

Discussion Guide

WEEK OF 09.8.24

Series: Gospel of Mark

Text: Mark 12:13-27

How to use this guide: This discussion guide is designed to help you facilitate a conversation around the Bible text. Begin your discussion with prayer. Then, read this week's passage. Next, work through some of the questions together. The goal is not to ask every question, but to have a good, free-flowing discussion. Do your best to ask at least one question from each section (introduction, understanding, and application), but beyond that, let the Holy Spirit guide your conversation. Also, if you heard some point from the sermon that you'd like to discuss, feel free to add that to your group's discussion.

QUESTIONS FOR INTRODUCTION

1. Of all the people with whom you have had a close relationship, who is the most consistent in living by the principles and practices they promoted? What was your opinion of them?
2. When you hear the word "hypocrisy," which of the following comes to mind first: Politicians, Parents, Professors, Doctors, Myself?

Read Mark 12:13-27. RE-READ MARK 12:13-17.

3. Two traditionally opposing groups work together to defeat someone they consider an enemy of their causes. Have you ever experienced this type of situation or watched it happen in the life of someone close to you? If so, briefly describe your reaction & actions as a believer.
4. Anytime a Christian chooses the world's way over God's way, they're living a life of hypocrisy. What are some situations where a Christ follower might be forced to choose between doing what God says over and above what another authority figure is demanding of them?
5. In the current atmosphere, what should Christians do when an expectation from an authority figure demands something of them, but that expectation is in direct contradiction of God's desires? Give specific examples.
6. What lesson(s) did Jesus teach you in the passage? Write it down.

READ MARK 12:18-27.

7. How would you describe the motives of the Sadducees? How does their question reveal their hypocrisy? How would you have felt if you'd been the Sadducees, asked the question, and Jesus pointed out your lack of Bible knowledge by saying, "Have you not read...?"
8. Do you limit yourself to reading or studying only certain parts of the Bible and ignoring or rejecting other parts of Scripture? After reading this Scripture, will you continue reading/studying Scripture with a limited view?
9. What does Jesus' reply reveal to us about the importance of studying Scripture?
10. Why do Christians often believe in the power of God but seldom pray as though they do?

QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

11. What lessons did you learn from this Scripture passage? Write them down. How do plan to use this knowledge this coming week? Remember, God's word brings about change in our lives; so, what change, with the help of the Holy Spirit, will you be making this week?
12. Sins we don't think we are committing like pride, hypocrisy, lust, envy, cruelty, etc., sneak into our lives in the most unexpected ways. Ways that we don't realize that are occurring. What commitments must each of us make if we're going to know God's Word well enough to realize when we're being hypocrites or practicing any other sin we tend not to recognize?
13. How can we as a group help one another *believe in* and *experience the power of* God? How can we as a group help one another seek the Lord daily, not as an afterthought but as a priority? What are you doing to strengthen your relationship with God and Jesus? To know their character, their spirit, their heart and be obedient to God's Word?

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COMMENTARY

Mark 12:13-27

Overview of Jewish Groups at the Time of Jesus 12:13					
Groups	View of the Law	Known for	Belief in the Afterlife	Relationship to Political Leaders	Mentioned
Herodians	Unknown	Loyalty to Herod	Unknown	Supported the Herodian Dynasty	Matthew, Mark, Josephus
Pharisees	Followed the Torah and Oral tradition	Oral traditions that formed the basis for rabbinic Judaism	Believed in the resurrection of the dead and a day of Judgment	Supported the Herodian Dynasty	The Gospels, Josephus
Sadducees	Only followed Torah	Part of the Priesthood and the ruling class, but not all priests were Sadducees	Did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, because it is not in the Torah	Supported the Herodian Dynasty	The Gospels, Josephus
Essenes	Strictly followed Torah	Dead Sea Scrolls	Believed in the resurrection of the dead	Rejected the authority of the priests in Jerusalem	Josephus, Philo

--from The Jeremiah Bible, p. 1364

12:13. From this point in the narrative, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians—who ordinarily were antagonistic toward each other—start working together against their common enemy, Jesus. Pharisees, some of whom supported older, nationalistic traditions, and Herodians, probably clients or political partisans of Herod Antipas, worked together only in exceptional circumstances—such as these. The fact that the Pharisees and the Herodians were sent indicates as an approved delegation. The same groups are united in 3:6 in the plot against Jesus in Galilee. They hoped to trap Jesus with a trick question.

12:14. They may expect the leader of Messianic movement to oppose Roman taxes, like an earlier Galilean revolutionary movement. If Jesus speaks against such taxes, they have public witnesses for arresting Him and handling Him over to Pilate on the charge of treason. The specific tax the Pharisees and Herodians had in mind was the Roman poll tax imposed when Judea became a Roman province in A.D. 6. This tax represented Jewish subjugation to Rome.

Jesus rightly labels his opponents' kind words as "hypocrisy". Since Jesus purports to be teaching the way of God, they figure that He must have an opinion on whether it is lawful to pay poll taxes.

If He answered "no", it would seem to encourage a rebellion against Caesar, the Romans would arrest Him for sedition and the Pharisees and Herodians would denounce Him as a revolutionary (Lk 20:20).

If He answered "yes" to the question, He would be seen as pro-Roman, compromising devotion to God, and the Jewish people would turn against Him.

Jesus was not fooled. He saw their hypocrisy and realized they were testing Him. A denarius was the equivalent of a day's wages (Mt 20:9-10) and it bore an image of Tiberius Caesar (reigned a.d. 14-37) with an inscription professing his divinity and his authority. By carrying the coin, Jesus' opponents show that they already participate in the Roman social order.

12:16. Since Jesus was asked about giving (vv. 14-15), He replied with a lesson about ownership. "Give back" has the nuance of obligation. The coin had Caesar's image, so it belonged to Caesar. Jesus supported the legitimacy of human government, but He raised the issue to a higher level. He did not identify the things that are God's, but since humans bear God's image (Gen 1:27), we have an obligation to give to God that which bears His image—ourselves.

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12:17. Jesus does not discuss the question of whether the current Roman Governance is just or unjust, but he does imply that it is right to pay taxes to Caesar. God's kingdom, however, transcends all of these "things."

12:18. The **Sadducees** arose in the second century b.c. during the Maccabean revolt. They were closely associated with aristocratic and priestly classes; accepted only the books of Moses (the Pentateuch) as Scripture; denied bodily resurrection, future judgment, the existence of angels, demons, and spirits; and affirmed human free will (v. 18; Ac 23:6-8; Josephus, Ant., 18.1.4). Essentially, they were religious secularists of their day.

Challenging teachers in public was common. **Pharisees**, whose views were closer to the mainstream in Judea, often defended the doctrine of the future resurrection of the righteous against the Sadducees, who denied it. Pharisees believed that the Sadducees would be excluded from the life of the world to come because of the Sadducean denial of resurrection.

12:18. The overstated and theoretical question (seven successive levirate marriages) assumes a tension between Mosaic law (Gen. 38:8; Deut. 25:5-6; Ruth 4) and belief in resurrection, which the party of the Sadducees rejects. How can one woman and seven men be married in heaven?

The Sadducees asked a hypothetical question they considered unanswerable. It was based in the ancient cultural norm that said a man could have many wives while a woman could have no more than one husband. Jesus answered that although the Sadducees might know the Bible superficially (they excluded all biblical books except Genesis through Deuteronomy), they had not begun to comprehend it nor grasp the might of the Living God.

12:19. The Sadducees approached Jesus with a situation based on the books of Moses. Specifically, the case involved the levirate (or brother-in-law) marriage law (Dt 25:5-6). This law obligated a male sibling to marry his deceased brother's widow in order to preserve the family name and inheritance. (And because widows could be left destitute, the extended families into which they married were supposed to provide for them by a brother of the deceased marrying the widow.) Based on this, the Sadducees presented a scenario designed to make the doctrine of resurrection look absurd. Their question assumed that the future life will be like the temporal life.

12:23. Sadducees were known to pose conundrums such as this to the Pharisees, seeking to illustrate what they believed were the absurd implications of belief in the resurrection. (Deut. 25:5-6)

12:24. "*you do not know the Scriptures.*" The highly educated and literate Sadducees would hear this statement as an insult. "*Power of God.*" A common Jewish prayer associated God's power with the resurrection of the righteous at the end of the age. In asking their question, (vv. 18-23), the Sadducees are wrong on two counts: they know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

12:27. Jesus declared that the afterlife will be different from life on earth. In heaven people will not marry or be given in marriage. By going to the book of Moses, specifically Ex. 3 and the passage about the burning bush, Jesus used the part of the OT that the Sadducees recognized as Scripture. The point of the OT quotation is that Abraham... Isaac, and Jacob were long dead by the time God spoke to Moses, but God declared He was their God. Since God is not God of the dead but of the living, they must still be alive in the afterlife.

12:28. The question reflects the fact that the scribes had identified 613 separate commandments, 365 of which were negative and 248 of which were positive. They divided them further into "heavy" and "light," i.e., more important and less important. An example of a similar question but a different answer is found in the reply of Hillel (a prominent Jewish rabbi) (ca. 40 b.c.–a.d. 10) to a Gentile who asked him to summarize the law while he stood on one leg: "What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof."