The Ministry of Jesus According to Mark

Lesson 8: The Greatest Commandment

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LESSON OBJECTIVES

Goals

1. To continue to give students an overview of the Gospel of Mark  
2. To encourage students to consider the greatest commands of the Scripture  
3. To challenge students to love those who are difficult for them to love

Topics

Burdens, Commandments, Love, Pleasing God, Relationships

Scripture Memorization

Mark 12:30

OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

GROUP BUILDING (15 minutes)

Separate the students into six groups. Each team is given one of the Ten Commandments (idols, father and mother, murder, adultery, false testimony, covet). The idea is for their group to argue why their commandment is the greatest of the Ten Commandments. Each group is given five minutes to prepare, and each team gets a chance to argue why theirs is the best.

GETTING STARTED (5 minutes)

Many of you are probably familiar with the Ten Commandments and what they mean. What you may not have known was that the Law actually spelled out 613 different laws: 365 negative, 248 positive.

I want you to guess whether or not the following laws are really in the Old Testament scriptures.  
  
• If anyone curses their mom or dad, they must die. *(True…Leviticus 20:9)*• Don’t plant multiple crops in the same field. *(True…Leviticus 19:19)*• You are allowed to eat a locust. *(True…Leviticus 11:22)*• Your clothing cannot be made of more than one kind of fiber. *(True…Leviticus 19:19)*

(Go ahead, check kid's shirts. Everyone with a cotton/poly blend is breaking the Old Testament law)

DIGGING IN (25 minutes)

These laws were also divided further into “heavy” and “light” commandments. The Jews knew that to keep the law they had to study and meditate on each of these laws, trying to keep them to the best of their ability.

Jesus was approached during His ministry and asked about which of the commandments was the greatest.

(Select four readers and have them read each of the following passages:)   
  
**Read Mark 12:28, 19-31, 32-33, and 34  
  
Discussion Questions:**  
1. What makes one commandment greater than another commandment?   
2. What does Jesus say is the most important command? *(To love God and love others)*The man who asked the question was probably sincere in his desire to know what the greatest commandment was. He probably was looking to keep the law to the best of his ability. There was only one problem: Jesus does not want people to follow a set of rules and regulations. He wants them to live in a relationship. Jesus answers the question, but probably not as the man had expected.

To try to live a life under a set of guidelines is extremely hard. Actually, it is impossible. The Israelites had to have animal sacrifices to take care of their sins because even though they had the law spelled out for them, they could not keep it.   
   
Jesus came, as He said Himself, to “fulfill” the law and the prophets. It is almost as if He came and said, “Ok, yes, if you live by this law you will make it. Unfortunately, you have and will not. So, I am here to give you another way. Just fall in love with God, and I will pay your price."

MAKING IT REAL (15 minutes)

**Read Mark 12:30  
  
Discussion Questions:**1. What is love?  
2. With that in mind, what does it mean to love God?  
3. How do you love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength?

Sometimes that kind of love takes us to places we’re uncomfortable with. If we are loving out of obligation to the law, we might be inclined to give up. But if it is a relationship that binds us to that kind of love, we’ll push through because we don’t want to lose that relationship.  
 **General Discussion:**  
1. Have you ever had a situation where you knew you did what was right even though the consequences may have been bad or it was hard yet you felt good about it?  
2. Why do you think loving others is “like” loving God?  
3. What does it mean to love others?

Now the typical Jew probably thought of this passage from Leviticus 19:18 in terms of their surroundings. To them, this passage meant that they had to love other Jews. Although that might be difficult sometimes, usually our struggles are NOT with the people who are the most like us and believe the way we believe.

Jesus’ ministry went outside of the confines of the Jewish people. He came to be a Savior to the world. He says in Luke 6:32 that it is of no credit to love those who love you. Even sinners do that. Christ's followers are called to something greater--loving the seemingly unlovable.  
  
**General Discussion (Continued):**4. What are some ways in which we can love the people around us starting tomorrow? *(If students have a hard time answering, have them look up Ephesians 4:2, Galatians 5:13, John 14:15, and 1 Timothy 4:12.)*Who is one person you have a hard time loving? Picture his or her face in your mind right now. Keep picturing that  person's face while I read this passage from 1 John to you.

**Read 1 John 3:11-20, as well as chapter 4**

As Christians, we often forget that Jesus loves those people who do not love us. He promised us that our road would be a difficult one.

There is so much to learn and understand about being a Christian. But you know what the great news is? It is all summed up in this short passage. Do you want to be a strong Christian? Love God and put others before yourself. Do you want this youth group to grow? Love God and put others first. Do you want our church to grow? Love God and put others first. Do you want to make a difference at your school? Love God and put others first. Do you want your friends to know Christ? Etc.

We can start today by setting an example of love in our families and with our friends. Jesus came to earth as an example of love. If we want to show the world what Christian love is truly about, we should apply this passage to each of our lives and live a life of love.

I Peter 1:22 says to “love one another deeply, from the heart.” I want you to think of a way that before this time tomorrow you can show someone a loving action that is from the heart. You may feel stupid doing it, but it is a good start in learning how to live a life of love.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)