



Lenses: Farsighted | March 7, 2018

Discussion Guide

The Scoop

Have you ever wondered how two people can believe that they are so right about a topic, and yet their views are polar opposites?

Key Verse

Mark 12:30-31 (NIV)

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

Discussion

In our current cultural, political and digital climate, new platforms allow people to say bold things, some specific to religion and Christianity. In a way, this kind of discussion feels farsighted – opinions can feel clear and easy from "far away," but all of the sudden more complicated and blurry "up close."

1. What's the most heated discussion you've ever seen or participated in on social media? What was the topic? Who were the people engaged in conversation?
2. In your opinion, was the conversation productive or did it feel farsighted?

We all have what's called an "inherited lens," a view of the world created from the culture in which we were raised and influenced by significant people and events in our lives. Most times, this lens is one of our primary tools to decode and understand the world around us. All too often, this lens clouds our ability to accept other views or understand scripture in the way God intended.

3. What is significant about the culture (socioeconomic, racial, parents marital status, etc.) in which you were raised that has contributed to your inherited lens? Who are the people in your life who have influenced this lens?
4. How you have seen your own inherited lens influence your view of scripture? Have you ever noticed how your lens has rubbed up against someone else's lens that has resulted in conflict?

In Mark 12:30-31, Jesus' primary message to us is to love God and to love your neighbor. Instead of using the Bible to prove our point all of the time, we need to put aside our inherited lens to see the larger narrative of what God is doing in the world. In order to have healthy conversation about things like immigration, human sexuality and racial inequality, all of us need to put on a new lens that allows us to study, focus and follow Jesus' teaching instead of getting caught up in our own personal worldviews and experiences.

5. How might changing your lens allow you to think differently about something like immigration, human sexuality, racial inequality, or any other political and faith-based "hot topic"? How might it allow you to relate to others in new ways?
6. If we believe in Jesus' teaching to love God and to love our neighbor, how does that encourage us to think differently when engaging in cultural conversations? How might it influence the way we engage with people who don't look or think like us on a day to day basis?

What's Next?

We all need a new lens that allows us to see what Jesus is actually asking us to do and how to interact in the world. If we take his teaching seriously, it should change the way we approach people who are different than us, with different life experiences and cultural contexts.

The next time you enter into a cultural conversation on social media or in person, acknowledge your inherited lens and take a moment to begin asking how you might take off that lens to better understand those around you, as well as listen intently to what Jesus really has to say.