

A 6-WEEK, NO-HOMEWORK BIBLE STUDY

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Loving God and Others: The Heart of True Faith



Kay Arthur, David & BJ Lawson

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BIBLE STUDIES

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PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



WATERBROOK
P R E S S

LOVING GOD AND OTHERS: THE HEART OF TRUE FAITH

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LOVING GOD AND OTHERS: THE HEART OF TRUE FAITH

Have you ever asked yourself, *What does God really want from me?*

Those who truly want to please God can easily get confused. One Bible teacher details a long list of all of the commands you should be keeping. The next teacher says you are not under law at all; all that matters is grace. Does that mean you don't have to keep any commands? Who is right?

What does it take to live a God-pleasing life?

Centuries ago, the experts in Jewish law took the Ten Commandments and multiplied them into 613 laws. Talk about confusing. Jesus, however, took the

Ten Commandments and divided them into two: love God and love people.

In the next six lessons we'll look at these two great commands that define the very heart of Christian faith—and learn how following them can transform not only your life but the lives of those around you.

WEEK ONE

When an expert in the law asked which was the greatest commandment, Jesus answered by referring to the Shema, a basic confession of faith in Judaism that calls the people to love God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength. This answer is what the lawyer expected; however, what Jesus said next surprised His listeners and changed the course of history. Not only were God's people to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, but they also were to love others as themselves.

OBSERVE

The religious leaders of the day had one goal: to get rid of Jesus. To that end, they had been challenging Jesus' authority. The scene we're about to look at opens just after the Sadducees tried unsuccessfully to trap Him into saying something that would get Him in trouble with the people and the Roman rulers. Now the Pharisees were trying to do the same. They sent a lawyer to Jesus with a question hotly debated among the religious leaders of the time.

Leader: *Read Matthew 22:34–40 aloud. Have the group say aloud and...*

MATTHEW 22:34–40

34 But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together.

35 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him,

36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

37 And He said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’


38 “This is the great and foremost commandment.

39 “The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

40 “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

- *mark every reference to **Jesus**, including synonyms and pronouns, with a cross:*



- *draw a heart over each occurrence of the word **love**:* 

As you read the text, it's helpful to have the group say the key words aloud as they mark them. This way everyone will be sure they are marking every occurrence of the word, including any synonymous words or phrases. Do this throughout the study.

DISCUSS

- What did the Pharisee ask Jesus?
- What was Jesus' response?
- What did Jesus identify as the second most important commandment?

- What do we learn about these two commandments in verse 40?

INSIGHT

The phrase *the Law and the Prophets* was the standard way of referring to the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament). When Jesus said, “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets,” He meant that all other commands are summed up or contained in these two.

OBSERVE

In boiling the Law down to two commands, was Jesus doing away with the rest of the Law and the Prophets?

Leader: *Read Matthew 5:17–20 out loud. Have the group say and...*

MATTHEW 5:17–20

¹⁷ Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

18 For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

19 Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

- *mark each occurrence of the pronoun **I**, which refers to **Jesus**, with a cross.*
- *draw a box around every reference to **the Law**, including pronouns and synonyms such as **commandments**:*

DISCUSS

- What did you learn from marking the references to Jesus?
- What did you learn from marking the references to the Law?
- To be sure you don't miss it, what was Jesus' intent with regard to the Law?

OBSERVE

Paul, writing later, commented on what the law meant for a Christian.

Leader: *Read Romans 13:8–10 aloud. Have the group...*

- *draw a heart over each occurrence of the word **love**.*
- *underline each **commandment**.*

DISCUSS

- Look where you marked *love* and discuss what you learned.

- What do you know about the one who loves his neighbor? How does verse 10 relate to verse 9? Explain your answer.

ROMANS 13:8–10

8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

9 For this, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

WRAP IT UP

This week we looked at Jesus' answer to a question that's just as hotly debated today as it was in the time of the Pharisees: what is God's most important requirement of His people? Jesus clearly said that loving God is our first obligation. But He also identified a second commandment as being foundational: Leviticus 19:18. These two commandments are the greatest of all, and the rest flow out of them.

Love is the glue that holds together not only the Law and the Prophets, but the Gospel as well. Without love, Christianity would be like every other religion with a set of rules and regulations leading to legalism and bondage rather than freedom and grace. That is what Jesus meant when He said "unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). The Pharisees saw the Law as a checklist to prove their righteousness. Jesus, however, identified the Law's purpose as a guide to remind us to love God and to love people. He was apparently the first to fuse these two commandments together and use them to summarize the law.

A deep sense of gratitude for what God has done for us should motivate us to love Him and others. Did you notice the word *and*? You don't get to choose your preference; both loving God and loving people are at the heart of our faith. The result of loving God is that you will love people. And loving people is the way to show the world that you love God. We must be careful not to emphasize either our devotion to God or our social concerns at the expense of the other.

In the weeks to come we will learn how to live out both of these

commandments so that we can make an impact on our families, churches, communities, and ultimately our culture. Meanwhile, take a look at your life this week and ask God to show you how well you are living out of love. If He shows you changes that need to be made, write them down and begin to work on them.



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No-Homework Bible Studies

That Help You Discover Truth For Yourself

