

Life of Christ

The Most Important Commandment

Matthew 22:34-40

Younger Verse

Love the Lord your God with all your heart. Matthew 22:37

Older Verse

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.
Matthew 22:37

Lesson Goals

Learn the two greatest commandments and why Jesus chose them
Understand that loving God and others summarizes all the other commandments
Recognize what it means to love God with all your heart, soul and mind

Welcome Time

Can you think of any of God's commands He gives us to follow? Which one do you think is most important? Jesus was asked that question. Let's find out how He answered.

Bible Story

*Please note: This portion of the lesson is given to help in teaching the lesson. Please read through the story and read it in the Bible before teaching it. Do **NOT** read from this piece of paper. Instead, make a note sheet and place it next to the story in the Bible.*

Last week, we learned that God has invited us to be a part of His family. When you are part of a family, you love each other. You help each other out. This is how God wants us to treat each other.

The religious leaders were trying to get Jesus in trouble. They thought up several questions to ask Jesus. They thought Jesus wouldn't be able to give the right answers. But Jesus always knew exactly what to say!

One of the questions they asked Him was, "Which one of God's commandments is most important of all?"

Jesus answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. The second is this: Love your neighbor as you love yourself."

These two commands come from the Bible. The first one is in Deuteronomy 6:5, and the second is Leviticus 19:18. These are books in the Old Testament.

Ask: Why do you think Jesus chose these two commands as the most important? Since Jesus is God, He knew the meaning of the commandments. He knew why God gave people rules to follow—because He loves us!

Jesus also understood the heart of the commandments—love. If you look at each commandment, it comes back to loving God and others. So if a person truly loves God with all of their heart, soul and mind, and loves others as they love themselves, they will obey all of the other commandments!

Jesus says we must love God with all of our HEART. We all have a heart that beats and pumps blood in our bodies. But the kind of heart Jesus was talking about is something different than that. A person's heart means their will—the part of you that makes decisions (choices). If we love God with our will, we will ask God to show us His

will and we will obey Him.

A person's SOUL is who they are—their likes and dislikes. So if we love God with all of our soul, we will like the things He likes and not like the things He doesn't like.

And a person's MIND means their thought life—what they think about, and how they understand things. A person who loves God will think about things that are pleasing to God. And they will seek God's wisdom and understanding.

To begin to love God with all of who we are, we must accept Him into our lives. Then He can change us into the person He wants us to be.

The second greatest commandment, to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, can be tough! We can only love others like that if we have God's help. But these two commandments go hand in hand. The more we love God, the more we will love the people He created.

Jesus went all the way to the cross to show us how much He loves us. We need to accept His love into our lives. Then we can experience this awesome love and share it with others!

Review Questions

1. What did Jesus say was the most important command of God? (Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind; Love your neighbor as yourself.)
2. What does it mean to love God with all of your heart? (Obey God's will.)
3. How can we love God with our mind? (Think about things that are pleasing to God.)

Prayer Time

Thank God for loving us. Pray that we will love Him more. Ask Him to give us a love for others.

Life Application

In John 14, Jesus said several times that if we love Him, we will obey His commandments (verses 15, 21, 23). We may say we love God. But do we show it by how we live? The best way to show God that we love Him is to give Him our life. This means that we give up our will for His will for us.

When Jesus was in the garden praying the night He was arrested, He prayed, "Not my will, but your will be done." This is a good thing to say to God. Many times, we want things our way. But the things we think we want are not always best for us. God knows this, and He wants what is REALLY best for us! We need to trust Him and pray for His will to be done.

We can also love God with our thoughts. In Philippians 4:8, it says to think about things that are true, pure, and right. Right thoughts lead to right actions that please the Lord. Let's love God with all of our heart, soul, *and* mind!

Planning for Next Lesson
The Day and Time Not Known
Matthew 24:36-46

Preschool Lesson for The Greatest Commandment

(Bring a large and small heart. Ask the kids if we should love God a little, like the little heart, or a lot, like the big heart.)

Last week, we learned that God has invited us to be a part of His family. When you are part of a family, you love each other. You help each other out. This is how God wants us to treat each other. (Ask for volunteers to shake hands or hug others.)

A man asked Jesus, “Which one of God’s commandments is most important of all?” (Hold up a paper with a question mark on it.)

Jesus answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. The second is this: Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” (Hold up the big heart.) These two commands come from the Bible. (Show kids a Bible.)

Since Jesus was God, He knew the meaning of the commandments. He knew why God gave people rules to follow—because He loves us!

To begin to love God with all of who we are, we must accept Him into our lives. Then He can change us into the person He wants us to be.

The second greatest commandment, to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, can be tough! We can only love others like that if we have God’s help. But these two commandments go hand in hand. (Put hands together.) The more we love God, the more we will love the people He created.

Jesus went all the way to the cross to show us how much He loves us. (Hold up the big heart.) We need to accept His love into our lives. Then we can experience this awesome love and share it with others!

Pray, thanking God for loving us. Pray that we will love Him more. Ask Him to give us a love for others.

Hands-on Activities for The Greatest Commandment

Make some hearts from red construction paper. Cut one of them in half. Show the children the piece of a heart. Tell them that God doesn't want a part of our hearts—He wants all of us! Discuss what that means. He wants to be in charge of all of our life—not just certain parts. Now show them a whole heart. Have older kids make their own. Have them write on the heart different parts of their life—school, home, church, friends, sports, etc. Pray that we will give God every area of our lives.

Practice finding Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18 in the Bible. You may want to have a Bible open to the Table of Contents so that they can begin to learn where the books are located. This can be lots of fun!

Do an object lesson to help the kids see how we must love God with all of ourselves. Bring an electronic device to class. Share that you will let someone use it—except you will take out the batteries (or another part of the device). Obviously the device will not work. Share how you must have the whole thing for it to work. Explain that in the same way, God wants *all* of us, not just part of us.

It's not Valentine's Day, but you can still have fun making Valentine's cards and giving them to friends. Write "Love God and others." on the cards.

There are many songs about loving God and others. Examples: "This is My Commandment, that you love one another," "Beloved, Let us Love One Another," "Amazing Love," etc. Choose one or two to sing with your class.