



NG Study Guide: Mark 12:18-44 “Loving God” [7.25. 21]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: There are great existential questions: Is there life after death? What is the meaning of life? Can you know that you love God and that God loves you? The right answer to these questions provides clarity, comfort, and contentment. Let’s discover together the life-transforming answers to some of the most important questions.

Subject: The resurrection + greatest commandments

Object: Live the Great Commandments and Commission

1. Is there life after death? [18-27]

The question regarding the resurrection [18-23]:

Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: ¹⁹“Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man’s brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁰Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. ²¹And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. ²²So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. ²³Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.”

In context, Jesus had made His triumphal entry to Jerusalem and received worship as Messiah (The Christ) for the first time. It was four days before the cross. He purified the temple courts, and responded to questions posed by the religious leaders regarding His authority, and payment of taxes posed in order to trap or discredit Him [Mk 11:1-12:17].

Then came *some Sadducees* [18]. The Sadducees were a sect of Judaism that believed that when the body died the soul died. They did not believe in the resurrection, the spirit realm (e.g. angels), and only regarded the first five books penned by Moses (Torah) as authoritative. They pose a hypothetical [19-23] regarding a woman who loses her husband, and ends up marrying his six brothers one after another as each dies. There were no children. Whose wife will she be in the resurrection? [23]. The context is a provision in the Mosaic law that would continue the family name and keep property in the family by instructing a close relative to marry the widow and bring forth an heir [Deut. 25:5]. Again, they did not come to learn, but to attempt to discredit Jesus about the resurrection.

Note: questions are good if the curious are sincere.

Jesus affirms resurrection life [24-28]: There is life after death.

²⁴*Jesus answered and said to them, “Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? ²⁵For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in*

marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶ But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken."

Jesus declares they are: 1. Mistaken, 2. Don't know the Scriptures, and 3. Don't know the power of God [24]. Their failure to receive the other books of the Old Testament was only part of the problem. When believers *rise from the dead* [25] there will not be marriage in heaven [25]. There is no need for procreation to continue or expand the human race since there will be no death. Twice Jesus affirmed that the dead will rise [25,26]. They did not understand God's power. It is no problem for God to give your soul a new resurrection body fit for eternity [1Jn. 3:2, 1 Cor. 15:1-58, 1 Thess. 4:13-18]. To clarify their misunderstanding of the Scriptures, Jesus reasoned from Moses' [Ex. 3:6,15]. God declared, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? [26]. Thus, "I am" rather than "I was" reveals that the Patriarchs were still living. Resurrection life (heaven) is more than this life a little better [Rev. 21:1-8]; and is available to all who follow Jesus. Although there will not be marriage, we will likely recognize loved ones since Jesus' followers were able to recognize Him after His resurrection.

2. What's the meaning of life? [28-34]

²⁸ Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" ²⁹ Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. ³¹ And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." ³² So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. ³³ And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." ³⁴ Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But after that no one dared question Him.

Love God supremely and love neighbors as yourself – The Great Commands

A scribe or expert and teacher of the Mosaic law was impressed with Jesus response to the question regarding the resurrection [28]. He approached the Lord and asked, *Which is the first commandment of all?*" [28]. The covenant delivered by God through Moses has 613 commands, 365 negative (shall not), and 248 positive (shall). Jesus answers quoting from Deut. 6:4-5 [29-30] the *Shema* or premier prayer of Judaism. We are to love God with total devotion: *heart, soul, mind, and strength*, and He is to be our supreme or first love. When you are devoted to God life has meaning, purpose, and contentment; and all other human relationships can be rightly aligned. Jesus then continued his reply, *And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these"* [31]. We are called to love neighbors as self. Jesus was demonstrating the connection between the Great Commandments. Jesus cites Lev. 19:18 [31] such that they are inseparable. These two commands are the essence of all of the law and prophets [Matt. 22:40]. Loving neighbors where you live, work, study, play and worship is a test of whether you love God. Love for others flows from loving God. Similarly, the first part of the Ten Commandments relate to love for God, and the second part deal with love for others [Ex. 20].

The meaning of life is: Be a follower of Jesus who loves God supremely, loves neighbors as self, and makes disciples who do likewise (Great Commandments and Commission).

The scribe realized that Jesus speaks truth: The supremacy of love for God and neighbors can never be replaced by ritual or sacrifice [32-33]. God desires the knowledge of God and mercy more than sacrifice [Hos. 6:6]. Jesus acknowledged the scribe's answer and affirmed, *You are not far from the kingdom of*

God [34]. He understood the primary kingdom principle, now all he had to do was to give the King His proper place.

3. How you can know if you truly love God [35-44]

I give Jesus His proper place [35-37] *Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, "How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David?"³⁶ For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: 'The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"'³⁷ Therefore David himself calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?" And the common people heard Him gladly.*

The scribes or teachers of the Scriptures in Jesus' time correctly recognize that the Messiah will be a descendant of King David fulfilling God's promise [2Sam. 7:14-16]. But Jesus makes clear, from David's own inspired words that the Christ is more than a mere heir. David penned Psalm 110 [10] confirming that the Messiah is David's Lord. A Jewish King, and fathers generally, don't refer to their son as Lord. Thus, more than merely David's son, Jesus is uniquely the Son of God [Matt. 22:42]. Once you recognize that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, it is only reasonable to give Jesus His proper place in your life and make Him king in every realm (self, marriage, family, career, calling, community).

I live to please God not impress people [38-40] *Then He said to them in His teaching, "Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces,³⁹ the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts,⁴⁰ who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."*

Jesus warned of the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who lived for the approval of people rather than to please God [38-30, Matt. 6:1-18, 23:5]. *Long robes* were a symbol that someone was above manual labor, *best seats* were the prominent seats of honor closest to the ark containing the scrolls. *Praying for pretense* were prayers to impress people rather than communicate with God.

I'm extravagant in my devotion [41-43] *Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much.⁴² Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.⁴³ So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."*

Jesus sat looking at the temple treasury where there were thirteen trumpet-shaped chests along the wall [41]. The gifts went to maintain the place of worship, provide for the poor and for those who served God. *Jesus observed how the people put money into the treasury* [41] (i.e. was the giver trying to draw attention to themselves [Matt. 6:1-4, Cf. 2Cor. 9:7]). *Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites* [42]. The *mite* was the smallest coin in circulation and has the idea in our currency of less than 1USD. *Jesus called His disciples to Himself* [43], because there is something special He wants to reveal: *this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.*" There were many who were wealthy who put in much [41], but she gave God all, her own livelihood [44]. Her sacrifice demonstrated her love for God and others, her extravagant devotion, and her confident trust in God's provision [cf. Jn. 12:1-7].

You can know God loves you, because of the cross, you can know that you love Him by living the Great Commandments and Commission.

Study Guide Qs:

Q1. When you consider the resurrection, what thoughts or feelings do you have?

Q2. Apart from the Bible, what are some answers to the question, "What is the meaning of life?"

Q3. For a follower of Jesus what are some answers to the question, “What is the meaning of life?”

Q4. What are some ways that people can know that they truly love God (and that God truly loves them)?

“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a helpful take on the question of life after death:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/is-there-life-after-death.html>.

2. Here is an insightful article on the meaning of life:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/meaning-of-life.html>.

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?

3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Sign-up to get involved in our back-to-school serve day:

<https://calvarynexus.org/events/?sapurl=LytiODM5L2xiL2V2LytyeHA1Znp2P2JyYW5kaW5nPXRYdWUmZW1iZWQ9dHJ1ZQ==>.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?

2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible. A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.

3. The “Digging Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Digging Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. Every time you meet consider asking:

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.