

The Greatest Commandment

Overview

Materials You'll Need

- construction paper, various colors
- markers
- scissors
- glue



Scriptures

Mk 12:28-34

Bible Truth Objective(s)

God is pleased when we love Him and love others

Behavioral Objective(s)

To demonstrate love for God and man through concrete actions

Memory Verse

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." (Mk 12:30)



Bible Knowledge

The Jewish Sects in the New Testament

In this lesson, the passages in Mark 12 refer to several Jewish sects that came to test Jesus. The ones mentioned were the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the Sadducees.

The Pharisees were the largest and more influential of the groups. The most famous Pharisee was Saul (Phil 3:5), before he was converted. The Pharisees controlled the synagogues. There are many accounts of their opposition of Jesus. The name "Pharisee" means "the separated ones." It could mean they separated themselves from the general public because of their religion, or it could be they devoted much of their time to interpreting and studying the law. Either way, the Pharisees saw themselves as authorities in the Law of Moses. They also developed many of the oral traditions. They thought that in order to obey God, one had to obey all the laws. The Pharisees did not like Jesus because He refused to accept these traditions. In fact, the question about the greatest commandment was asked by a scribe (Mk 12:28). A

scribe was an expert in the law and was responsible for interpreting and teaching it to its followers. This scribe was probably a Pharisee.

The Herodians are not mentioned in many places (Mt 22:16; Mk 3:6; Mk 12:13). Each time they are mentioned, they opposed Jesus. In this passage, they were sent along with the Pharisees to ask Jesus about paying taxes to Caesar. Because of their name, it is assumed that they were supporters of Herod Antipas and thus sided with the Roman government.

The Sadducees were the sect of the rich and the priestly families. They were in charge of the temple and its services. They claimed to be the descendants of Zadok, the high priest during the time of Solomon. But this cannot be verified. Although they controlled the temple, they did not believe in life after death (Mk 12:18) or any punishment beyond this life. In fact, they opposed the Pharisees in that they did not believe in the oral traditions. They took only the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch) as the ultimate authority. They mostly concerned themselves with their wealth and position in society. That is why they opposed Jesus. They were afraid He would be a threat to their status.



Understanding Your Students

If we were to ask the kindergartners whether they love their parents, they would all respond with an astounding, "Yes." However, it often isn't apparent through their actions or words. It isn't because they don't really love their parents. At this young age, the children are still very self-centered. This is the same with God. They will say that they love God, but it's hard to tell when they are constantly running around in class, talking during service, or not willing to share their things. That is why it is important for us to teach them concrete ways to demonstrate love for others and for God.

Tell your students that they can show love by

treating others with kindness and concern. Although it may seem rehearsed, it is very valuable to role-play specific scenarios. For example, if a friend is hurt, what could we say or do? If an elderly person didn't have a place to sit and we had a seat, what could we say or do? How does keeping the classroom clean show God we love Him? How does sharing our things tell God we love Him? How does telling the truth relate to showing our love to Him?

Also, whenever the opportunities arise, praise the students for their loving behavior in and around the church. It could be something as simple as throwing out a piece of trash or handing a pair of scissors to a friend. It could also be staying in their spot and praying for five minutes. Over time, the students will associate these concrete actions with loving others and loving God.



Vocabulary

Commandment

the special rules and laws God gave us to follow

Preach

to tell others about God and His kingdom

Wisdom

to know right from wrong; to do things according to God's will

Clever

to be smart

Trick

to fool someone



Before You Teach

The Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, and scribes had come to Jesus with several questions (Mk 12:13-34). But their purpose was not to get any real answers. They were more interested in trying to trap Him. One of the questions was which was the most important law. Jesus answered that we are to put God first in our lives, and love Him with every faculty of our beings (Deut 6:5). That was the first commandment. The second was to love our neighbor (Lev 19:18) because this also brings love for God into tangible form.

With these two new commandments, Jesus was essentially summarizing the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament. Loving God encompasses the first four of the Ten Commandments. Loving man is the essence of the fifth to the tenth commandments. By restating the Ten Commandments, Jesus

wanted to demonstrate that loving God and loving man are more than just laws to follow. They are more important than sacrifices and burnt offerings (1 Sam 15:22; Hos 6:6). Loving God and man should be a worship in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:24). It should not be about doing anything for the sake of obeying the laws God has laid down, or because we are afraid of the consequences. This was the very reason that kept the Pharisees and scribes from truly worshiping God. They were too burdened by the regulations and rules they had formed over the years to love God from their hearts.

Today, when we observe Sabbath, are we going to church because we want to draw near to God, or are we going out of habit? Can others see that we are Christians based on the things we say and do and not because we claim to be followers of Christ? As we live our lives, let us remind ourselves to worship God in spirit and in truth. Let us encourage one another to do things out of love. Then we will have fulfilled the intent of all of God's commandments.



Bible Story

In the last few lessons, we learned about some miracles that Jesus performed. One time, He healed a blind man. Another time, Jesus brought Lazarus back to life even though he had been in the tomb for four days already. These are amazing things that only God can do. That is why they are called miracles. While Jesus was on earth, He did many wonderful miracles to show people that He was God. He also spent a lot of time teaching people about God and how to love God. In our lesson today, we are going to learn about the greatest commandment that God wants us to follow.

God's Commandments

Do you know what a commandment is? A commandment is a rule we have to follow. We follow God's commandments, or rules, because we love God and want to obey Him. In our lives, there are also other rules we need to follow. For example, we can only cross the road when the traffic light is green; when the traffic light turns red then we need to stop. Those are the rules on the road. There are rules in our home and in class. What rules do you have at home? (Allow students to share; no talking back, sharing the toys, tidying up after playing, listening to mom and dad, etc). What are the rules we have in the classroom? (Allow students to share; hands up before answering questions, be nice and kind to others, no eating or drinking in the classroom, no talking when the teacher is talking, etc). Why do we have these rules? These rules are for our good. They are to protect us, to keep us safe, and to help us be better children at home and in class. It is hard to say which rule is the most important because all of them are very important. Today we are going to learn about a rule that Jesus said is the most important of all.

Everyone Wants to Ask a Question

When Jesus was preaching, there were many people who followed Him. They followed Him because they wanted to listen to His words. Some of the people asked Jesus questions when they did not understand what He was saying because they knew Jesus always gave good answers to their questions. Jesus knew a lot of things and everyone wanted to ask Jesus questions.

But not everyone wanted to learn from Jesus. There were people who did not like Jesus. They did not like Jesus because they had done many wrong things and Jesus told them to repent and change. They didn't like that Jesus told them what to do. These people did not listen to Jesus and they became angry with Jesus. They tried many ways to get Jesus into trouble. Sometimes, they asked Jesus trick questions, hoping that Jesus would not be able to answer them. But they were surprised because Jesus always gave good answers to their trick questions.

The Greatest Commandment

One day, there was a very clever man who came to listen to Jesus. He knew a lot about God's rules for His people. He listened to Jesus answer many of the people's questions. As he listened, he wondered if Jesus could answer his question too.

He asked Jesus, "Teacher, God had given us so many commandments. Which one is the most important?"

Wow! That is a hard question, isn't it? God has given us many commandments. Do you remember the story of Moses? Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea. When they came to a mountain called Sinai, God gave His people His rules- the Ten Commandments. Each of the Ten Commandments is very important, and God wrote them on the stone tablets Himself. Do you remember any of them? (Allow students to share anything they might remember. If they don't remember them, take a moment to quickly review some of them, e.g. worshiping the one true God, keeping the Sabbath, no stealing, no lying.) God wanted His people to keep all the commandments because they are all important. How would Jesus decide which of these commandments was the most important?

Jesus knew that this clever man was trying to test Him.

So Jesus answered, "The greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart."

This means that we should love God more than anything else in this world. Nothing can compare with God, not our favorite toy, or our friends and family. Some people think having a lot of money and nice things are most important. But that is not what Jesus said.

Jesus said God is the most important and we should love Him with all our heart, and all the time. We cannot just love God a little bit, or love Him only when we remember to. Some people might ask, "We cannot see God; we cannot give Him a hug or buy Him a present and say, 'I love You,' so how do we love Him? What can we do to show our love to Him?"

The Bible tells us that the best thing we can do to show our love to God is by doing what God wants us to do. For example, God wants us to keep the Sabbath day. So when we come to church every Saturday instead of going to other places, when we concentrate in class and listen to His word, when we sing hymns and pray to Him in class, then we are doing what God wants us to do. This is showing God that we love Him. There are many more things that God wants us to do. Can you think of any examples? (Allow students to share; to pray earnestly, to be kind to others, to listen to our parents, to tell the truth, to be honest, etc.) When we are doing what God wants us to do, we are showing our love for God!

Jesus continued to say to this clever man, "The second most important commandment is this: You should love your neighbor as yourself." This means that we should love others just as much as we love ourselves.

We all want other people to like us, to be kind to us, and to help us when we are in trouble; none of us want others to yell at us or hurt us. When we

love others as we love ourselves, we would do the same for others. We would be kind and help others when they are in trouble. We would not yell at others or hurt them. Jesus said that this is almost as important as loving God. When we are having a fight with our brother or sister, or when we argue with others in school, we must remember this commandment-- we should do to others what we want others to do to us. If we want others to be nice to us, then we need to be nice to others.

No More Trick Questions

Jesus had the wisdom of God, which is why He gave good answers. He put all the rules of God into the two most important commandments: To love God with all our heart, and to love others as ourselves.

When this clever man heard Jesus' answer, he said, "That's a good answer! Now I understand that to love God and to love people are the most important of all of God's commandments."

Because Jesus answered so well, those people who did not like Jesus became afraid of Him, and they stopped asking Jesus more trick questions!

The Bible has many good teachings from God. God wants us to live a life that makes Him happy. We can make Him happy by following His commandments. We can make Him happy when we show Him how much we love Him and all the people around us.



Check For Understanding

1. **What did the clever man ask Jesus?** (Which is the most important commandment?)
2. **What did Jesus say was the most important commandment?** (To love God with all our heart.)
3. **How can we show God that we love Him?** (Do what God wants us to do. Allow students to share some concrete examples, e.g. coming to church, praying, telling the truth.)

4. **What is the second most important commandment?** (To love others as ourselves.)
5. **How do we love others as we love ourselves?** (Be kind to others, help others, not to yell at others or hurt them, share our things.)
6. **After Jesus answered this question, what happened to those who wanted to trick Jesus?** (They did not ask anymore questions.)
7. **What have we done this week to show God we love Him? What have we done to love others as ourselves?** (Allow students to share one example each.)



Life Application Story

The Big Clean Up

"Julie, Tommy, are you ready yet?" Mrs. Lewis called from the hallway. "We are leaving now!"

"Coming, Mom!" Julie answered as she skipped happily down the stairs.

"Where is Tommy?" Mrs. Lewis asked.

"I thought he came down already," Julie answered.

"Tommy! Where are you?" Mrs. Lewis called out again. A voice came from the TV room.

"I will be done in five minutes!" Tommy yelled back.

Mrs. Lewis walked across the hall and found Tommy sitting on the couch playing with his video games.

"Tommy, we have to leave now, or we will be late!"

"But it's just five minutes, then I will pass this level," Tommy said without even looking up.

"No, Tommy, we are leaving NOW!"

Tommy got up from the couch unwillingly and grumbled as he turned off the TV and followed his mother and sister to the car. He was upset because he did not get to finish his game.

As they neared the church, Julie asked, "Why are we going to church today, Mom? It's Sunday."

"Yeah, why are we going?" chimed in Tommy.

"We are going to church for a big clean up, and everyone is invited to help," Mrs. Lewis said as they drove into the church parking lot.

"Wow! There are so many people here," Tommy said, forgetting that he was still upset about not being able to finish the game. "Look! Juan, John and Susan are all here too."

It seemed that the whole church had arrived. People were carrying brooms and buckets, some were wiping windows, some were sweeping the walkway, some were cleaning the pews inside the chapel.

As soon as Mrs. Lewis had parked the car, Tommy and Julie quickly jumped out and joined the others in cleaning. Tommy and the other kindergarten students were assigned to clean up their classroom, to put all the toys away and to put crayons back into their boxes. Julie and Mrs. Lewis helped to

clean up the dining hall and kitchen.

Everyone worked very hard and everyone was having a good time. People talked and laughed as they were working together for a cleaner chapel. By the end of the day, the chapel was sparkling clean.

"That was a good day, wasn't it?" said Tommy as he got into the car.

"It was. It was so good to see so many people coming to church and working together," Mrs. Lewis said.

"I didn't know everyone was coming. I thought it would just be a few people," said Julie.

"Everyone came because we love God and we know that God loves us," Mrs. Lewis said. "We want to clean up God's church and show Him how much we care about God's things."

"Mom, I didn't really want to come this morning. I wanted to play my game instead," Tommy said quietly. "But coming to church with everyone to clean is so much more fun than staying at home."

"It's not only fun, it is also a way to show your love for God and His church," Mrs. Lewis said. "God will remember how you love Him, so much so that you gave up playing your game to come and clean His house."

"I can't wait until the next cleaning day," Tommy said excitedly. "I promise I will be early next time."

Questions to Think About:

1. **Why were Julie, Tommy and Mrs. Lewis going to church on a Sunday?** (To clean up the church.)
2. **What did Tommy want to do instead of going to church?** (He wanted to play his games.)
3. **Why did so many people come and help clean the church?** (Because they love God, and they showed their love for God by caring for His church.)
4. **How did Tommy feel after the clean up?** (He felt good; he felt coming to church to clean is much better than staying at home and playing.)
5. **What can we do in our lives to show God we love Him?** (We should listen to our parents, pick up garbage in the classroom, put the toys away after playing, etc.)



Activity 1

Who Can We Love?

Look at the people in the picture. Who can we love? Can you draw some other people in the picture whom you can love?



Activity 2

How Can We Show Love?

Look at each picture. How are the people showing love?

1. I can _____ (hug) someone.
2. I can say, "I _____ (love) you."
3. I can _____ (obey) the grown-ups.
4. I can _____ (students will draw their own picture).



Activity 3

Heart People

Materials:

1. construction paper, various colors
2. scissors
3. glue
4. markers

Directions:

1. Provide each student with a piece of red construction paper.
2. Help them draw a large heart on the paper. Have them cut it out.
3. They can draw a face on the heart. Then put the heart aside.
4. Provide the students with another piece of construction paper. Help them draw arms, and hands and legs and feet for their "heart person." (Note: The teacher can be creative and make accordion legs and arms.)
5. After they have cut out the arms, and legs, they can glue them on the heart at the appropriate places.
6. Remind the students as they work on this activity that we should love the people around us.

Activity 11:1

Who Can We Love?

Look at the people in the picture. Who can we love? Can you draw some other people in the picture whom you can love?

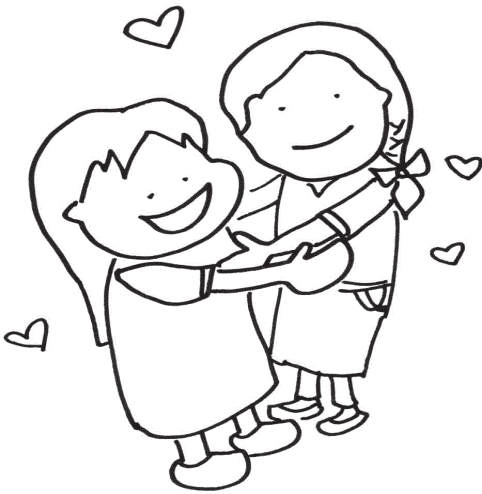


Activity 11:2

How Can We Show Love?

Look at each picture. How are the people showing love?

HUG
LOVE
OBEY



1. I can _____ someone.



2. I can say, "I _____ you."



3. I can _____ the grown-ups. 4. I can _____.

Draw something you can do to show love.

A large rectangular box with a dashed border, intended for a child to draw an illustration of how they can show love.