

The Greatest Commandment

Grades
1-2

LOVE

MATTHEW 22:34-40

What's happening in this story?

First, it should be noted that the Pharisees in this passage were not asking innocent questions. They were hoping to trap Jesus. Second, if you ask Christians, "How many commandments are there?" most will answer, "10." But first-century Jewish people would have answered, "There are 613." With so many commandments to keep track of, there was always a desire to organize and prioritize them, so the Pharisees' question was not new. But Jesus gave a profound response. Jesus pointed out that all 613 commandments came from one source: Loving God with all your heart and soul and mind.

What does this story mean for kids?

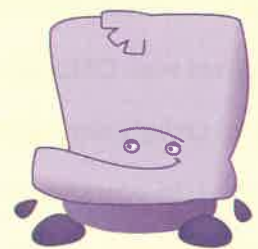
Kids who have been part of a faith community have likely started to learn about the Ten Commandments. Hopefully, they are learning that the commandments are not just a list of dos and don'ts. Rather, they are guides to living a meaningful and full life—another way in which God provides for and blesses us.

Why this theme?

Love for God and neighbor is the focus and purpose of all the commandments. Kids may struggle to memorize the ten most famous commandments (imagine trying to remember all 613!), and words like *adultery* and *covet* are well beyond them at this age. How fortunate that when we know "Love God; love others," we know all we need to know!

AGE LEVEL TIP

Fairness is important to kids, and some young children have trouble dealing with situations that seem unfair. Remind worried kids that love sometimes gets buried under other emotions.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Markers
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Pencils

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Construction paper (red)
- Poster board
- Images of people, printed or from magazines
- Yarn (red; wound in a ball)

WHIRL SUPPLIES • WHIRL KIDS STORY BIBLES • DVD • WALL CHART & STICKER • LEAFLETS

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Invite kids to cut out a red construction paper heart, write their name on it, and glue it to the poster board. **What does love look like to you?** Write some of the kids' words and ideas around the hearts. **Jesus taught people a lot about love.**

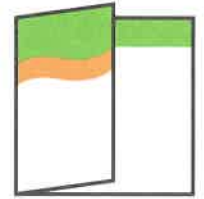
Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

Invite kids to sit in a circle on the floor. Give one kid the ball of yarn. Ask them to describe one way they show love. Have that kid hold the end of the yarn and toss the ball to another kid. Kids keep catching, describing, and tossing. After each kid has had a turn, grab the spot where all the yarn crosses and lift the yarn up to make a tent. **Our Bible story today is about Jesus answering questions about rules. I wonder how all the questions can be connected into one rule, like all our answers connect to make one yarn tent.**

Pray together: **We love you, God. Help us learn to show love to other people, as we show our love to you. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets and pencils.

Today we focus on how love is number one. Point to the bottom of the leaflet panel. **See these hearts? Fill them up with names of people you love.** Collect their leaflets until Respond.



Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

You'll be hearing a familiar word a lot today. Maybe you already said the word to someone this morning! It's... *love!* Today, let's look for times when our video friends are being loving or *think* they are being loving.

View Episode 5, "The Ultimate BFF," on the Year Gold Spring PreK-Grade 2 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video.

- **What was Otto trying to do? Was he successful?**
- **Did Otto's way work? Why or why not?**
- **How do you love God? How do you love other people?**
- **What's it like to try to love people all the time?**
- **What makes it easy to love? What makes it hard?**



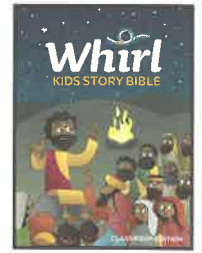
Open your Whirl Kids Story Bibles.

Let's find our story today! Help kids find "The Greatest Commandment" on page 218. Before you read, invite them to look for the hand holding up one finger.

Read the story and Ada and Otto's questions and comments on each page.

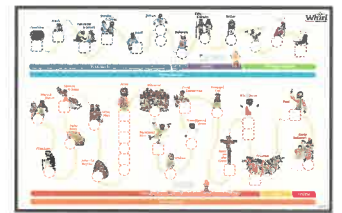
Ask these questions after you read the story:

- **How many answers does Jesus give the Sadducees? Talk about these answers.**
- **The story says we love God with three parts of ourselves. What are the three parts?**
- **What is our soul? Where is it?**
- **What might happen if we forget to love God and to love others?**
- **What other questions have only one answer?**



Gather near the Wall Chart to place today's sticker.

Point out the Testament (New), Bible section (Gospels), and character image (Jesus). **People asked Jesus a lot of questions. Let's add a sticker to remind us of what Jesus said about love** (Jesus' hand showing one finger). Point to the corresponding image of Jesus' hand on page 218 in the Whirl Kids Story Bible.



Play together!

Play together with this call and response. Kids echo words and motions after each line.

Jesus said (clap, clap)

Love God (hand on heart)

Heart (hands on heart)

Soul (hands open wide)

Mind (hands on head)

Love your neighbors (clap, clap)

All of 'em. (sweep arms to point at everyone)

Invite kids to create new motions for each line. Repeat with new leaders.

BIBLE BIT

For early believers, the commandments proved that God cared about right and wrong. This set God apart from pagan deities who often seemed to act on whim instead of justice.

WATCH IT AGAIN

Work together to figure out how the kids in the video show their love to Otto.

OUR CHURCH

As a group, think about how many ways your church family shows love to other people.

RESPOND 10

Pass out leaflets, pencils, and red and green markers.

Unfold and tear off leaflet square.

1. Explain today's mapping project. **Today we are exploring our church so that we can make a map of what it looks like inside.** Point to the square. **We'll use graph paper to make our maps, just like architects and interior designers use!**
2. Draw a sample map of your learning space on poster board to help kids get started. **Try to include every space we might explore today on your map, even if it's just a hallway.**
3. Explain what "Love Alerts" are. **On our maps, mark the places where you find people showing love to God and to others. Red hearts are for people showing love to God. Green hearts are for people showing love to others. If you think people are showing love to God AND other people at the same time, make a double heart of green and red to mark that place in our church. Let's get started!**
4. Ask kids to line up, use quiet voices, and begin exploring your building. Stop frequently to add hearts to maps.
5. Lead kids back to your space. Ask kids to share their maps. Point out where loving God and loving others overlap. **Our church is part of God's family. In God's family, we love God and love others.**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Tell me about today's story. Pause. **Jesus says that loving others is our "rule number one." Love isn't just a rule—it is something we do. We love God and love other people with our actions.** Allow kids to share their thoughts.

Pass out leaflet panels, pictures of people, markers, scissors, and glue sticks.

Invite kids to create a collage of God's diverse, loving family by gluing pictures over the map space. **We can love God and we can love others all over the world. That is God's greatest commandment.**

Send kids out with a blessing.

Circle up with kids. **God blesses all of us. And that means me** (place a hand on your chest). **And that means you** (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you). Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, **Go and bless the world.**

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.