

## Spending Time With God Matthew 22:34-40

**Directions:** These questions will help you “dig deeper” into the sermon message. You can choose to do these on your own, with a friend, or together with your group. If you are doing these on your own, you can record your responses in a journal. You could consider grabbing a friend (or two!) and go through these together. Share your responses to not only encourage each other, but also to help keep each other accountable.

When discussing these questions as a group, leaders should encourage group members to look at these questions ahead of time, so they come prepared for group discussion. Consider which questions will work best for your group. Don't feel you need to ask every question. Encourage everyone to share. Each week, encourage members to share stories of how they personally put into practice what they learned.

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### Getting Started Questions:

1. When during your day or night do you have unwanted ‘down time’? Examples could include waking up in the middle of the night, waiting to pick children up from school, sitting in traffic, etc. What do you do with this unwanted down time?
2. For many, the new year is a time for creating new goals. Do you have any goals for the new year regarding your habits or the way that you spend your time?

### Digging Deeper Questions:

3. **Read Matthew 22: 34 – 40:** *“Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ Jesus replied: ‘‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”* Why did the Pharisees ask Jesus which commandment was the greatest? How did Jesus respond? What does this say about how we are to live as believers?
4. **Read Hebrews 4: 12:** *“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”* What does it mean that the word of God is alive and active? What are the implications for believers?
5. Pastor Ted spoke of prayers that are transactional (asking for wisdom, praying for those in need) and prayers focused on relationship with God. Consider how Jesus taught us to pray from **Matthew 6: 9-14:** *“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’”*

What parts of the Lord's Prayer are transactional? What parts are relational? If you have time, think of other prayers and consider how they are transactional and / or relational.

6. Review **Esther Chapter 4** and **Jeremiah 36**. In Esther 4, the Jewish people living in exile fast and pray to prevent an edict for their annihilation; in Jeremiah 36 the Jewish people fast before hearing from God's word. Fasting is mentioned alongside prayer many times in the Bible, yet it is not spoken of often in the church today. Have you had any experiences with fasting that you can share? If you do not, is it a discipline that you would consider? Why or why not? Keep in mind that fasting does not necessarily need to be food related (think social media fasts or technology fasts).

### **Putting It Into Practice:**

7. The Pharisees often did religious actions in order to avoid God's anger (as opposed to seeking good relationship with God). Are there times in your day when you do things more out of guilt or fear from God than from simply wanting to do what's right? How can you amend this type of thinking?
8. How often do you pray? Are your prayers mostly transactional, mostly relational, or a mixture of both? What is one change you can make to grow in your prayer life in the year ahead?
9. Pastor Ted explains worship as a means for the walls we've built up between us and God getting torn down. When do you worship God in song? (in church, in the car, doing chores, etc). How does this affect your relationship with God?
10. What practical steps can you take during your day to make time to spend with God?