

Looking for a Group to connect and dive deeper in your relationship with God and others? Contact Community Pastor, Beth Yokley, at [byokley@myhope.church](mailto:byokley@myhope.church).



## **Discussion Questions With Emily LeVault**

Be Real: Week 4

Take time before diving into the questions to read this week's scripture in at least three different translations... I'll give you a head start with the Message version here:

### **The Message (Matthew 23:23-24):**

**"You're hopeless, you religion scholars and Pharisees! Frauds! You keep meticulous account books, tithing on every nickel and dime you get, but on the meat of God's Law, things like fairness and compassion and commitment—the absolute basics!—you carelessly take it or leave it. Careful bookkeeping is commendable, but the basics are required. Do you have any idea how silly you look, writing a life story that's wrong from start to finish, nitpicking over commas and semicolons?"**

Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for perfecting minor religious rituals while neglecting more crucial aspects of faith. Can you identify specific areas in your life where you might be focusing on easier, more manageable tasks at the expense of addressing deeper spiritual needs or challenges?

Reflect on the tendency to gravitate towards "accomplishable" actions in our spiritual lives. How can this affect our personal growth and our relationships within the church and the wider community? In what ways can we encourage one another to consciously tackle the weightier matters of our faith?

The metaphor of "straining out a gnat but swallowing a camel" highlights the absurdity of prioritizing minor details over significant issues. Have you experienced a situation in your spiritual journey where attending to smaller tasks prevented you from addressing larger, more important ones? How did you realize the need for change?

Before these next questions, take time to read through these verses:

**[Micah 6:8, Isaiah 58:3-7, 1 Samuel 15:22, Hosea 6:6, Mark 7:6-8, Amos 5:21-24]**

Why is it so tempting to focus on smaller religious practices rather than engaging with justice, mercy, and faithfulness? What steps can we take to shift focus and energy towards these bigger priorities, even if they seem more difficult to address? What "human traditions" (**Mark 7:6-8**) can we stop holding over one another to make space for God's priorities instead?

The message translation emphasizes the "meat of God's Law" as fairness, compassion, and commitment. How can we as a church recognize when we start nitpicking over small details and instead prioritize these foundational principles? What genuine practices or simplified systems would help us as a community to prioritize these essentials?