

Loving God and Our Neighbors

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[0 : 00] We'll be starting in verse 28 and reading through 34. Mark chapter 12, verse 28.

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he had answered them well, asked him, Which commandment is the most important of all?

Jesus answered, The most important is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. And the scribes said to him, You are right, teacher. You have truly said that he is one and there is no other besides him.

And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

[1 : 08] And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, You are not far from the kingdom of God. And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions. The word of the Lord.

Thank you to God. So we finished our first sermon series with 1 Peter last week.

And we're going to be starting just a two-week brief series on our mission statement, which is to love God, love one another, and share the love of Christ with others. And after that, we'll launch into our public portion of our life as a church and go through the Gospel of John.

So this passage from Mark 12, 28 to 34 is about the greatest commandment, which many of us are familiar with. And if you have gone through school, you know the importance of summarizing and being able to tell someone this is what this book is all about.

So maybe some of you guys use spark notes as you are studying or you know how to get to the crux of the matter. That's when you are able to summarize something. So in the same way, the scribes and the Pharisees and the legal scholars of the Bible back in Jesus' day often ask this question.

[2 : 27] So what is Judaism all about? What is the Bible all about? And Jesus' answer here gives us what Christianity is all about.

So what is Christian ethics all about? What does it mean to be a Christian? And what is the greatest commandment in all of the Bible? And Jesus answers that question for us.

And for it to be the greatest commandment doesn't just mean that it's the first among all the commandments, that it's the most important one out of all the commandments. Rather, it means even more that it's the most important, meaning it summarizes, it encapsulates all of the law.

So you see this in Matthew 22, 40, where Jesus says, All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments. So all of the law and the prophets, that's shorthand for all of Scripture.

All of Scripture hang on these two commandments. A pair of commandments united into one. And that's this passage right here. So the main idea of this passage is that the love of Christ enables our love for God and neighbor.

[3 : 31] That's what I'm going to talk to you about this morning. And I'll unpack them in three points. And the first is going to be the love for God. And the second will be the love for our neighbors. And the last, it will be the love of Christ.

What does it mean to love God? What does it mean to love our neighbors? And what is the love of Christ that God has shown us? So if you look first with me to verses 29 to 30, you can follow along.

It says, Hear, O Israel. Jesus answered the most important is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Now, that's a little bit odd because a scribe just asked Jesus, What is the greatest commandment?

But Jesus doesn't give a commandment right off the bat. Instead, he gives a great doctrine. Right? He says, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Right? He starts with that.

And he's taking that passage from Deuteronomy 6, 5 to 6, which is really the most important prayer that the Jews pray twice a day in their lives. And the reason why he gives this preface to the commandment is that the oneness of God, the fact that there's only one God, undergirds the command that he's about to give.

[4 : 42] Because he's saying, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. That's not a commandment. That's the most important doctrine. But without that doctrine, that this commandment to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, understanding and strength wouldn't make sense.

Right? Because the admission of many gods, if there were many gods in the world, then you would have to have divided allegiances. You would have to have divided loyalties. You'd have to serve this God one day and another God in the evening.

You can't have a singular devotion. But because there's only one God, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. We have to, we are demanded of us. It's exclusive allegiance, exclusive loyalty to God.

He alone is God. That's what he's, that's why Jesus gives that doctrine first, before he gives the commandment. So, if you keep following along, this is not just that this Lord is one, that this Lord is God and that there's only one God.

It's, it also says that this Lord is our God. Right? It says, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God. Right? And the Lord, the word comes from the Hebrew proper name for God.

[5 : 48] Right? So it's actually kind of the name of God. It's not just saying that he is our Lord, as in kind of a master. But it's referring to the proper name, the revelation of God's name to Moses and Israel in the Old Testament, in Exodus.

So here, what, what this passage is telling us is very special, because it's saying that this God, the one God that rules over the universe, is not just a God, a distant God, but he is our God.

He is the God that revealed himself in our history. He is the God that redeemed us from slavery. He is the God that saves us not from sin. This God, one God, is our God.

And then he gives a command. If you look with me at verse 30. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Right? This is the greatest commandment. And the greatest commandment is really a summary of the first five commandments, first five of the great, the ten commandments. And you see this throughout the book of Deuteronomy.

[6 : 55] Deuteronomy, the book where this command originally came from, that Jesus is quoting from, over and over again it teaches us, especially the first two commandments, not to have, not to have any idols, not to worship anything other than God himself, and not to make an image of anything other than, other than God.

Not to make an image of anything really, just to worship God. And the first five commandments really all have to, in some way, to do with this exclusive allegiance to God. Because the first commandment, right, is you shall have no other gods before me.

Right? Second commandment, you shall have no idols. Right? And the third commandment, right, it tells us, not just to, not make anything in the image of him, but also not to take anything in vain, his name in vain.

Right? And the fourth commandment says, tells us to respect the Sabbath of God, and the fifth commandment tells us to respect our parents, who are representatives of God. Right? So, in all, in all, all of those five commandments, connect to this great commandment, to love the Lord our God, with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Because they are all in ways, that we're supposed to honor God. Right? So, if that's what we're, what's commanded of us, that's what the greatest commandment is, then what, what would it look like for us to transgress the greatest commandment?

[8 : 08] What would it look like for us to be idolatrous? Right? And the Bible teaches us about idolatry in Colossians chapter 3, 5. It says, put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Right? That's a pretty broad, uh, uh, painting of, of idolatry. Because if covetousness is idolatry, then anything we covet, anything we want inordinately, anything we want more than we should, anything in our lives that competes with our affection for God, for our creator, is, in effect, an idol.

Anything, any creative thing that competes with our affection for the creator, is an idol. And what are the idols in our lives? And, and, and I, I can go through a whole litany of, of things, but, most frequently, the greatest idol in our lives is ourselves.

It's that, we lash out in anger when our, when our prideful sense of entitlement is violated by other people. Right? We, uh, indulge in illicit and or harmful pleasures in our lives, and live idly because we wrongly believe that our lives and our bodies are ours to do whatever we want with.

Right? When really, they belong to our creator, our God. We covet other people's clothes, cars, houses, and lovers because we doubt God's sovereign goodness in our lives.

[9 : 34] And we think that what that person has is better for us, that we know better than God does. These are all, at the root of all of these, is an idolatry of the self, where we place ourselves in the place where God only should be.

But the Lord, our God, the Lord is one. And we are not that God. Right? And so what does it look like then? So if that's not, that's what it looks like to transgress the greatest commandment, what does it look like to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength?

And verse tells, 30 tells us, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. And we know what it means to love our family, and love our, you know, friends, and things like that.

But what does it mean to love God? Right? Because He's our superior. He's our creator. He's the ruler of the universe. What does it look like? 1 John chapter 5, 2 to 3 tells us.

He says, it says, by this we know that we love the children of God. We love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

[10 : 42] What does it mean to love God? We keep His commandments. And that's why I've heard so many people tell me that they love God, and yet they're living a life that is diametrically opposed to what it means to obey God.

Right? And so if people claim to love God, yet they, so if you think about this, let's say there's a married man, and he claims to love his wife, but yet he spends most of his life with his mistress.

No one would believe him if he came and told you, like, oh, I love my wife. Right? I mean, his actions betray the truth. Right? That he does not love his wife. In the same way, if we spend our lives living for ourselves, if we spend our lives living for the idols in the world, then how can we rightly say that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength?

God will not be fooled. He says we cannot love God without obeying Him. Loving God involves, it entails obeying God. Now, it would be a mistake at this point to say that loving God only means obeying God.

Right? Because if that's the case, he would have simply told us the greatest commandment is to obey God. He doesn't, but the greatest commandment is not to just obey God. It's to love God. Right? There's this obedience aspect, but there's also this affective, affection aspect of the greatest commandment.

[12 : 04] And love includes both concrete action, concrete action, and affectionate feeling. He demands not only our compliance to His laws, but He also demands to be loved by us.

And the love to God is the greatest commandment, because God is love, as it tells us in 1 John 4, 8. And man is created in God's image. So when we love God, when we love one another, we're most like our creator.

We're truest to the way we're supposed to live, because that's how God designed us. We're created in His image, and God is love. Right? Right? A Christian, I guess, a theologian, Augustine, from our early church father, wrote this in his confessions.

He wrote that all things in the world move to their proper station by their weight. He calls it weight. So he talks about how fire or smoke, it follows its weight upward, because its weight is light, and a stone follows its weight downward.

I mean, he obviously hadn't discovered, you know, density, or like what makes things sink, or what makes things, you know, float. But he's describing a phenomenon in nature, and he says that they all follow their weight.

[13 : 13] And he says this about humans. What is our weight? He says, things which are not in their intended position are restless. Once they are in their ordered position, they are at rest.

My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. And the more I reflect on this truth, and the more I live and examine my own life, I learn that this is true.

I never do what I don't want to do. I do the things that I love. If I sin, it's because I love that sin. If I love, if I care for somebody well, it's because I love that person. We do the things that we love to do, right?

And so Augustine tells us, it's what we love that will carry us. And in order for our lives to be rightly ordered, our love, our weight has to be God, right? He understood that the love for God is going to, is what's going to facilitate our obedience.

You can't have obedience apart from our love for him. So the implications of this are staggering because one might conform to certain biblical standards outwardly, right?

[14 : 23] We might obey God outwardly. And some of us may even have a natural temperament that's more amenable to the biblical commands. Maybe some of us are just naturally kind.

We, we hate offending people. So we're just naturally nice to people, right? So, so we, and externally, we might be able to obey. And some of us maybe are just fearful. We're, we're fearful of that, what that God would punish us if we sin and did something wrong.

So we, we try to obey him and to earn God's favor or to his, to get in a good place with him. But if this passage is true, and if the greatest commandment is true, any of, all of those things are inadequate because God is the primary motivation, motivation for our obedience has to be love and gratitude for what God has already done for us.

Love, only the conduct that arises from our love for God is a conduct that is worthy of the name obedience, right? Because he cares, not just that we obey, but he wants us to love him, to follow him.

And only the people who love God actually will obey God. So what does that mean? Like a more, you know, often when we think of our lives and, and I need to become a better Christian, we might say, you know, I need to, you know, be more disciplined about my devotions.

[15 : 39] You know, I have to read the Bible more. I need to pray more. I need to think about all of these things. And all of those things are good things and necessary things, but they are not the ultimate things. The reason why those things are important is because they all help to stoke our love for God.

It's because they all remind us of what God's love, what, how God has loved us. And in doing so, stir our love for God. That's why those things work. Not because it's some kind of, you know, incantation or magic.

You just, if you just read, flip through the pages, you'll become a more holy person. That's not what happens. What happens is that when you read God's word, you see his love for you, and you are stirred in your love for him.

And that's what motivates us to obey. And that's what makes us holy people. So if we are living a disobedient life, you are living an undisciplined life. The heart of the matter is not just more effort, more determination, more willpower.

The heart of the matter is a lack of love for God. We must love him more. Of course, this doesn't mean that we shouldn't do anything that we don't want to do.

[16 : 42] Like, so some people will say, well, if that's the case, you know, I don't feel like going to church right now. I don't love God that well. So there's no point in going, you know, I'm only going to do the things that I actually want to do and that I love to do.

You know, of course, that's not true either because there is duty. There is responsibility, but duty and responsibility cannot replace, cannot supplant our love for God.

And C.S. Lewis puts this in a really helpful way. He says, a perfect man would never act from the sense of duty. He'd always want the right thing more than the wrong one.

Duty is only a substitute for love of God and of other people, like a crutch, which is a substitute for a leg. Most of us need the crutch at times, but of course, it is idiotic to use the crutch when our own legs, our own loves, tastes, habits can do the journey on their own.

Right? Yes, we do have duty. Yes, we do have responsibility, but those are crutches that we use when we don't have the legs that are functioning properly. When our loves are not ordered properly, when our emphasis and our desires of our hearts are not ordered properly.

[17 : 50] Yes, we use the crutch of duty and responsibility, but ultimately, we must start a love for him, because that's what's going to help us become obedient believers, Christians. So, if that's the case, loving God involves both obedience and affection.

Now, what does it mean when he spells out that we ought to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? Now, these might seem self-evident, but the way that the Jews use these words were a little different, so the way the Bible is written is a little bit different.

So, when we think of heart, we usually think of, you know, our emotions, our feelings, but actually, in Bible times, they refer to the intestines as the source of emotions.

So, if that's what he was referring to, he would say, you know, out of love God with all of your intestines, right? But that's not what he says. He says, love God with all of your heart. Heart, rather, is where our moral intention lies, according to biblical worldview.

So, that refers to our will, our desire, what we want to do ethically and living. It does call for certain emotions and affections, like Deuteronomy 28, 47.

[19 : 00] It says, with, worship God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, right? So, we could have gladness and joyfulness in the heart. So, it refers to those things as well. The soul here is, is not just referring to kind of this disembodied part of, of our lives, like a soul, but it refers also very practically, pragmatically to physical life.

The literal translation of that is neck, throat, basically where our life resides, right? So, it's, that's, what that means then is love God with all of your life, right?

Be willing even to give up your very life for Christ, right? To follow God and to obey him. That's, that's, that's what he's referring to. Um, and then, uh, finally, well, there's two more.

There's the strength. What does it mean to love God with all our strength? So, heart and soul, when you say in the Bible, you often see this expression, love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. Uh, this king followed God with all his heart and soul.

So, that means really everything. Uh, it's, it's, they, they're usually paired together. But in addition to that, even though heart and soul is plenty to communicate to us, we have to love God with everything that we have. He adds this, these two categories, for, for good measure.

[20 : 15] With strength refers, it's literally a muchness, exceedingly strength, not half-heartedly, not, you know, dispassionately, no, but exceedingly with muchness, with strength, we ought to love God.

And then finally, mind, right? God cares not just about what we do, right? He cares about how we think. What are you thinking about? Like, how do you, is your thinking honoring God?

How do you think about God and other people? Is that consistent with God tells about us? But if you, so these are what the heart, soul, mind, and strength mean. But if you have a hard time remembering all of these things, that's okay.

Because what you need to remember is heart, soul, mind, and strength, what God's communicating to us through this word is with everything, right? So if you have a question, okay, should I love God with this thing or not?

The answer is yes. The answer is always yes. Whatever you do, what you're doing, what you're thinking, what you're feeling, how you're living in the morning when no one's around, or in the evening, when you're working at a job, everything is supposed to be for God.

[21 : 17] The totality of the human faculty. That's why it says repeatedly with all your heart, right? With all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength.

Repeatedly. The sum of all of those things, all of our lives is to be lived in obedience to the greatest commandment, to love God. And that's challenging, isn't it?

If you think about it, but that's what it means to be a Christian, right? It's not something that we can compartmentalize, say, well, I'll be a Christian on Sunday morning. So when I go to church, I'll be Christian when I go to this, this small group meeting that I have.

No, everything it's comprehensive and it's tempting as, as, as Christians, if you're a believer to, to measure our success, our level of obedience against other people, you know, cause you're with a group of believers.

So, so if you're reading the Bible more than someone else, or if you're, you know, if you have, uh, you, you speak more kindly than someone else. You don't gossip like this person, or you don't use profanities like, this person, you know, you don't use these vices.

[22 : 22] You don't have these vices in your lives like, like this person. You know, we think that those things are sufficient to, to, to reassure us that, okay, I'm doing pretty good before God. But if this commandment is true, and it is, this greatest commandment tells us that's not the measure of our success.

We don't measure by how we're doing with relation to other people, because the command is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Meaning, if anything, any part of our lives is not properly ordered, and, and, and channeled to loving God and serving Him, then those things must change.

Those things are not adequate. All of our life, He demands. Not, just part of it. So that's, the greatest commandment.

And, but He continues, He goes on. Instead of giving one command, He gives two, and the second commandment is in verse 31. It says, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Right? Now, just like the first great commandment was the summary of the first half of the Ten Commandments, this is actually a summary of the second half of the Ten Commandments.

[23 : 29] It's from Deuteronomy, Leviticus 19, 18, where it says, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony against your neighbor, do not cover your neighbor's house, wife, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

And this is why several biblical writers say that this commandment summarizes biblical ethics. In Romans 13, 8 to 10, Paul says that this commandment to love your neighbor as yourself sums up all the commandments.

And same way, in James chapter 2, 8 to 11, he writes that this is the royal law, love of neighbor is the royal law that fulfills the commandments of the Decalogue. Now, but who is our neighbor?

Right? And Jesus answers this question in Luke chapter 10, 25 to 37. He tells the parable of the good Samaritan, which many of you are familiar with, where there's a man who had been robbed and injured.

He was mugged basically on the road. And no one helps him except for none of his fellow people, none of his fellow Jews help him. But this Samaritan whom the Jews despised, because they were a mixed breed, half Jewish and half non-Jews, Gentiles, and they despised one another.

[24 : 37] Yet, this Samaritan comes to help this person that's injured. And after telling that story, Jesus says, then who was a neighbor to this person? And the answer, of course, is the Samaritan.

And what Jesus is telling us then is that your neighbor is not someone that looks like you. Right? Your neighbor is not someone of the same race or ethnic background. Your neighbor is not someone who has the same academic pedigree as you.

Your neighbor is not someone who listens to the same kind of music or is the same kind of food, or someone who was born in the same decade as you. The neighbor is anyone that you rub shoulders with.

It really is your neighbor. People that you live with. People that you see at work. People that you walk alongside. And Jesus says, all of these people, love them as you love yourself.

And it's key that Jesus gives these two commandments together. Because there are people who claim to love God and engage in this kind of mysticism that is detached from the world.

[25 : 43] They try to love God apart from loving people. And the greatest commandments doesn't allow, they do not allow for that. In the same way, there's a lot of people who are very generous toward humanitarian causes.

They try to feed people who are hungry. They try to go to foreign countries where they're suffering after earthquakes to volunteer. They do all of these things yet without any reference to God.

And if God's our creator, and He is, and He's the one that, and we're created in His image, He alone knows the blueprint for humanity.

He alone knows how we ought to live, the purpose of our lives. And if we don't give these people that are living without purpose, living without their true orientation toward their creator, the thing that they need most, which is spiritual renewal and revival, that we're not loving them properly.

You can't have one without the other. That, too, is an inadequate love. We must love both God and our neighbor. So then there are two rightful objects of love.

[26 : 50] That's God and man. God and people. You can have a passion for hobbies. You can love football. You can love your country. You can love certain kinds of food or drink.

You can love your pet. But none of those things, you can't love any of those things in the same way you love God in the way you love people. There's two proper objects of this love that God commands.

It's God and people. Do the weight and distribution of our time and money reflect the priority of loving God and people? Or if someone were to look at our lives, look at our calendars, look at our budgets, will they say that we love other things more?

So we have to love our neighbor, and that includes all of our neighbors. Then what does it mean to love our neighbor as ourselves? In verse 31, it says to love them as ourselves.

And we can get rid of a lot of misconceptions simply by asking that question. How do we actually love ourselves? As I mentioned before, some people think that this means maybe we need to esteem people.

[28 : 09] We need to respect them and think highly of them because that's what they say. And a lot of Christian psychologists will actually say it is because they recognize that self-esteem is an important principle of psychological treatment.

So they say it's self-esteem. But I don't think that's what the passage is getting at because if you're honest with yourself, there's times when you don't esteem yourself very highly. I mean, this happens to me very frequently.

I look at someone or look at something, and I'm like, oh, wow, I'm really bad at this. Or like, oh, wow, I've really messed up there. Oh, wow, I really don't deserve these things that I have.

When I'm very clear-minded, when I'm actually probably most sober-minded, I actually don't have very high esteem for myself. Yet that doesn't mean I have stopped loving myself.

In fact, I love myself very much. The fact that I am so bothered by these deficiencies in my life is even, in fact, a sign that I love myself that much more. Right?

[29 : 13] And I'm always looking to provide for myself. I'm looking to care for myself. I'm looking to improve myself. That's all evidence of my great love for self.

And that's exactly what God's getting at, what this Jesus is getting at in this passage. You know what? He takes for granted the fact that we all love ourselves. We do. We love ourselves. We fend for ourselves.

We prioritize our lives before others. And God's saying, love your neighbors in that same way. And prioritize their interests, their needs, instead of putting yourself first, as people want to do.

That's why the background of this is the Leviticus passage I mentioned. It gives you a whole list of things that you're not to do to your neighbor. For example, don't steal. Don't deal falsely with him. Don't oppress your neighbor or rob him.

Don't do any injustice in court against your neighbor. Don't be partial. Don't slander your neighbor. It gives you all of those things, and it summarizes at the end of it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

[30 : 10] So what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves is really the counterpart to all those negative commandments. It's to treat them as we would, you know, treat them as we would like to be treated. It's to be selfless and sacrificial in our love.

And now, this is all good, right? And it makes sense to us and we understand it.

But there's something very disturbing about this passage. Because if you take a step back and look at the whole passage in view, you see in the context of the flow of the narrative in Mark that scribes had repeatedly come up to Jesus to question him, to challenge him, to make him look bad.

And Jesus answers them well each time. But this one is a little different. This scribe comes by himself. He doesn't come in a mob like the other scribes that just preceded him.

And it says that he came, he heard them disputing, and he saw, he's seeing that Jesus answered them well. He came to ask this question. That's again different because in Mark 8, Jesus said that these Jewish leaders have eyes but failed to see and ears but failed to hear.

[31 : 26] In contrast, this scribe is hearing and he's seeing, right? So Mark includes that intentionally to show us that this scribe is not coming here to test Jesus in the same way these other scribes have come.

This scribe comes alone, not in a mob. This scribe comes sincerely, which is why Jesus says that in verse 34, he tells the scribe, you answered wisely. So if that's the case and he's seeking God sincerely and all of these things are going well and he seems to summarize the greatest commandments well in response, why does Jesus still say you are not far from the kingdom of God?

Well, that's an understatement. So I mean, he's saying that he's close, right? So it's just like when we say some things, oh, that's not bad at all. We're saying that, well, it was good, right? In the same way, when Jesus says you're not far from the kingdom of God, he means you're close.

But that's still very disturbing because he's close. He's not there. Why is he not there? He knows this is what Christianity is all about, loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

And why is he not there? He understands it, right? The answer to this lies in the whole structure of the passage, right? Because what we know from reading the Old Testament and up to this point and from our own lives, we know that we cannot fulfill the greatest commandment, right?

[32 : 50] We fail to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We fail to love our neighbor as ourselves every single day, right? And Israel, God's people from the Old Testament, they also failed.

They failed every time God gave them a chance. And Moses knew that would happen when he was writing Deuteronomy. But he says this in Deuteronomy 36, that there will come a day when God himself will circumcise their heart and the heart of their offspring, so that they will love God with all their heart and with all their soul.

Moses knew that everyone would fail. They would not be able to keep the greatest commandment. But he promised there is coming a time when you will have, God will circumcise your heart so that you can actually love God.

And the time that he was referring to and the time that the prophets have been referring to is the time of Jesus Christ. He came to pay for the sins that we could not atone for.

He came to obey perfectly in a manner that none of us could. And that's what this passage is referring to because if you look at the very structure of this, if you look from verses 28 to 34, depending on how it is written in your context, you might not be able to find it.

[34 : 14] But it begins with the scribe hearing and Jesus and the Sadducees debating, right? That's the first point. But if you look at the end, it says that there's no more debating, right?

So those are parallel items. Begins with debating. At the end, there's no more debating. And then before that, in the middle, there's also parallel items. First, scribe sees that Jesus answered well and then asks about the greatest commandment.

And then the counterpart to that is that Jesus sees that the scribe answered well and then he pronounced that he's not far from the kingdom of God. So those are parallel elements again. And then in the middle also is Jesus gives the greatest commandment and then the scribe summarizes the greatest commandment.

So it's structured in a way that highlights kind of this dialectic, this dialogue between Jesus and the scribe. And the whole point of this is this, is that there's debating in the beginning.

With Jesus' answer, he quells all debates. There's no more debating. And the scribe asks about the greatest commandment and Jesus not only gives him the greatest commandment, but authoritatively pronounces that the scribe is not far from the kingdom of God.

[35 : 24] No scribe dared to do that. No Pharisee dared to do that during this time because who knows except God himself whether this person is close to the kingdom of God or not. And Jesus claims that authority.

In fact, the passage that immediately follows this will say that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the son of David, that is to come to redeem the world. So the point of this passage, the point of this passage obviously was the greatest commandment, but the main point of the narrative that Mark's getting at is not the greatest commandment.

We have known that since the Old Testament. It's written exactly that same way in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. His point rather is that Jesus is the solution. He's the one that ends all debate.

He's the one that's able to get you into the kingdom of God. He's the one. The scribe is not there. He's close, but he's not there because what he needs to do is forsake all things and start following that Jesus Christ.

That's what is missing. That's what is lacking. And that's what it means to be ultimately a Christian. Right? Because Jesus came to live the perfect life that we couldn't live.

[36 : 28] And he paid for the sins that we couldn't pay for. So when we repent of our sins and believe in him as our savior, we are cleansed from our sin. And Jesus sees us as he sees his perfect son.

And that's the love of Christ. We talked about the love, loving God, loving our neighbor as ourselves. And what's going to help us, what's going to enable us to love God is this love of Christ.

And that's what it means to become a Christian. What is Christianity all about? It's about Jesus Christ. It's about the person and work of Jesus Christ and what he accomplished for us.

If you have your Bible, just turn briefly with me to Luke. Luke chapter 7.

Luke chapter 7. Starting in verse 36.

[37 : 39] It says, One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, this Jesus. And he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. And behold, a woman of the city who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment.

And standing behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.

Now, when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.

And Jesus answering said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And he answered, Say it, teacher. A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed 500 denarii and the other 50.

When they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Now, which of them will love him more? Simon answered, The one, I suppose, for whom he canceled the larger debt.

[38 : 47] And he said to him, You have judged rightly. Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, Do you see this woman? I entered your house. You gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.

But he who is forgiven little, loves little. And he said to her, Your sins are forgiven. And those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, Who is this who even forgives sins?

And he said to the woman, Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. He who is forgiven little, loves little. And in the same way, he was forgiven much, loves much.

So how can we love God? All of us, every single person sitting here has been forgiven very much. We're all sinners who rebelled against an eternal holy God, and God has forgiven us of that through Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection on the cross.

[40 : 11] How do we love God? How do we love our neighbor? Remember how Christ loved you. Remember how much you have been forgiven. Because then you will love much.

Then we will obey the greatest commandment. Just take a moment now. If you would close your eyes, just reflect on this love of Christ.

And what God's saying to you now. Areas that God may be highlighting for you now in your life.

Where he wants you to love him more with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. God's doing it. Let's pray. Sort of like this guy may be OK, I can Google this episode when you just listen to him.

Work at Istvahag. Let's pray, fillis for the food. Nothing is fun. If I put that time, listen, come to the food. I should know. Let's pray.

[41 : 21] The best thing to help.