

The Great Debate
Community Group Discussion Questions
Mark 12:28-34

Opening Question: *Growing up, what was the weirdest rule your parents had in the house?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael asked us which of the 10 commandments we think is the most important. As a reminder, here is the list, it comes from Exodus 20:3-17:

1. **Have no other gods before me**
2. **Do not worship any graven image**
3. **Do not take God's name in vain**
4. **Keep the sabbath holy**
5. Honor your parents
6. Do not kill
7. Do not commit adultery
8. Do not steal
9. Do not lie
10. Do not covet

Tell them: You probably know this, but as a reminder, the first four commandments have to do with our relationship on God. The rest have to do with our relationships with one other. **Ask them:** *What is significant about this order? (God first, humanity second)*

Ask them: *Which do you think is the most important commandment? Which one would most people say would be the worst to disobey?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael informed us that 64% of the largest evangelical denomination in the South lean Republican and 36% lean Democrat or Independent. That means that 3 – 4 out of 10 don't lean conservative.

Ask them: *Why do you think this number is important for us to keep in mind?*

Tell them: On Sunday we looked at Mark 12:28-34. This passage follows a debate between Jesus and some religious leaders. An expert in the law asked Him what the most important commandment was and He responded saying: ***Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.***

Ask them: *Have you ever noticed that Jesus summarized the law by saying love is the action at the center of greatest commandments?*

What do we learn about God in this encounter?

1. **Tell them:** *First we learn that Jesus is the expert on the law. That means you can't out debate him. In the Matthew report of this same debate Jesus adds that, "All the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:40)*

Ask them: *Why would all the laws and rules of scripture depend on our ability to love God and others?*

2. **Tell them:** God expects our devotion to Him. Jesus reply to the Pharisees means that 100% of your heart is meant for God. He then adds and love your neighbor as yourself. This must mean that loving God includes loving others. **Ask them:** *Have you ever experienced a situation where loving others did not come from loving God with 100% of your heart? What was the motivation?*

Remind them: Many say you have to prioritize your devotion. God first, family second, friends third, etc. But according to Jesus the priority to devotion is God first, last, and in total. Loving your neighbor flows out of your devotion to God.

3. **Tell them:** The third point was that Jesus expects our devotion to others to be at least equal to our devotion to ourselves. (love your neighbor as yourself) **Ask them:** *Why do you think that he put it like this?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael said that we gravitate toward self-devotion. We want what's best for us, even if we are self-destructive. Even suicide has the purpose of easing our suffering. **Ask them:** *How good are you at seeking what's best for others?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael made the point that we want to be experts.

Ask them: *What do you think about this idea? In what ways do we ravenously seek to be in the know and let others know about it?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael said that this desire to be an expert leads to debate and division.

Ask them: *Have you noticed this in your relationships? If so, how?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael reminded us that we are unable to fulfill the law. Psalm 14:2–3 confirms that when it says, *"The Lord looks down from heaven at the human race, to see if there is anyone who is wise and seeks God. Everyone rejects God; they are all morally corrupt. None of them does what is right, not even one!"* We all fail at keeping the commandments, but still we have certain commandments and even sometimes self-made laws that we convince ourselves we have to keep in order to be "good" people.

Ask them: *Have you ever believed that there was something you or someone else had to do (other than surrender to Jesus) in order to be accepted by God? If so, do you mind sharing?*

Examine your heart

Ask them: *What rules, law, or practices do you have a tendency to elevate above the greatest commandments?*

Ask them: *Circling back to our opening question, what rules have you made up in your home that you are recognizing are as important to you as God's laws?*

Ask them: *What is the part of your heart, soul, mind, or strength that is the hardest to give completely to God? In other words, to what/whom are you most devoted?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael talked about the idea of allegiance being another word for devotion. **Ask them:** *To what do you pledge your allegiance other than God?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael suggested that we needed a Christian's pledge of allegiance and that it should be "Trust in the Lord" (Or "Jesus is Lord."). This comes from Proverbs 3:1-6:

"My child, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for they will provide a long and full life, and they will add well-being to you. Do not let truth and mercy leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will find favor and good understanding, in the sight of God and people. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. Acknowledge him in all your ways, and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:1-6)

Ask them: *How do you think the two ideas of trusting in the Lord and showing love should impact our desire to know more than others, to debate other, or to reject those who don't agree with us?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael talked about making decisions based on the greatest commandment.

Ask them: *How does asking yourself, "Is this showing love?" change the way you make decisions?*

Remind them: Next week is the ordination service for Eric Moreno. Be sure to be online to show your support, either at the live service online Saturday at 5pm, or Sunday morning at 10:30am. In order to serve our community we are preparing for our Candy Cruise-In. We still need people to man the booths and to drop off candy at the church offices. If you can help in any way please let Lisa or Toshya know. Also, remember that November 1st will be our next drive-in service!