

INTRO

- How would you define what love is?
- What is the most loving thing someone's done for you?

READ

Mark 12:28-34

REFLECT

Jesus sums up the heart of the Law & Prophets, giving us the meaning and purpose and design for our lives by God. In summary, we are to LOVE GOD and LOVE OTHERS.

1. LOVE GOD

Jesus answers the scribe by quoting the *Shema* (pronounced *sh-ma*)—a famous prayer of devout Jews prayed twice daily even to this day.

“**Hear**, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall **love** the LORD your God with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your **might**. (Dt 6:4-5)

Qu: Sh-ma means 'hear'. how are we to hear?

Biblically, to hear is much more than just listening to something. It involves giving respect to the one speaking, and then acting on what they say.

Qu: what does it mean to love God? how are we to love God?

We are instructed to love God with all our HEART, SOUL and MIGHT. In other words, we are to love God from the innermost to outermost of us: out of everything *within us* (heart), out of everything that *is us* (soul), and out of everything that *we have* (our 'muchness', or might).

Qu: if we are made to love God why do we struggle to love him like this? In what way do you struggle to love God fully?

2. LOVE OTHERS

For Jesus, Loving God and our neighbours is inseparable. If we say we love God but hate our neighbour, we are liars (1 Jn 4:20).

Qu: who is your neighbour? what does it mean to love your neighbour as yourself?

Love for another is “*unconditional regard for them that prompts and shapes behaviours in order to help that person become what God desires*” (Scot Mcknight). If loving God is the heart of everything, loving others is the pulse. I can gauge how well I'm loving God by the way I treat others around me.

Qu: If all the laws of God are summed up in these 2, why can't we even consistently keep them? (hint: Jer 17:9)

Jesus commends the scribe not because he has kept the 2 Great Commandments, but because **he knows they are the standard by which he will be judged, and that religion cannot make up for not keeping them**. In fact, God promised that he would give us new hearts postured towards loving him and others (Ez 36:26), and Jesus is the fulfillment of that.

Qu: how is receiving God's love in and through Jesus the key to loving God and others wholeheartedly?

RESPOND

- What encouraged and challenged you the most out of today's discussion?
- How can you practically apply what you're learning to your personal life?

PRAY

- Pray for one another to grow in receiving God's love and responding accordingly by loving him back wholeheartedly.
- Pray for your neighbour.