

The Greatest Commandment

Grades
5-6

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

In today's discussion, it may become clear that kids face a wide range of household rules and expectations. Kids sense that homes with overly rigid rules—and those completely lacking in them—are tough places to grow up. Deal gently with their realities.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Markers
- Pens

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Index cards
- Smartphone or tablet

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

As kids arrive, hand out index cards on which you've written outlandish rules for kids to follow. (Examples: You can only stand on one leg. You can't use the letter s when you talk. You have to wink continuously.) Be sure to retract all rules before you begin the lesson!

Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

Why do rules exist? Give kids time to begin to think about the rules in their lives and why they follow them. **Rules exist for lots of different reasons. They keep us safe. They help us get along. They guide our decisions. Can you summarize all of your school rules in one sentence?** Give kids time to share. **How about rules at home? In today's story, a lawyer asks Jesus a question about God's commandments, and Jesus responds by wrapping all the commandments into one big idea: love.**

Pray together: **Loving God, thank you for rules that help us get along. Help us to treat everyone according to your number one rule: love. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets and pens.

When you think about neighbors, who comes to mind? How is someone who lives in another country and speaks a different language your neighbor? Invite kids to match each word for *love* inside the heart with the correct language outside the heart. Ask kids which languages their ancestors used and if they know how to pronounce any of the words on the leaflet. If you have a smartphone or tablet available, search the internet for a pronunciation guide.

Spanish = amor

Arabic = محبة

German = liebe

Norwegian = elsker

Irish = is breá

Hebrew = אהבה

Greek = αγάπη

French = charité

Latin = caritas

Japanese = 恋

Maltese = imħabba

Swahili = kipendo

Swedish = kärlek

English = love

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

What are some rules and expectations people have for you? If you could erase every rule that applies to you, why would or wouldn't you do it? Take time to hear kids' responses. **Today we'll find out how Ruby reacts to new rules.**

View Episode 5, "Tough Love," on the Year Gold Spring Grades 3-6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video.

- Why did Ruby equate her new rules with her parents hating her?
- Why did Mimi say that parents have rules?
- Why might rules be more about love than hate?
- If you could do away with one rule in your life, what would it be and why?
- What more could you do to live out love for God and for others in your life?

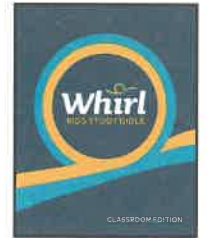


Open your Whirl Kids Study Bibles.

Today's passage is from the book of Matthew. It's in the New Testament in the Gospels and Acts section of the Bible. If this is your first time reading from Matthew, invite kids to check out the book introduction and comic on page 1156.

When we enter this story, some important people felt threatened by Jesus and the things he said. They tried to outwit Jesus and trap him. But he turned the tables on them.

Help kids find Matthew 22:34-40 and read it in a creative way together: **Listen to the story and raise your hand when you think Jesus has won the argument.** Read the story to the kids or ask for a volunteer reader.



Invite kids to check out what Ruby says about Matthew 22:36-40.

Ask these questions after you read the story.

- **What's your reaction to the rule to love God all your heart, soul, and mind? How is that easy or hard?**
- **What do you think it means to "love your neighbor as yourself"? How do you love yourself?**
- **Can you think of any situation not covered under the rule to love God and to love others?**
- **Find Jesus' greatest commandment, or number one rule, in verses 36-39, then write "#1 Rule!" in the margin.**
- **How do you think the Pharisees reacted to Jesus' answer?**

Make your mark on the Wall Chart.

Look at the chart and find the theme for today. Give kids time to find the word *Love*. **Jesus' number one rule is to love God and love others.** Invite one kid to draw a heart in the box by *Love*, and another kid to write "#1" in the heart.



BIBLE BIT

The 613 rules in the Torah cover everything from health and hygiene to food and relationships, shaping the Israelites' identity as set-apart people.

WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, listen for the words of wisdom from Mimi's hamster—or grandma. What do Mimi's parents want her to do as she gets older?

OUR CHURCH

Living next to a church can be a challenge. Show your love of neighbor by doing something nice for folks living next to the church property.

RESPOND 10

Open the leaflets and pass out markers.

Tear off the leaflet square.

1. **Jesus summarized all the commandments as one: love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. Let's explore what following this commandment can look like.**
2. Form four groups. (For smaller classes, form two groups.)
3. Assign each group one of the images on the leaflet. (If using two groups, assign two images per group.)
4. **Your mission is to show your classmates ways to express love through each category. The heart is for loving God with your heart, the burst is for loving God with your soul, and the brain is for loving God with your mind. The final square is for loving others as yourself.**
5. Give groups five minutes to prepare a short skit, a song, a factual demonstration, or another creative presentation of their choosing.
6. Regroup and present to each other.
7. As other groups present, invite the audience to doodle or write notes in the quadrant being presented.
8. **We love God and others because God loved us first. God's commandment leads to love. How does knowing that make it easy or hard to follow rules?**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Today we talked about rules and commandments, but also about love. Jesus said that the most important rule is to love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbors the way we love ourselves. How would you explain to someone how *rules* and *love* are related?

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out pens.

Ask kids to write a math equation on the leaflet using words or pictures that equal love. **How will you show love this week?**

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.