

## The Great Debaters

*And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. Luke 12:10-12 ESV*

*Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us. 1 Peter 2:12 NIV*

*Jesus said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34 RSV*

Prejudice can take many forms. People treat others unfairly because of race, age, and even disabilities.

Have you known someone who was picked on or teased? Have you ever been treated unfairly? Was it because of some form of prejudice? Why are some people filled with prejudice and hate?

When a pig ran out in front of their car and was killed, Reverend Farmer realized that it was a dangerous situation. Even though he was an educated man and willing to pay for the accident, he knew that because of his skin color that the share croppers could make life very difficult for him and his family.

Have you ever disliked someone or treated them unfairly without getting to know them?

When the debaters presented their message clearly and compellingly, their presentation was a success.

Even though people listen to the truth, and agree with what they've heard, it doesn't always mean that they will act on what they believe. It isn't enough to believe what is right. We also need to do what is right.

Have you ever defended someone who was being treated unfairly? Is there someone you need to defend?

Before the emancipation, slaves were the property of their owners. They could be beaten or abused at will. They were not taught to read or write in order to keep them under control. After the slaves were freed they were still viewed as an inferior race, even generations later. Being lynched was a very real fear for many people in the American south. Fear is a common way to control people.

Has anyone ever controlled or coerced you by making you afraid?

Professor Tolson taught his student to respect the power of words, showing them that words have great power to influence how people think and act. Words are important to all of us. The Bible tells us that when we are in difficult situations that we should not be afraid of how we can defend ourselves or what we should say because the Holy Spirit will teach us what to say.

What are some ways you use words to help others? Do you ever use words to hurt others?

"Who is the judge? The judge is God? Why is he God? Because He decides who wins or loses."

Watching the movie it is hard to know if the coach is saying that the debate judges are like gods or that the ultimate judge is God. But no matter what the writer intended, the truth is that God is the judge of all. He alone decides who wins or loses and He desires that all be saved. He wants us all to win. He invites everyone to come to Him for forgiveness and restoration. All we have to do is ask.

*Dear Lord we come to You, imperfect and undeserving of Your love and grace. Take away all that is wrong in our hearts and lives and fill us with what is good and right. Thank you for all who are brave enough to protect those who cannot defend themselves. Help us to boldly stand up for what is right. Show us when we are treating someone else unfairly, and teach us how to do what is right. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*