



Growth Group Questions
March 23, 2025
“Focus on These Two Things”

CONTEXT

A teacher of the law approaches Jesus with a question. His approach is not adversarial which is rare for an interaction between Jesus and religious rulers. This scribe/teacher of the law recognizes something in Jesus that others had not. Nicodemus did the same kind of thing, but Nicodemus went in the cover of the night, whereas this teacher asks in a public place – the Temple.

Jesus’ answer, though rooted in the law, is actually rooted in love. The first part of his response is: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” He points all those listening Godward, as he draws from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. He is not reinventing the law, but rather piecing it together in a way that simplifies it.

The second part of his response is to “love your neighbor as yourself” which comes from Leviticus 19:18b. He does not rank these two commandments in order of importance. Rather, he says we must hold both simultaneously. The phrase “as yourself” calls us to love others with all that we are. To see each person as someone for whom Jesus Christ died and rose again.

In holding both love of God and love of neighbor equal, Jesus presents a tension that is common throughout scripture. To have one without the other is a far too narrow view of the Christian life. By not answering singularly Jesus demonstrates that two truths can exist without devaluing each other.

The teacher of the law is beginning to understand what Jesus is saying because he articulates that obedience is better than sacrifice. See 1 Samuel 15:22. The teacher is coming to an understanding that all his sacrifices will never right his relationship with God. That is likely why Jesus says to him that he is not far from the kingdom of God. Jesus moves the conversation from the law to the kingdom of God. Jesus is encouraging the teacher of the law to continue to realize that the kingdom of God will be found in Jesus and not in the words of the law.

SCRIPTURE

Mark 12:28-34

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?”
²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’^[a] 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.’^[b] ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^[c] There is no commandment greater than these.”

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.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.^[a] ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

2 Kings 23:25

²⁵ Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.

Leviticus 19:18

¹⁸ “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

Leviticus 19:33-34

³³ “When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. ³⁴ The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

1 John 4:19-21

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.

Matthew 22:40

⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to love God “with all your heart and all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength?
2. In Mark 12:31, Jesus says we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. This causes two questions to arise:
 - a. Who is our neighbor?
 - b. What does it look like to love your neighbor as yourself?
3. What obstacles seem to get in the way of our loving our neighbors and how can we overcome these obstacles?
4. When he was speaking about loving our neighbors, Pastor Paul shared the story of the Good Samaritan found in Luke 10:29-37. As you think about this story, what thoughts come to your mind about what it means to love your neighbor?
5. What other Bible verses help you to understand what Jesus meant when He said we are to love our neighbors as ourselves?
6. How does striving to love God with everything you have help you to love your neighbor as yourself?
7. As you think about the interaction between the teacher of the law and Jesus found in Mark 12:28-34, what strikes you most about the interaction?
8. This week’s sermon focused on Mark 12:28-34. As you read through the entire chapter during the week, was there anything else in Chapter 12 that particularly spoke to you?

SERMON QUESTIONS

1. What can you do this week to focus on loving God?
2. What can you do this week to cherish your neighbor?