

SO WHAT?

Lesson 2: The Great Commandment

This includes:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW

The Great Commandment is at the heart of the gospel. Following Jesus is all about his great love for us, and this commandment boils down what it most important to Jesus: loving God, loving ourselves, and loving our neighbor. This lesson will help your students see how the greatest command in all of Scripture is about love. They also will take a look at how Jesus defined our neighbor, which is different from what we might expect.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. WHAT: God calls us to love him with everything we have, and he also calls us to love other people just as we love ourselves.
2. WHY: When we build our lives around love for God and love for others, everything else falls into place, and our priorities reflect the things that matter most to God.
3. HOW: Students will discuss what it means to love God and to love our neighbor, and they'll talk about ways to grow in both kinds of love.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 22:34-40

SECONDARY SCRIPTURE

Mark 12:28-34 and Luke 10:30-37

TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you'll definitely want to refer to it as you lead.

Read Matthew 22:34-40.

This is another familiar passage of Scripture, one that is easy to read in autopilot and miss the significance of what Jesus was saying.



LEADER
TIP



When Jesus gave the Great Commandment, he was speaking to the religious leaders of the day. They were leaders who knew the Law and knew the “right” answers, but they were missing the point altogether.

In our day, our neighbor is someone with a nearby address or perhaps someone we come into contact with on an average day. But who does Jesus identify as our neighbor, according to Luke 10? Our neighbor is anyone in need—even if that’s someone who is not like us, or even someone we don’t like. This is the kind of love Jesus commanded us to express, and it is possible when we love God with all our heart, soul, and mind.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

Text Message Questions

We’ve provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- Who’s the most important person to love? Be ready to share with the group.
- Why are some people easy to love and other people, well, not so much? Let’s talk about real love when the group meets!

Parent Email

We’ve provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

We’ve finished the second lesson in our “So What?” series exploring some core passages in the New Testament. In this series we are simplifying discipleship by exploring the teachings of Jesus in the Great Commission, Great Commandment, and his promise to return again.



In this second lesson we focused on the Great Commandment in Matthew 22 to love God with our heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. We challenged our students to love God, not just at church but in every area of life. And we discussed what Jesus really meant by loving our neighbor as ourselves.

As you go throughout the week, continue the conversation with your teenager with these kinds of questions:

- What does it look like to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind?
- How does the idea of the Good Samaritan carry over into our own culture? How do we sometimes create distance from people who are different from us—and why might God not be pleased with that?
- Think of someone not like you that Jesus is calling you to love—how can you demonstrate true love for that person this week?

I'm praying for you this week as you love God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and as you love your child through thick and thin.



SO WHAT?

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2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then lead students in this activity:

As an icebreaker, play a game where you go around the circle quoting movie titles, movie lines, song titles, or song lyrics that have the word love in them. Go as quickly as possible until you run out of titles or lines to quote.

ASK:

- *What are some of the themes from the lines and titles we quoted?*
- *How does our culture view and define love?*
- *What are some of the lies about love that our culture promotes?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *We use the word love a lot in our culture. I love pizza. I love my phone. I love your outfit. I love football. I love my new car. It isn't necessarily bad to be fond of those things, but it can dilute the true meaning of love. Today we are going to take a look at what Jesus defined as being the greatest commandment, and it's all about love.*

TEACHING POINTS

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen are (1) Love God with everything you are and have, (2) Love your neighbor, but use Jesus' definition, (3) You can only love your neighbor to the extent you love yourself, and (4) Being religious gets in the way of loving like Jesus commanded.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.



LEADER
TIP



LEADER
TIP



Read Matthew 22:34-30 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so everyone has a chance to read.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let's spend a few minutes in this Scripture so we can get a clearer idea of what Jesus is saying.*

1. Love God with everything you are and have

ASK:

- *Give me some examples of the way you use the word love in a typical day—and for each example, tell me a different word that you could use for love, such as like, admire, or value.*
- *If you truly love someone, how will it be obvious to everyone around you?*
- *What does it look like to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind?*
- *How is this commandment different from just loving Jesus during church or religious activities?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Jesus isn't messing around with this first command. He says we must love God with everything we are. It's not because God is selfish, but because he knows that when we love him fully, everything else will fall into place in our lives. As our Creator, he knows we were created to love him.*

2. Love your neighbor, but use Jesus' definition

ASK:

- *What people would you consider to be your neighbors?*
- *What are some specific ways you and your family love your neighbors?*
- *Read Luke 10:30-37. In this passage, how does Jesus' definition of a neighbor differ from how most of us use that word?*
- *How does the idea of the Good Samaritan carry over into our own culture? How do we sometimes create distance from people who are different from us—and why might God not be pleased with that?*
- *What sacrifices might you have to make to truly love a neighbor—but a neighbor according to Jesus' definition?*



SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *The parable of the Good Samaritan would've been shocking to the religious leaders who heard Jesus speak. The Samaritan would've been the last person in the world to help a beat-up Jewish man. There never would've been any reason for these two men to interact, much less for that kind of love to be shown. But this is what Jesus meant when he said to love our neighbor. Loving our neighbor costs us something.*

3. You can only love your neighbor to the extent you love yourself

ASK:

- *Why does Jesus say it's important to love yourself? What does that even mean?*
- *Can you love someone else more than you love yourself? Why or why not?*
- *How does your ability to love yourself impact your capacity to love someone else?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Because God made us, he knows how important it is that we love ourselves for who he created us to be. As we love and accept ourselves, it becomes possible to love another person—even a person who's not like us. Once we've loved and accepted our own flaws, failures, and shortcomings, we are able to extend that God-given grace to another person.*

4. Being religious gets in the way of loving like Jesus commanded

ASK:

- *Read Mark 12:28-34—a parallel passage to the Scripture we read in Matthew 22. What are some key differences between the two passages?*
- *Look at the end of verse 33—why is love more important than religious duties and rituals?*
- *Some people say Christianity has everything to do with a relationship with Jesus and nothing to do with religion—do you agree? Why or why not?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *The religious leaders had the most difficult time understanding Jesus' commandments. He broke their misconceptions about what being religious meant. But as one of the religious leaders was listening to this debate, he understood! He understood that it wasn't about the laws but about love, about relationship with God and others, and about our whole lives.*



ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three for these questions.

ASK:

- *Is anything difficult for you to accept about loving God, yourself, or your neighbor? If so, why is it difficult?*
- *How has your definition of a neighbor changed because of today's conversation?*
- *How is being a religious person the enemy to being the kind of person who loves like Jesus loves?*



PAIR SHARE

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

APPLICATION

ASK:

- *Is God asking you to love him more with your heart, your soul, or your mind? What are some specific ways you can do that this week?*
- *If you have a tough time loving other people because you don't love yourself—maybe because of mistakes you've made, or because you feel unlovable—how would you want Jesus' help in loving yourself more? And is there anything we as a group can do to help you with this struggle?*
- *Think of someone not like you that Jesus is calling you to love—how can you demonstrate true love for that person this week?*



SUMMARY



End your lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]



Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

“Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” Jesus replied, “ ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:36-40).

