



First Baptist Church Selmer

COMMANDED! • THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT •

MARK 12:29-30; DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9 • 8/10/2025

MAIN POINT

A genuine love for God is transformative in the life of the individual believer, but also collectively to those around them.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Which is more dangerous, texting or talking on the phone while you are driving?

Do you believe laws against "texting and driving" have increased or decreased the likelihood of people doing it?

"Talking on the phone while driving a vehicle makes you *four times more likely* to get into an accident, but texting while driving makes your chance of a crash *twenty-three times more likely*. Assuming a driver never looks up in the average time it takes to send a text (4.6 seconds), at fifty-five miles per hour, he drives blindly the length of a football field." -12 *Ways Your Phone is Changing You* by Tony Reinke

Wow! Did you realize that? Unfortunately, studies are showing that the harder police clamp down on texting and driving, the lower the phone goes, and along with the phone goes the driver's eyes in an attempt to conceal their texting.

We are going to look today at the Greatest Commandment. In a world that is constantly vying for our attention with distractions galore in every way we look, Jesus calmly and honestly conveys the Greatest Commandment for believers to follow. If we are to follow Jesus, everything we are must be focused intensely on God Himself.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MARK 12:29-30

29 *"Jesus answered, 'The most important 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 and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'" (ESV)*

Why is it important that we understand that the "Lord is one"?

What does it mean to genuinely love God?

When asked the question, *"Which commandment is the most important of all?"*(v.28), Jesus responds with the Greatest Commandment. Jesus, in essence, wasn't removing all other commands from Scripture, but rather clarifying the central, or most foundational, of all the commandments.

Jesus appealed first to the scribe by reaffirming a Jewish orthodox daily prayer called the Shema. Most pious Jews would recite this prayer 2x daily as a foundational creed of their Jewish faith, *"The Lord is one."* The scribe was commended on the importance of his knowledge and understanding of who God is. If God is one, then all devotion, honor, worship, and focus need not be divided, but intently focused. But Jesus didn't pick just one command of many throughout the Torah, but one that was the cornerstone of life for everyone who believes.

We must go back to the Old Testament to find the specific quote that Jesus repeated here in the book of Mark (also in Matthew 22:36-40). As the Israelites moved from Egyptian slavery and their wilderness wanderings, God sent forth a foundational command for the Israelites to obey for His blessing to remain with them in the Promised Land.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DEUTERONOMY 6:1-3

1 *"Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, 2 that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life,*

and that your days may be long. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey." (ESV)

What was the main command that Moses gave Israel? What does "Hear" mean?

Why was it important for Israel to notice and remember?

What did the people of Egypt worship as God? How many gods did Egypt have?

The chief command of Moses was "Hear!", take notice, listen, remember that the Lord is God and that the Lord is one. It is simple and to the point. Israel had lost focus before. Remember Mount Sinai? They thought God and Moses had abandoned them, so they built a golden calf and worshipped it. They had just come out of Egypt, where they worshiped many gods, like the river, the sun, the ground, animals, and much more. Israel needed to remember that the Lord is God, and no one else.

Do you think we live in a culture that serves many gods as did Egypt?

What types of gods do we worship in our culture today?

We don't like to talk about it, but we may serve as many, if not more, gods in our culture today. Moses communicates to the Israelites the conditions under which their lives are supposed to be upheld. "*Fear the Lord your God*", teach them to "*your son and your son's son*", and "*be careful to do them*". It is great to know God's commands, but it is something entirely different to commit your life to obeying them.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9

4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (ESV)

Why do you think God told His people not just to love Him, but stated they should love Him with all their hearts, souls, and strength?

What does it mean to love God with your whole self?

Love is not a feeling; it is a commitment and covenant with another. Love is defined as seeking the well-being and pleasure of one's covenant partner, often without regard for oneself.

This type of love for God is proclaimed in Scripture four times. In Deuteronomy 6, it states to love God with your heart, soul, and might. Matthew 22 states to love God with your heart, soul, and mind. Luke 10 and Mark 12 state to love God with your heart, soul, mind, and strength. So which it? The full scope of the qualifiers for our love of God is this: we are to love God with our values, our commitments, our thoughts, our plans, our bodies, our wills; we are to love God with OUR EVERYTHING! We are to love God first and foremost, even before we are to love ourselves.

Why is it important that this type of love for God is not just spoken about but is modeled from one generation to the next?

What type of love do we model for our children when they see us act one way at church on Sunday but differently in our homes throughout the week?

Our love for God cannot be compartmentalized. We love Him with everything we have, or we don't. It is simple, but it is not easy. Jesus claims we are to love God, not from a place of obligation, but with a heart of sincere gratitude. This type of love for God is not only spoken about, but is lived out practically. It requires both deliberate teaching to ourselves (and others), but also consistent action.

Does your life consistently reflect your love for God?

Would those close to you agree with your assessment? If not, how can you begin to live consistently in your love for God?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is the greatest challenge you face in loving God with all your heart, soul, and might?

What disciplines or habits can begin to help you prepare your mind and heart for loving God well?

How can you model to your children (and others) what a genuine love for God looks like?

PRAYER

Praise God as you remember and notice all that He has done for you. Ask Him to help your group worship Him by loving Him with their entire beings, and pray that God would be worshipped and glorified at your church and through all of its groups..

COMMENTARY

| DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9

6:1-3. A young generation of Israelites had come of age in the wilderness during 40 years of wandering. They were anxious to enter the land of promise and to enjoy the fruits of the land said to be flowing with milk and honey. Moses sought to prepare this new generation of Israelites for the challenging spiritual adventure ahead of them. Success would depend on their knowledge of and obedience to God's laws. Having reminded the present generation of God's revelation of His law at Mount Sinai, Moses urged the people to keep God's laws and to pass them on to future generations.

6:4. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is arguably the best-known passage of Scripture in ancient and modern Judaism. Deuteronomy 6:4 begins with the Hebrew verb rendered listen (shema), and these verses are commonly referred to as the Shema [SHEE mah]. These verses make two important declarations about God and His people's obligation to Him. The first declaration is a statement about the uniqueness of Israel's God. The assertion is that the Lord ... is one. The word rendered the Lord is, of course, God's personal name, Yahweh. Declaring that Yahweh is one denotes there is no other existing Deity. People might worship other so-called gods, but those gods are not real. They are worthless fabrications of human minds (see Isa. 44:10-11).

6:5. The second declaration is that God's people are commanded to love the Lord. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment in the law, He responded by quoting this verse (see Mark 12:30). The first thing to analyze in this command is the verb rendered love.

The measure of our love for God is to be greater than all other affections. We are to love Him wholeheartedly (with all your heart). The biblical conception and use of the term heart differs at points from modern usage. The term does not refer primarily to the fleshly organ but rather to the core of our inner, spiritual being. Heart refers to the power of the mind to think and remember (see Deut. 4:9). Heart also refers to our volition in making decisions (see Ex. 7:13). Thus, to love God with all our heart means to choose Him above all other desires and to make Him our highest priority in life. Likewise, we're to love God with all our soul. The Hebrew term rendered soul can refer to physical appetites (see Job 33:20), emotions (see Job 30:25), and the spiritual nature (see Ps. 19:7). A supreme love for God results in submitting every human appetite and desire to His will. Finally, we are to love God with all our strength. This term refers to every talent and resource we possess. We are to give our best efforts in serving and worshiping the Lord.

6:6-7. Families are instructed to bequeath the ways of God to the next generations. However, parents and grandparents cannot teach what they themselves do not know and practice. A passionate devotion to the Lord must first be in the parents' and grandparents' hearts. Only then are they equipped to help instill a genuine love for God in younger lives. Primary responsibility for teaching children spiritual truth cannot be delegated by parents to others. Parents have a unique relationship with their children and a responsibility to teach them about God in daily life (when you sit in your house ... walk along the road, ... lie down and ... get up). Church attendance is vitally important for children's overall spiritual development, but participation in church activities can never substitute for the daily spiritual instruction children need from godly parents.

6:8-9. The need for individuals and families to focus daily on the ways of God is emphasized with the commands to bind God's commands on one's hand and forehead. In addition they were to be written on the doorposts of their houses and gates. In New Testament-era Judaism, these commands were observed literally by attaching small boxes containing various Scriptures to the hand and forehead.