



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V23 N20

May 16, 2021

## KING JESUS

“If You Don’t Do Anything Else”

Mark 12:28-34

### THIS WEEK’S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Love

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

*“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”*

1 John 4:10-12



Which  
commandment  
is most  
important?

I want to string together some scattered thoughts about “love” based on the “beloved” disciple’s words found in his first epistle. A number of passages in this letter make it clear that John is writing to Christians, but he does not indicate where they lived. However, since early Christian writers place him in Ephesus during his later years, it’s reasonable to conclude that the recipients of 1 John lived in the Roman province of Asia (modern Turkey) – the location of the epistle’s earliest confirmed use. Perhaps it was a circular letter sent to believers in a number of locations in the province.

In 4:8, he writes: “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” About this verse, one commentator writes: “Here we meet the second of First John’s two great affirmations about God. The first, found in 1:5 affirms that ‘God is light.’ The second one, here, declares that **God is love**. The former, as we noted under 1:5, points to His perfect holiness, His freedom from all sin or deception. This statement affirms that His basic nature is characterized by **love**. Naturally, the statement does not mean that God has no other attributes, such as wisdom and justice. But it does indicate **love** is fundamental to what **God** is and to what He does” (Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 184). John is not simply saying that God *loves*. Of course, he does. He cannot do otherwise! He is saying that God *is love* – something far more. While true Christians can fail to love, those who do demonstrate an immature knowledge of their heavenly Father’s true person.

In 4:19, he writes: “We love *him* because he first loved us” (NKJV). Most modern English versions (e.g., NIV, ESV, NET, HCSB, et al.) omit “him” because it is not found in the Greek text behind their translations. And if no object is supplied for the verb *love*, the obvious objects are either God himself or other believers. Perhaps here John has *both* in mind, since his

statement is general enough to include both alternatives – even though the following verse puts more emphasis on love for other believers. But in either case, we love because he loved us *first*. The same commentator explains: “Our love for God is sourced in His love for us. As John has already reminded us, His love ‘was manifested toward us’ in the sending of ‘His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him’ (4:9), and we find our very definition of love in His own superlative act of love (cf. 4:10). Consequently, if we love one another, and also **love** God, there can be only one reason. It is **because He first loved us!**” (Hodges, 203).

Finally, in 4:21, he writes: “And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God *must* also love their brother and sister.” John links love for God to love for others in this verse – more specifically, to love for other Christians. The presence of the one kind of love clearly necessitates the presence of the other kind. The command in question, namely, “this command,” may refer to the command Jesus gave the disciples in the upper room: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you *must* love one another” (Jn 13:34). The link between love for God and love for others is also reflected in the apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans. He writes: “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command; ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor, Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (13:8).

To summarize: God *is love*; we love because he loved us *first*; and because he *loved us first*, we *must love others*.

# 1 EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

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28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

## READ complementary passages

### Deuteronomy 6:4-5

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

### Leviticus 19:18

18 "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Bracket "teachers of the law" in v. 28.
- Circle "most important" in vv. 28, 29.
- Underline "heart," "soul," "mind," and "strength" in v. 30.
- Circle "neighbor" in v. 31.
- Box "as" indicating *comparison* in vv. 31, 33.
- Box "more" indicating *comparison* in v. 33.
- Highlight Jesus' words in v. 34.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What makes you think verses 28-34 are closely tied to verses 18-27?
2. What makes you think the teacher of the law who questioned Jesus is a *Pharisee*?
3. Explain what he wants to know.
4. Jesus prefaces his answer by quoting the *Shema* (cf., Dt 6:4). Explain what is meant by “the LORD is *one*.”
5. Put what with all your “heart,” “soul,” “mind,” and “strength” means in your own words.
6. Explain the *comparison* “as yourself” (v. 31).
7. The *first* commandment and the *second* commandment are related. How so?
8. Explain the *comparison* in verse 33.
9. This “scribe’s” attitude toward and response to Jesus is atypical. Explain.
10. **Discussion:** According to Jesus, the “friendly” scribe is “not far from the kingdom of God.” Talk about why

### Commentary On The Text

Debates in the temple between Jesus and his adversaries continue in Mark 12:28-34. In this passage, Jesus answers a scribe's question concerning the greatest commandment. The fellow is likely a Pharisee, given his favorable reaction to Jesus' reply to the Sadducees' question regarding resurrection. Many of "the teachers of the law" are Pharisees, who believe in "life after death" and resurrection "life after, 'life after death.'" Unlike his fellow scribes, who were to a person hostile to Jesus, this "friendly" scribe appears to have a different attitude. One commentator writes: "He came with no apparent hostile or hidden motive to appraise Jesus' skill in answering a much-debated subject in scribal circles" (John D. Grassmick, "Mark," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 163). Another adds: "The introduction of the scribe does not portray him as hostile and the entire episode lacks the polemical tone of the previous dialogues" (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 302). The conclusion of their conversation, too, is more amicable (v. 34).

Regarding the structure of the passage, following Mark's opening words (v. 28a), which link verses 28-34 to verses 18-27, the narrative consists of the following: the scribe's question (v. 28b); Jesus' answer (vv. 29-31); the scribe's approving response (vv. 32-33); and Jesus' commendation (v. 34a). Mark's closing words (v. 34b) conclude the passage.

The "friendly" scribe joins a dispute over resurrection already in progress (vv. 18-27). Upon hearing Jesus' answer to the Sadducees' question, an answer that he apparently agrees with, he is so impressed that takes the opportunity to ask Jesus' opinion on a different matter. "Had Jesus been beaten in the debates, there would have been little reason to solicit an opinion. Had the scribe's intentions been hostile, a resounding compliment would have been unlikely" (Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 34B, Mark 8:27-16:20, 263). "Of the commandments, which is the most important?" he asks.

It is a frequently debated question among teachers of the law. According to one commentator, "The rabbis counted 613 commands in the Mosaic Law: 365 negative and 248 positive. They recognized that all were not equally important or equally foundational. They debated which were the 'heavy' commands and which were the 'light' ones. They also tried to formulate principles that comprehended the

rest of the Law. These were the concerns of the law teacher who asked Jesus what type (Gr. *poia*) of command He regarded as first in importance ('foremost')"

(Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Mark," 2021 ed., 256, [planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf](http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf)). The scribe is looking for one command that entails all the others.

Jesus answers by quoting two Old Testament passages: Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 and Leviticus 19:18b. The two inseparable commands contained in these two texts—"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Dt 6:5) and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18b)—comprise one two-part command that entails all of the other commandments. Put differently, all of the other commandments can be understood as an explication of this one, two-part command.

The scribe likes what he hears and says so: "Well said, teacher," he tells Jesus. Then he goes on to commend Jesus for acknowledging that God is unique (affirming his *holiness*) and that no other gods exist but him (denying *polytheism*). Then he commends Jesus for combining the command to wholeheartedly and unreservedly love God with one's whole being and the command to wholeheartedly and unreservedly love others, even as yourself, to form one two-part commandment that is "more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices" (v. 33; cf., 1Sa 15:22; Ps 51:16-17; Isa 1:11; Jer 7:21-23; Hos 6:6).

Jesus likes what he hears and says so: "You are not far from the kingdom of God," he tells the scribe. This scribe now recognizes Jesus' credibility and believability. He has come a long way. If he comes to believe Jesus' message, he will have come the rest of the way to entering the kingdom of God. One commentator explains: "The scribe's openness and humility before God exhibited a favorable disposition, while his enthusiastic approval of Jesus' teaching revealed an attraction toward the one though whom God had brought the Kingdom near to men in an eschatological and messianic perspective" (William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT, 434). Having a favorable view of Jesus is not enough. Believing in him and his message is necessary to enter the kingdom.

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## Word Studies/Notes

v. 28 *teachers of the law*                      I.e., “scribes” (ESV). “A scribe was a professional person who possessed the ability to write and interpret texts. Whereas this was once a secular position, by NT times it was associated with religious duties such as interpreting biblical texts and serving as guardians of the tradition. Although a scribe could belong to any Jewish sect, or to none at all, the majority were associated with the Pharisees (2:16; Luke 5:30; Acts 23:9). In every instance but one (12:28-34), they are portrayed in Mark as bitterly opposed to Jesus (2:6, 16; 11:27-33; 15:33) and intimately involved with the elders and chief priests in the plot to kill him (8:31; 10:33; 11:18; 14:1, 43, 53; 15:1)” (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 86-87).

vv. 28, 29 *most important*                      “Later rabbinic tradition gave the total number of commandments as 613, of which 248 were positive commands and 365 prohibitions. Some were considered to be lighter (smaller) and some weightier (greater). This teacher is not asking which laws need to be obeyed and which can safely be ignored. He is asking, ‘What is the fundamental premise of the law on which all the individual commands depend?’” (David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*, 476). “Within the Second Temple period, we find several attempts to answer the question addressed to Jesus. Perhaps the most famous is found in *b. Šabb.* 31a, in which Shammai and Hillel are challenged by someone, ‘Teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot.’ Hillel then replies, ‘What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof.’ This ‘silver’ rule, which is a negative form of the ‘golden’ rule (Matt. 7:12), is also found in Tob. 4:15 . . . Jesus’s own answer to which commandment is greatest of all involves two separate commandments from two widely separated sections in the Torah” (Stein, 560).

v. 30 *heart, soul, mind, strength*                      “The point of this commandment is to be totally, unreservedly committed to God with one’s entire being. The Hebrew text has only three elements (heart, soul, strength). The terms *heart*, *soul* and *mind* are all roughly equivalent, describing the human mind and will from slightly different perspectives: the *heart* is the centre of human thinking and affections; the *soul* is the source of desires and feelings; the *mind* signals thinking and understanding. The term *strength* points to one’s energy and power” (Eckhard J. Schna-

bel, *Mark*, TNTC, 302).

v. 31 *neighbor*                      “The Jews regarded only fellow Jews and full proselytes as their neighbors, but Jesus taught that a neighbor is anyone with whom we have any dealings whatsoever (cf. Luke 10:25-27). ‘Neighbor’ (Gr. *plesion*, lit. one nearby) is a generic term for fellow man” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Mark,” 2021 ed., 257, [plano-biblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf](http://plano-biblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf)). “In Matthew 5:43-48/Luke 6:27-36 (cf. Luke 10:29-39) Jesus extends the understanding of ‘neighbor’ to one’s enemies” (Schnabel, 303).

vv. 31, 33 *as yourself*                      “It does not command self-love (J. Edwards 2002: 372n49) but rather assumes that people love themselves and that this kind of love should be extended to one’s neighbor” (Stein, 561). “The love a person has naturally for himself is not to focus solely on himself—a constant tendency—but should be directed equally toward others” (John D. Grassmick, “Mark,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 164).

v. 33 *more important*                      “He made the bold statement that the double command of love is much **more important than all burnt offerings** (fully consumed sacrifices) **and sacrifices** (those partly consumed and partly eaten by worshipers; cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Prov. 21:3; Jer. 7:21-23; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8)” (Grassmick, 164). “The highest ethic of the Law is not sacrifice or other cultic activity; it is loyalty to God and compassion for human beings” (Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 34B, *Mark* 8:27-16:20, 267).

v. 34 *not far from . . .*                      “Jesus meant that the scribe was ‘not far from’ entering ‘the kingdom.’ His openness to Scriptural revelation and his positive orientation to Jesus, if continued, would bring him to faith in Jesus and ultimately entrance into His kingdom” (Constable, 258).



## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Unable to keep the greatest commandment . . . since respect for Jesus as a teacher isn't enough, you must believe in him and his message in order to enter the kingdom of God.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



## 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## FAMILY TALK

The moment you learn you're going to have a baby the realization hits that everything about your life is about to change. You begin thinking about names, nursery themes, and all the equipment that is vital to a newborn. The biggest adjustment for me was the preparation of my heart. There was to be a new human living at my home as part of my family and my responsibility. I had to really get into the Word and remind myself of God's character and how He picked us to parent this brand new, fresh baby. Throughout the years I've noticed that I can easily get caught up in the weeds when parenting and have to remind myself to get back to the basics. I remind myself to parent according to Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Love God with all I have, impress His word on my children and talk frequently about the things of God – grace, mercy, love and compassion. Parenting challenges send me to the greatest commandments; to love God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind and to allow the overflow of His love to bless my neighbors through me. I have to ask myself if my thoughts and will are aligned with these commands, and if they're not, to hit my knees and ask God to do an overhaul in my heart. God has not only blessed us with salvation through Jesus, but He gave us His word and the Holy Spirit. What a blessing that He loves us so deeply we can be confident He is with us and will never leave us. We are praying your relationship with God grows deeper every day!

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 7:24-30.

1. What question did the teacher of the law ask and why?
2. How did Jesus answer this question?
3. What did Jesus mean when He told the man he wasn't far from the kingdom of God?

### What Do You Think?

Why is it important that Jesus used scripture to answer the man's question?

### What Do You Do?

This week show a neighbor some love! Get creative – bake cookies, write a note, or even do a canned food drive on your street and bring what you've collected to Central Storehouse.

## CORE COMPETENCY: Life Purpose

I believe God cares about everything in my life.

## MEMORY VERSE: Luke 10:27

*"He answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

## KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)  
*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)  
*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)  
*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)  
*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)  
*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)  
*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)  
*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)  
*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)  
*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)  
*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)  
*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)  
*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)  
*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)  
*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

**Tom Bulick** (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for 12 years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Central Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

**Stephanie Thomas** (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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**CENTRAL  
BIBLE CHURCH**

8001 Anderson Boulevard  
Fort Worth, Texas 76120  
817-274-1315  
wearecentral.org