

“Is It Possible to Live Up to God’s Demands?”

Mark 12:28-34

(A free transcript of the sermon is available at the Information Desk in the Lobby)

THEME: The devotion God expects from us.

According to the Bible, this world is in a horrible state because the first man and woman didn’t live up to God’s demands. As a result the whole creation, including the human race, came under a curse.

The majority of Americans believe there is a God. But what is their view of God? To some extent people fashion their concept of God according to their view of what God expects of us. For example, the concept of a distant uninvolved God removes fear of divine judgment. But this view of God also removes any hope of divine help.

At some point in life most people will consider this “tough question”: Is it possible for mortal, fallen human beings in an evil world to live up to the demands of a holy God?

Let us tackle this tough question by asking and attempting to answer three **questions** that arise out of Jesus’ interaction with a questioner in Mark 12:28-34.

I. WHY DO YOU ASK? (12:28)

II. WHAT IS THE TRUTH? (12:29-31)

III. HOW WILL YOU RESPOND? (12:32-34)

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

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OPENER:

1. Have you ever been highly motivated to live up to a certain person’s expectations? Who was it, and why were you so motivated?
2. Of the four different images of God identified in Gallup’s 2006 religious survey, which one most closely fits your view of God, or the view you had before you became a Christian?

I. WHY DO YOU ASK? (12:28)

3. How was the teacher of the law who questioned Jesus in verse 28 different from the other questioners in 11:27-33, 12:13-17, and 12:18-27?
4. What are some of the reasons why people today are interested in knowing what God expects of them?
5. What do you think the outcome would be if Christians and churches took time to seriously consider the question, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

II. WHAT IS THE TRUTH? (12:29-31)

6. Jesus' answer came from the Old Testament. Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9. On what great occasion in the nation of Israel did God give these instructions to Moses? Why was this the most important commandment?
7. What does "neighbor" mean in verse 31?
8. Read 1 John 4:20-21. How does this explain why Jesus coupled the commandment from Leviticus 19:18 with the commandment from Deuteronomy 6?

III. HOW WILL YOU RESPOND? (12:32-34)

9. Read Isaiah 29:13 and Amos 5:21-23. How do these Scriptures correspond with the teacher's response to Jesus in verse 33?
10. What did Jesus mean when he said to the teacher, "You are not far from the kingdom of God"?