**THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT**

Mark 12:28-34

Key Verse 31b

“There is no commandment greater than these”.

**Introduction**



So far, the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the Sadducees came to Jesus and asked him questions. They had no pure motive in asking Jesus these questions. Jesus said to the first group, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s,” and said to the second group, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Jesus defeated the corrupt religious leaders with the absolute words of God. In today’s passage Jesus had a conversation with one of the teachers of the law. His question was not malicious. Jesus was willing to teach him. May God bless us to love God with all our hearts, all our souls, all our minds, and all our strength. May God bless us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

1. Read verse 28. Who came to Jesus and what did he ask? (28) What does his question reveal about him? What hope does this give us as Bible teachers in our times?

1-1, Read verse 28.

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

1-2, Who came to Jesus and what did he ask? (28)

***28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”***

* This teacher of the law must have been in the crowd, listening to the questions of the religious and political leaders as well as the answers Jesus had given to them.
* The teacher of the Law was amazed by Jesus’ remarkable wisdom. He realized that no question might be too difficult for Jesus to answer.
* He decided then to ask Jesus a question that has been lingering in his heart. He asked, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

1-3, What does his question reveal about him?

* His question was not to test Jesus. Rather, it was a question that had been buried deep in his heart for a long time.
* In the course of studying the Bible, this teacher of the law memorized the commandments of God. But he was not satisfied with knowing the law literally.
* He wanted to go even deeper into the core of the law of God. He wanted to know the deep meaning of the Bible.
* He wanted to understand the spirit of the law. The problem was that he himself could not find it. Nobody could answer his profound question.
* But he found hope in Jesus. He believed that Jesus could answer this question and help him understand the true spirit of the law.
* We can see a genuine and pure attitude in studying the Bible in this teacher of the law. He was a truth-seeker. He was a remnant of God.
* He must have been a great comfort to Jesus. God always preserves for himself genuine and pure people like this teacher of the law.

1-4, What hope does this give us as Bible teachers in our times?

* We must also believe that God has preserved pure and genuine people of God even in this sinful and adulterous generation. Praise the Lord!

1. Read verses 29-31. Describe Jesus’ response to the teacher’s question. (29-31) Why did He first explain who the Lord God is? (29) What then does God want us to do based on this truth? (30) How is the second commandment related to the first? (31)

2-1, Read verses 29-31.

29 “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24703e)] 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24704f)] 31 The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24705g)] There is no commandment greater than these.”

2-1, Describe Jesus’ response to the teacher’s question. (29-31)

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2-2, Why did He first explain who the Lord God is? (29)

***29 “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.[***[***e***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24703e)***]***

* The teacher of the law’s question, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” was not an easy question to answer.
* When we read the first five books of Moses, known as the Pentateuch, we find so many commandments.
* But Jesus answered to him first, “‘The most important one,’ answered Jesus, ‘is this: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”
* Jesus began his answer with God. Knowing God should be the number one priority of our lives. Knowing God is the most important subject of all subjects.
* Knowing God is the most important matter in our lives. When we are in trouble, we don’t know where to begin. We must begin with God.
* Jesus said, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” The word “one” has a profound meaning.
* When Jesus said, “the Lord our God is one,” he meant, “God is the one and only God who is worthy of our love, praise, and worship.”
* Our God is the Creator God. We must worship God alone. We must not worship idols in the form of anything.
* “The Lord our God is one,” he meant, “God is number one.” When we have God in first place in our hearts, we become godly people, and learn to trust God.
* But when we have idols sitting in the first place of our hearts, we become ungodly idol worshipers.

2-3, What then does God want us to do based on this truth? (30)

***30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’[***[***f***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24704f)***]***

* Therefore the most important commandment is “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”
* When we study the Bible, we are greatly moved by the love of God. We are greatly moved by the faithfulness of God.
* God’s love is wonderful, more wonderful than that of our parents or family members or friends.
* God’s love is unconditional. God’s love covers multitudes of our sins and mistakes. Not only does he forgive our sins but he also blessed us.
* We realize that we are what we are only by the love of God. God has loved us from when we were born until now.
* God loved us first with his perfect, all-sufficient and one-sided love. Now he wants us to love him in return. Man’s responsibility is to respond to God’s love.
* We love because he first loved us. God will discipline us until we turn our hearts to him in repentance.
* When we experience difficulties in our lives, often we doubt God’s love. Instead, we must realize that God is disciplining us for we don’t love him back fully.
* So instead of complaining, we must see the opportunity to repent of our half-hearted love for God. We must love God with all our heart.
* Then God will shower his blessings on those who love God with all their hearts, souls, minds and strength, and on their children up to a thousand generations.
* When we love God with all our hearts, we experience God’s abundant blessings. When we love God with all our hearts, God also fills our hearts with his love.
* Jesus said in John 14:21, “Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.”
* Also John 14:23, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.” The action of our love for God is to obey Jesus’ teaching.
* John 15:9-12 says,“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.
* 1 John 3:17-18 says, “If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”
* After rising from the dead the risen Jesus also said to Peter, “Do you love me?” Peter answered that he loved Jesus, Jesus commanded him, “Feed my sheep.” Feeding Jesus’ sheep and taking care of them is the action of our love for God.

2-4, How is the second commandment related to the first? (31)

***31 The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[***[***g***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24705g)***] There is no commandment greater than these.”***

* When we love God with all our hearts, we can love others as ourselves. People need love. We don’t just live on food or home. We live in love.
* But the problem is that people do not know how to love one another, for people are self-centered. So they don’t know how to love others. They only demand love.
* The answer to that question is this: God is love. God is the all - sufficient source of love. Only God’s love is perfect and truly satisfying.
* Until we are filled with God’s love, we feel lonely. Unless we know that God’s love meets all our needs for love, we become beggars of love.
* We must come to God for his love. We must love God and be filled with God’s love. As God’s people we must practice God’s love.
* Love generates love. People come to church not only to study the Bible but also to taste God’s love. Therefore, it is important for us to love one another.
* We are all different from one another. We are all unique. No one is perfect. We have our own strengths and weaknesses.
* But when we love one another and form a unity in diversity, we can achieve a mysterious harmony and perfection.
* When we love one another, we can show to the world that we are Jesus’ disciples and display a glimpse of the kingdom of God.
* God himself showed us the example. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We call God in three persons the Trinity. But God is one.
* God is in complete unity. God wants us to have complete unity among us. Christians maintain their individuality in God. Christians must be united in love.
* Christians should be in complete unity to form God’s family and God’s mighty army and God’s beautiful orchestra with God as the head of the family.
* Our love for others stems from loving God first. If we don’t love God, we can’t really love others, though you may try.
* The world is like a desert and Christian fellowship is like an oasis in the desert. When we love one another, many thirsty souls will come to us.
* 1 John 4:20-21 says, “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”
* Jesus said in John 13:34, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”
* The world is like a desert. People are looking for genuine love. Therefore, we need each other to become complete and to serve God as a team.

1. Read verses 32-34. What can we learn from the teacher’s reply? (32-33) What did Jesus mean when He said, “You are not far from the kingdom of God”? (34)

3-1, Read verses 32-34.

32 “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

3-2, What can we learn from the teacher’s reply? (32-33)

***32 “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”***

* This teacher of the law was amazed by Jesus’ answer. He showed that he understood Jesus’ words and accepted them wholeheartedly by repeating his words almost exactly and applying to himself.
* The scribe’s response to Jesus was right. It is easy to think that all burnt offerings and sacrifices are more important than love for God and his neighbor.
* A thousand empty burnt offerings do not mean more to God than a single act of love done in His name.
* The scribe was satisfied with Jesus’ teaching about which commandment is the greatest above all. He was blessed with Jesus’ word of wisdom.

3-3, What did Jesus mean when He said, “You are not far from the kingdom of God”? (34)

***34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.***

* He was a very good Bible student. Jesus blessed him saying, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”
* This implies that the next step he should take is to put it into practice and taste the kingdom of God truly.
* Let us accept Jesus’ words wholeheartedly and apply them to our lives. Let us love God with all our hearts, souls and strengths and love our neighbors as ourselves.
* Let us build beautiful Christian communities of love together among us as our expression of loving God.

**Conclusion**

Today we have thought about the greatest commandment. First and foremost, we must know God, the only true God through the precious blood of Christ. We must know his unconditional love and saving grace. We must love him with all our hearts, all our souls, all our minds, and all our strength. And we must love our neighbor as ourselves. This passage may remind us of 1John 4 which reads, “*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 17 This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”*

**One Word: The Greatest Commandment!**