

# LEADER'S GUIDE

## Discussion Questions: The Greatest Commandment Bible Study

The greatest commandment described in two of the Synoptic Gospels: Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-34 cover the "Greatest Commandment" Jesus teaches the disciples. Luke, however, uses some of the verses in the Greatest commandment to explain the parable of "The Good Samaritan."

**Read:** Mark 12:28-34. Most studies use either Matthew or Mark's version, but seldom are they referred to together. This is probably because they are very similar.

1. **The Sadducees are silenced.** (Read the verse outlined in purple: Matthew 22:34-35, and Mark 12:28a) **Mark identifies the man as a scribe, Matthew identifies the man as a lawyer. Is there any difference between the two? If so, what?** A scribe may have been more focused on copying and interpreting texts, while a lawyer may have been more involved in legal disputes and decision-making.
2. **"Which is the greatest commandment?"** (Read the verse outlined in red: Matthew 22:36, and Mark 12:28b). **In what book(s) are the 613 commandments in the Bible?** Jewish tradition holds that the Torah, which is the sacred text of Judaism, contains precisely 613 commandments. These commandments, also known as mitzvot. The Torah itself consists of five books of Moses - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
3. **What are the Ten Commandments?** (Read Exodus 20:1-17) The Ten Commandments, also known as the Decalogue, are a set of ethical and religious principles that are the foundation of both Jewish and Christian law. The Ten Commandments are grouped together. Commandments 1-4 demonstrate the love of God. Commandments 5-10 demonstrate the love for your fellow man.
  1. You shall have no other gods before Me. (Exodus 20:3)
  2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; <sup>5</sup>you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, <sup>6</sup>but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Exodus 20:4-6)
  3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. (Exodus 20:7)
  4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup>For in six days the Lord made the

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heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:8-11)

5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. (Exodus 20:12)
  6. You shall not murder. (Exodus 20:13)
  7. You shall not commit adultery. (Exodus 20:14)
  8. You shall not steal. (Exodus 20:15)
  9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (Exodus 20:16)
  10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's. (Exodus 20:17)
4. **What is significant about the first commandment?** The first commandment given to the Israelites was against polytheism. Israel had just come out of 430 years of bondage under Egypt, where the Egyptians and several other neighboring nations worshiped many different gods.
  5. **The second commandment has three elements, one in each of the three verses. What are they?**
    1. God does not have any physical form, and any attempt to create an image of Him would be a sinful misrepresentation of His true nature.
    2. It prohibits the worship of any other gods, idols, or images. It emphasizes that God is the only true God and that he should be the only one worshiped and served. This commandment carries the implication that the sins of the fathers are passed down to their children and the next two generations.
    3. those who abide by His laws will be rewarded with God's mercy for a thousand generations.
  6. **The third commandment. What does it mean to take the Lord your God in vain? We are not expecting to you state it, but you may be "descriptive."** By disrespectfully or irreverently using His name, such as in cursing or swearing, or using it to express negative emotions. Another is when swearing an oath in court, a person takes an oath, they pledge to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.
  7. **The fourth commandment. How are we supposed to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy? And when is it?** The Jewish faith and Roman Catholics recognize Saturday as the Sabbath day. In the time before Jesus' arrival, keeping the Sabbath day holy meant that people had to abstain from all kinds of labor or work. Today, people still observe the Sabbath day, but the understanding of what it means to keep the Sabbath day holy has evolved. The Sabbath is a day of

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- rest for God, and He wants us to rest and worship Him. It is a day to reflect on our faith, spend time with family, and engage in activities that bring us closer to God.
8. **The fifth commandment. How do we honor our father and mother?** Honoring someone can take many forms, including showing gratitude, offering praise, and expressing admiration. It can also involve taking care of them, supporting them, and honoring their wishes or commands when appropriate.
  9. **The sixth commandment. What is the difference between “kill” and “murder?”** Murder refers to the act of unlawfully killing someone or intentionally committing murder. Kill has a broader meaning and can refer to killing someone either intentionally or accidentally, lawfully or unlawfully. In order to determine whether the killing was accidental or premeditated and deliberate, it is important to analyze the context in which the word is used.
  10. **The seventh commandment. How is Jesus’s interpretation of adultery differ from God’s?** Old testament Leviticus 20:10, it is stated that if a man commits adultery with another man's wife, both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death. New Testament, Matthew 5:27-30, Jesus details the commandment that adultery is not merely in regards to the external act but the secrets of the heart and the intention of seeing lust with one’s eyes.
  11. **The eighth commandment. Other than taking of someone’s possessions, what are other forms for stealing?** The act of theft can take many forms, such as, robbing them of their innocence, or forcefully depriving them of their freedom, Stealing of a person or human trafficking or kidnapping. Theft of a person's thoughts or ideas is a grave infringement of their intellectual property rights.
  12. **The ninth commandment. What damage is there of bearing false witness against your neighbor?** It can severely damage a person's reputation and deprive them of their rights. The importance of witnesses in the Old and New Testament cannot be overstated. In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15 established strict conditions for evidence provided by witnesses. To establish an accusation, a minimum of two witnesses was required. Similarly, in the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 13:1 and 1 Timothy 5:19 emphasized the importance of multiple witnesses. At least two witnesses were required to establish any charge.
  13. **The tenth commandment. Why is this commandment different than all others?** Coveting is the first commandment that deals with controlling one's thoughts, as opposed to one's actions, which are the basis of the previous commandments. The word "covet" means to desire or wish for something eagerly.
  14. **Jesus states the Greatest Commandment:** (Read the verse outlined in blue: Matthew 22:37-38 and Mark 12:29-30) **What are the four key elements in loving**

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**the Lord your God?** Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

15. **Which element was omitted by Matthew?** Strength.
16. **Where is this found in the Old Testament?** Read: Deuteronomy 6:5-6.
17. **The Jewish prayer.** Found in Deuteronomy 6:5-6, Matthew 22:37-39 and Mark 12:29-31. **What did the Jewish people call Deuteronomy 6:5-6?** The Shema.
18. **Why would the Jewish people pray this prayer?** The Shema prayer was of immense importance to the Israelites, as it represented their unwavering devotion to the LORD and their gratitude for being rescued from the shackles of slavery in Egypt. Each time they repeated or prayed the Shema, it served as a poignant reminder of their faith and the extraordinary events that had led them to freedom.
19. **What does it mean to love the Lord your God with all your heart?** The origin of the English word "cardiologist" can be traced back to the Greek word "kardiá" which means heart. This word is mentioned over 800 times in the New Testament and primarily refers to the spiritual heart rather than the physical one. The spiritual heart encompasses a wide range of aspects that include an individual's moral compass, the ability to differentiate between right and wrong, feelings of affection, fondness, and love, as well as warmth and closeness towards someone. It is also the driving force behind devotion, loyalty, faithfulness, and commitment to loving God. Simply put, obeying and adhering to God's laws and teachings is a commitment to love Him.
20. **What does it mean to love the Lord your God with all your soul?** The Greek language holds within it a beautiful word, "ψυχή" or "psychi" in pronunciation, that captures the essence of our being. This term has paved the way for the field of Psychology to emerge, allowing us to delve deeper into the workings of our soul. Our soul is the very abode of our emotions and will, the core of our being. It demands that we surrender our current way of living and wholly pledge ourselves to serving and fulfilling God's intentions. This means being willing to make sacrifices, even laying down our lives, should He command it.
21. **What does it mean to love the Lord your God with all your mind?** The Old Testament book of Deuteronomy 6:5 teaches us to submit to God with our entire intellect. Loving God is not a mere utterance of words, but an act of putting His laws and teachings above all else. It is an act of prioritizing our relationship with God over all other choices and decisions in life. To truly love God, we must make a conscious effort to know Him. And there's no better way to know Him than by reading and studying His Word. Understanding God's teachings is crucial to loving and appreciating Him. For we cannot love or appreciate someone we do not know.

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22. **What does it mean to love the Lord your God with all your strength?** The word "strength" is an abstract noun that denotes a sense of force, power, or ability. The term is derived from the Greek word "ischyos," which refers to the physical and mental robustness required to accomplish a task or overcome an obstacle. In Hebrew, "strength" is derived from the root word "me'ode," which connotes a quality that is considerable, diligent, or exceedingly genuine. It refers to the inner fortitude, perseverance, and resilience that are necessary to succeed in life. In English, "strength" can also be translated as "might." However, this doesn't necessarily imply the use of brute force. Instead, it signifies the effort and passion we put into loving and serving God. It can be seen as an extension of our faith, as we draw on our spiritual resources to face the challenges of life.
23. **How do we demonstrate this love to God (Man's love for God)?** By obeying commandments 1-4.
24. **Love your neighbor as yourself.** (Read the verse outlined in green: Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31a). **How do we demonstrate our love for our neighbor (Man's love for each other)?** By obeying commandments 5-10.
25. **These two commandments are the greatest commandments** (Read the verse outlined in black: Matthew 22:40, and Mark 12:31b). What are the two greatest commandments? love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, which means loving God with every fiber of your being. And the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as you love yourself.
26. **The Lawyer's response.** (Read the verse outlined in orange: Mark 12:32-34) **Why did Jesus say to the scribe, "You are not far from the kingdom of God?"** This event highlights the significance of having a proper understanding of the Old Testament, its laws, and requirements, which can prepare the mind to accept Christianity when presented. It emphasizes the importance of comprehending the teachings of the Old Testament and how it can lead to a deeper understanding of Christianity.
27. **Prior to the Good Samaritan Parable** (Read the verse outlined in grey: Luke 10:25-28). Prior to the Good Samaritan Parable, **what teaching was Jesus trying to convey to the lawyer?** It's essential to note that Jesus did not tell the lawyer that he would inherit eternal life by following these commandments. Salvation has always been through grace by faith, and Jesus' message was meant to emphasize the importance of living a life of love and compassion towards others. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself," do this and you will live.