear work to Satan (12:24, 31–32)
- This sin as a settled, hardened, persistent rejection of the Spirit's testimony to Christ, not a single careless word
- Why this posture is unforgivable: it closes the only door through which grace is received, refusing repentance
- The pastoral assurance that a tender, fearful heart troubled by this sin has not committed it
- The Spirit's ongoing work seen in the very conviction and longing of the anxious soul
- Christ's promise to receive all who come to Him in repentant faith (John 6:37; Acts 2:38)

Discussion Prompts

- Why is context so important for rightly understanding the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?
- Why is the very fear of having committed this sin actually evidence that one has not?
- How does this passage move you to keep your heart soft and responsive to the Spirit's witness to Christ?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole chapter, from the grainfield to the redefining of family in “whoever does the will of my Father” (12:50). Name one specific way Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath whose mercy meets the weak, is calling you to belong to Him and do the Father’s will this week.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Use this capstone to gather the whole chapter and press it toward action. Matthew 12 ends with Jesus redefining family: told that His mother and brothers are outside, He stretches out His hand toward His disciples and says, “here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (12:49–50). Belonging to Jesus is not about bloodline, religious pedigree, or rule-keeping; it is about doing the Father’s will from a heart that is His.

Tie the threads together. The chapter has shown the Lord of the Sabbath in whom the Old Law is fulfilled, the gentleness of Christ toward the bruised, the searching of our words, the refusal of neutral ground, the sign of the resurrection, and the warning to keep a soft heart toward the Spirit. The danger now is that students close their Bibles informed but unchanged.

Press for the specific. A vague resolve to “do God’s will” evaporates. A concrete answer sounds like: “I will let mercy come before correctness with my difficult family member,” or “I will stop keeping one area of my life neutral toward Christ and surrender it,” or “I will watch my words this week as a window into my heart and bring what I find to Jesus,” or “I will rest in the finished work of Christ instead of striving to earn God’s favor.”

Close in worship and assurance. Remind your class that the Lord of the Sabbath who confounds the proud is the same gentle Savior who will not break the bruised reed, and who calls all who do the Father’s will His own family. Lead them to belong to Him gladly, to do the Father’s will this week, and to rest in His mercy.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Belonging to Christ defined by doing the Father’s will, not pedigree or mere rule-keeping (12:50)
- The integration of doctrine and daily obedience
- Specific, concrete obedience as the fruit of genuine encounter with Christ
- The family of God formed around glad submission to the Father’s will

Discussion Prompts

- What is the one truth from Matthew 12 that God most wants to work into your heart?
- What specific step will you take this week to do the Father’s will and belong to Christ?
- How can this class pray for you as you take that step?