

Command #1: Love God and Others

Matthew 22:34-40 // Jerry Barber & Greg Singerle

³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Condensed Version

Read Matthew 22:34-40 and discuss these questions with your disciple(s):

1. Read Matthew 26:36-46 and answer these questions: "How did Jesus fulfill the command to love God comprehensively?" and "What do you admire about Jesus?"
2. Read Matthew John 4:1-42 and answer these questions: "How did Jesus fulfill the command to love his neighbor as himself?" and "What do you admire about Jesus?"
3. What are some practical, specific ways that you can love God with your whole being this week?
4. What are some practical, specific ways that you can love your neighbor as yourself this week?

Study

1. Background: read Deuteronomy 6:1-9. Jewish people at that time recited this twice each day because they viewed it as the essence of their obligation to God.
2. Context: read Matthew 22. What setting does the author of this gospel (Matthew) create in chapter 22 that leads up to this event in 22:34-40? Does that lead you to believe that this is the question of a person sincerely seeking the truth or one that is trying to trap Jesus?
3. Meditate prayerfully on Matthew 22:34-40 and make 3-5 observations of your own about the passage.

4. Study the following words/concepts:
- a. *Love*. In verse 37, Jesus answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." And in verse 39 he added, "And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" When most people think about "love," they think about an EMOTION. Biblically, love is not only an emotion but an ACTION. Perhaps the best picture of this is found in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." How did God prove that He loved humans?
 - b. *All*. Read the passage again and notice all the times "all" appears in verses 37 and 40. What is the significance of this?
 - c. *Heart, soul, mind*. While some approach this verse by thinking Jesus is distinguishing among different compartments of human existence, by putting them together in this context it is better to understand "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" to refer to "with all that you are, the totality of your being." Can you describe the comprehensive nature of this demand in your own words?
 - d. In verse 39, Jesus adds the second command, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 18:19). This is not a *command* to love yourself, but based on the assumption that most people do take care of themselves and look out for their own best interests, Jesus urges this same kind of loving action towards others. If you want to see some practical examples of what loving neighbor as oneself looked like for God's people in the Old Testament when this command was first given, read Leviticus 19:1-18 (note: this is just a guide to give us a glimpse into God's heart; believers today are no longer "under" the Mosaic Law but subject to the "law of Christ," which is found in his teaching and that of his apostles in the New Testament).
 - e. How does Jesus' statement in verse 40 reinforce the importance of these two commands ("All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments")?

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Worship

Worship God as you look at Jesus and consider how He lived out these commands so that we might imitate Him in loving God and loving our neighbors. Think about two events:

“Love God with all your heart, soul and mind”: Jesus in the Gethsemane before the betrayal and crucifixion (Matthew 26:36-46)

1. How did Jesus fulfill this command to love God?
2. Make a list of all the things you admire about Jesus from this passage.

(For example: Jesus clearly displays His human emotions, but it is His desire to do the will of God that prevails, even in the most difficult circumstance; Jesus was honest before God in His prayer for the cup to be taken away from Him. Jesus stays awake and at watch, even when we fall asleep).

Parents, this is a very simple and easy way to have an impactful Bible study that focuses completely on revealing Christ to your kids (and yourselves!) It takes little, if any, time to prepare. Just sit and read an event in the gospels and simply ask each other what you admire about Jesus. You will be blessed with what your children will notice and retain.

3. Using your answers to the questions above, how does Jesus' example help us understand what loving God with all our heart, soul and mind entails? (For example: Loving God means allowing His will to trump my will. Loving God means not letting my emotions rule me but His Spirit ruling me. Loving God means surrendering to God to do his will).

“Love your neighbor as yourself”: The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-45)

1. How did Jesus fulfill the command to love His neighbor as Himself? Pick out specific things that Jesus did that demonstrate this.
2. What do you admire about Jesus from this passage of Scripture? (Example: Jesus crossed social, racial and male/female relation barriers to love His neighbor. He tells us about the more satisfying food of doing the will of God. Jesus confronts her sin directly, honestly and firmly yet with hope and grace).
3. Using your answers to the questions above, how does Jesus' example help us understand what loving our neighbor as ourselves entails? (For example: Loving my neighbor means speaking the truth boldly and with grace. Loving my neighbor means crossing barriers to love him or her. Loving my neighbor means sharing the message of God's love for them).

Obey

1. Give an example of one time (or season) that you saw someone love God with their entire being. What did they do to demonstrate that?
2. What are some practical, specific ways that you can love God with your whole being this week? (Or at least move closer to that).
3. Give an example of one time (or season) that you saw someone love their “neighbor” unselfishly. What did they do to demonstrate that?
4. What are some practical, specific ways that you can love your neighbor as yourself this week?
5. Take a few minutes to ask God (and wait in His presence to listen well) about both of these commands: is there anything you need to confess regarding not loving God completely? Is there anyone that you need to make things right with in order to obey the second command to love neighbor as yourself? Write down any action steps that you need to take in order to obey Jesus:
6. We are often given commands by Jesus that we cannot obey in our own strength. Write out a brief prayer that expresses your dependence on Jesus for his help to love God and others:

Train

You don't have to wait until you are fully mature in order to help others. In fact, God's plan is that, as you are learning and growing, you will also be training others to obey Jesus as well. Here are three simple tips to help you as you disciple someone, whether your child, small group member, or other disciple.

1. Model it for them in the context of a real-life relationship.
2. Pray for and with them (you might want to use #5 in the section above, “Obey”).
3. Ask them to work through this worksheet and discuss with them their answers to the questions in each section (Study, Worship, Obey and Train).

Recommended reading: *The Jesus Creed: Loving God, Loving Others*, by Scot McKnight