



# fellowship church

## Sermon Discussion Guide

March 15, 2026 - Pastor Scott Allen

*The Leaven of Addition and Subtraction* (Matthew 16:1-12)

**Summary:** The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded yet another sign from Jesus because they refused to believe what they had seen. Jesus warned the disciples to watch out for the dangerous teaching, the leaven, of both parties. While the Pharisees added rules, regulations and checklists to scripture, the Sadducees subtracted key truths of scripture to fit their own agendas. By editing God's Word, they fell into self-righteousness, self-reliance, self-preservation and self-worship, all of which blinded them from seeing Jesus rightly. The remedy to such blindness is embracing and trusting God's Word. Knowing Christ—the Bread and the Word—is of surpassing worth (*Phil. 3:8*) because it frees us to live for a better kingdom.

### Discussion Starter

- What is something that stuck in your mind from the sermon this week?
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### Reflection Questions

- The Pharisees and Sadducees rejected Jesus and demanded additional signs from him. Yet, the disciples also struggled to believe who Jesus was at times. Is there an area of your life in which you continue to ask God to prove himself or to give more evidence? How could you ask God to reveal himself from a posture of belief versus a posture of unbelief?
- How do you find yourself adding to God's Word (cultural rules, checklists of behaviors, etc.)? In what ways do you feel tempted to subtract from God's Word (ignoring or embarrassed by its commands, overvaluing the world, etc.)?
- Jesus gave his disciples a sharp warning about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. What is at stake when we edit God's Word? Like leaven, what does adding to or subtracting from scripture invisibly, gradually and absolutely lead to?

- When we embrace God’s Word, we come to know Jesus rightly. Reflect on Philippians 3:7-11. Why do you think Paul writes that knowing Jesus is of surpassing worth?
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### **Application Questions**

- (Personal implications) How does embracing and trusting God’s Word and its gospel message free me from self-righteousness, self-reliance, self-preservation, and self-worship?
- (Communal implications) Can you think of an example in your life when you were—intentionally or unintentionally— “editing” scripture and a brother or sister graciously corrected you and encouraged you to embrace the truth of God’s Word?
- (Vision Question) Our church’s vision statement is: *We are a family of disciples on mission*. How might we be a witness and reveal a better kingdom to our neighbors if we embrace God’s Word and let its teaching be the leaven that changes us gradually and absolutely?

This week’s guide written by: Anna Koke

## Tips for Group Leaders

- DO ask open-ended questions. DON'T ask questions where a short "right" answer ends the discussion.
- DO encourage mutual participation by every group member. DON'T feel the need to respond or weigh in after every contribution. Avoid monologuing. As the leader, your goal is to facilitate mutual discussion between all group members (Eph 4:15–16).
- DO ask follow-up questions: "What do you mean by that?" "Tell me more!" "Has anyone else experienced something similar (or different)?"
- DO feel free to pick and choose questions that are a good fit for your group. DON'T feel the need to get through every question, and don't worry if you spend most of your time on a few questions that generate a lot of good discussion.
- DO keep the main thing the main thing. Steer your conversation toward the main theme of the sermon and the biblical text. DON'T get sidetracked on less important matters, theological debates, etc. A rabbit trail might sometimes be worth pursuing—if group members are wrestling deeply with the implications of biblical truth for their lives. Otherwise, steer conversation back to the main topic.
- DO get into the text. It could be helpful to read over the passage together or ask questions directly related to the text. Help group members engage the text for themselves and respond to what they see there.
- DO revisit important moments from the sermon—a memorable story, an impactful quote, a convicting point of application. "Remember when pastor X talked about Y? What impression did that make on you?"
- DO allow space for reflection, silence, and thoughtful answers. DON'T feel that you need to jump in or ask a new question just because the group has been quiet for a few seconds. A good rule of thumb is to wait until the silence gets awkward, then count silently to ten before jumping in.
- DO bring discussions home to practical, concrete everyday life. DON'T let discussion and application stay in the abstract realm. Steer discussion toward *what does responding to this sermon look like for me?* If comments are vague or general, ask "what would that look like, practically?"