



## Bible Study – Dialogue 1

### SHREWD AS A SNAKE

*- Leader's Notes -*

*“Be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.”*  
- Matthew 10:16 -

#### The Point:

- to set the framework for the next seven weeks.
- to establish what Jesus meant when He commanded His disciples to be “shrewd.”

- *Group Leader's Notes are in bold italics*
- *Additional questions the Group Leader may use for clarity or additional stimulation of dialogue are in bold.*
- *The Check It Out and Think It Out segments are the most critical. Everything else reinforces these two segments. Keep this in mind as you budget your time.*
- *Questions with a star ★ are the most critical. Questions without a star may be omitted if necessary.*

#### Warm Up

Webster's Dictionary defines *shrewd* as “marked by clever discerning awareness and hardheaded acumen.”

- ★ 1. Think of a person you would describe as shrewd and state a specific example of something they did which was shrewd.
- ★ 2. What is the shrewdest thing you have ever done?
- 3. Who is a historical figure whom you would describe as shrewd? Can you give an example of a situation in which you think they were shrewd?

## Check it Out

- ★ 1. Read Matthew 10:16
  - What do you think Jesus meant when He commanded His disciples to “be as shrewd as snakes but as innocent as doves”?
    - **What does it mean to be “shrewd as a snake”?**
    - **What does it mean to be “innocent as a dove”?**
    - **How can the two operate simultaneously?**
  
- ★ 2. Read Luke 16:1-9
  - Does this passage shed any light on what Jesus thought the it meant to be *shrewd* and how does this relate to Jesus’ command to his followers to be *shrewd as snakes*?
    - **Is it okay for us to be dishonest like the shrewd manager?**
    - **What was the shrewd manager’s goal? (*Taking care of himself.*)**
    - **What do you think God wants our goal to be? (*Advancing God’s Kingdom and helping others Matt. 22:37-40.*)**
  
- 3. Read 1 Kings 3:16-28
  - How did Solomon’s handling of this situation exemplify Jesus’ instruction to be both “*shrewd as a snake and as innocent as a dove*”?
  
- 4. Read Genesis 3:1-6
  - How was the serpent shrewd?
    - (*He created doubt.*)
    - (*He appealed to her physical appetite – “good for food”*)
    - (*He appealed to her aesthetic sense of sight – “pleasing to the eye”*)
    - (*He appealed to her intellect and pride– “desirable for gaining wisdom”*)
  
  - Contrast the serpent to Jesus’ words in Matthew 10:16.
  
- ★ 5. Read Matthew 21:23-27
  - How was Jesus’ response similar to the question, “Do you still kick your dog?” How was it different?
  
  - Who do you think Jesus’ regarded as his primary audience and how did that affect his response?
  
  - What can we learn from Jesus’ example in this instance about what it means to be both shrewd and innocent as the same time?

6. Read I Chronicles 12:32
- What do you think it means to understand our “times” and how does this relate to being shrewd in modern culture?

## Think It Out

- ★ 1. What do you believe are the most controversial issues in America today? (*For example: abortion, racism, apathy, homosexuality, global warming, poverty, terrorism, censorship, etc.*)
  - ⇒ Pick one issue and explain what you think the bottom line solution to that particular issue is.
- 2. Using Jesus as your example, explore what it looks like to be “shrewd” but “innocent” when dialoguing about that particular controversial issue within the context of modern culture?
- ★ 3. In his book, *GOD Is the Issue*, Brad Bright makes the following statement:

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*“Debating issues apart from the larger context of God Himself is the practical equivalent of rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic while it sinks beneath the waves.”*

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- ⇒ Evaluate how you think Jesus would view this statement, and what implications does this have for addressing the controversial issues in America today?

## Sort It Out

### REAL LIFE SITUATION:

Sally was the president of the PTA at her girls’ public elementary school. At one of the meetings she opened the meeting in prayer and then closed with the words, “In the name of Jesus, Amen.”

A few days later she received a letter in the mail from one of the parents who had been present stating how offended he was that she prayed in the name of Jesus, chastising her for her intolerance.

If you were in Sally’s positions, how would you respond and why?

**SALLY'S ACTUAL RESPONSE:**

*Sally, wrote back saying that she thought education was all about the open and honest dialogue about ideas, not censoring ideas we don't happen to personally agree with.*

**A POSSIBLE SHREWD RESPONSE:**

*Sally responded very well by not getting defensive and reframing the issue from "intolerance" to "censorship." However, I would take it one step further to actually make God Himself the issue by asking, "But I'm curious, just what exactly do you have against Jesus?" Just like Jesus, our goal should always be to bring the conversation back to the central issue of life—our view of God. A shrewd follower of Jesus always looks beyond the problem and sees the opportunity to make God the issue.*

## Act It Out

Pair up with another person in your group. One person play the role of Sally. One person play the role of the person who wrote the letter. However, redo it as a face to face dialogue. Reverse roles back and forth a few times until you can respond with confidence as you make God the issue.

## Wrap Up

1. Suggested reading for this week: Chapter 1 of *GOD Is the Issue*. As you read, ask yourself the following question: What is the one thing that must happen in order to effect real change within modern culture?
2. This week, ask three people *from varied backgrounds* what they think the connection is between their belief in God and their behavior. Do not be argumentative. Try to really understand what they are saying. Be prepared to report your findings to the group next week.

*Note to small group leader: You may want to ask each person to write the names of three people on an index card that they would like to talk with this week about their view of God and their behavior. This will greatly increase the chances of the conversations actually occurring. The goal is to hear views from various types of people—not just people who all tend to think about God the same way.*

3. Close in prayer asking God to provide each person in the group with three great opportunities this week to talk with people about the connection between their view of God and their behavior.