

The Two Greatest Commandments Chaplain Brandon Denning

Discussion Guide

Use this guide by yourself, with a friend, or in a group to help you pursue a deeper relationship with Jesus this week!

Open

As we celebrate Memorial Day this weekend, our guest speaker Chaplain Major Brandon Denning of Fort Jackson focuses our attention on Matthew 22:34-40. In this passage, a religious leader tries to trap Jesus by asking Him a question designed to incite controversy and give credibility to the religious establishment's claims that Jesus' teaching doesn't line up with Scripture. Jesus, however, responds with a stunningly simple yet incredibly profound answer - and in so doing challenges all of us in our understanding of how God wants us to live. To get your group started this week, let everyone share the best advice they've ever received and what made it so powerful...

BIG THOUGHT

The health of our relationship with God is not to be measured in how perfectly we act, but in how strong we grow in our love for Him and the people around us.

1. To lay the groundwork for understanding our passage for today, read Matthew 22:15-22. Who was trying to set a trap for Jesus? (v. 15-16) Matthew's original readers would have known that these two groups hated each other - what does that tell us about their motivation to work together? How does Jesus answer their trick question? (v. 18) What was their response? (v. 22)
2. Now read 22:23-33. Which group tries their hand at trapping Jesus next? (v. 23) What was their (ridiculous) question? (v. 24-28) What does Jesus say are their foundational problems? (v. 29) What two errors does He correct? (v. 30-32) Read Exodus 3:6. How does Jesus' use of Scripture here serve as a reminder for us? Explain.

3. Read 22:34. Now that you're familiar with the background of this exchange between Jesus and the different groups of religious leaders, what do you think the Pharisees were discussing as they huddled together? What did they decide to do? (v. 35-36) If you had been in the crowd observing, what would you have been thinking when the Pharisee asked Jesus this question?
4. Now read v. 37-40. What does Jesus tell them? (note: the verses He quotes are Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18) What does Jesus say these commands summarize? (v. 40) How does Jesus' answer both simplify and deepen what it means to live in our relationships with God and others? Share your thoughts with the group...
5. To finish, read Mark's account of the questioner's response in Mark 12:32-33. In this account (thought to be based on the disciple Peter's recollections), what does Mark record as Jesus' final words to the man? (v. 34) When would you say you first became aware that God's desire was for a relationship with you more than you merely obeying to His rules? And that He wants us to act in love toward others?

Take it Further

Talk with God and thank Him for His love for you - then ask Him to help you grow deeper in your love for Him and the people around you.

Daily Verse Readings

Day 1: 1 John 4:7

Day 2: Deuteronomy 10:12

Day 3: 1 Peter 1:22

Day 4: Romans 12:10

Day 5: Psalm 31:23

Day 6: 1 John 4:8

Memory Verses: Matthew 22:37-40