

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

Lesson # 25 of 27

Scripture/Memory Verse

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' Mark 12:30 (NIV)

Lesson Goal & Objectives

GOAL:

- ❖ The goal of this session is to present the participants with “The Great Commission” and to have them consider for themselves how this can and should be lived out.

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ The students will create pictures on newsprint sheets of their own “version” of what a follower of Jesus – a Christian – “looks like”.
- ❖ The students will create a mock “Facebook Page” for the typical “Joe Christian.”
- ❖ The students will read and discuss passages from God’s Word about how the world will treat His followers.
- ❖ The students will appreciate their identities are persons loved by God.
- ❖ The students will develop ideas about the ways in which Christians bring Christ to the world

Materials Needed for Lesson

- Copies of a blank mock “Facebook” page
- Bibles or printed excerpts from Holy Scripture as indicated
- Large pieces of paper/newsprint
- Paper & Pens
- Sheets with a Scripture quote printed on them: See instructions under “Take-home Activity”

Introduction & Teacher Background

This lesson should really get the participants thinking about how **they** can be followers of Jesus – everyday. But first, there are some things you need to consider about our world today personally, and as the teacher of this class. The problem we face is that we now find ourselves living in a world where people’s lives are more and more made up of different compartments which usually aren’t connected to each other. Many people find that certain parts of their lives end up being lived in an “anonymous” way – disconnected from the rest of their lives. Family forms one separate “world,” work another, and faith may be completely divorced from these. Therefore, most people regard their Faith as something that is only, merely an activity done *in* the church building and nowhere else. This process has been going on for some time.

However in the last ten years, this condition has greatly escalated due to the use of electronic media such as cell phones, texting and the internet. If you are teaching young adults or teens they are no doubt spending a good amount of time on the internet. That means they are involved in “social networks” with friends as well as people they never meet face to face. They create their own profiles about how they want others to see them. Here is the amazing thing: often the person they present themselves to be in one setting is quite different from the person they present themselves to be in another setting. This really isn’t anything

new as we have all been doing it to one degree or another in the past without the “benefit” of the internet. The difference is that the internet allows this “compartmentalization” of our personalities to escalate to degrees never seen before in human culture. We can hide parts of ourselves from those upon whom we want to make a particular impression in specific areas. We can hide our faith in the church.

The result is that people can present themselves in one way when they go to Church Camp or Sunday School, and another, very different way in their school, still another way on the web, etc. They develop different “profiles” in different settings. People do this in a new way, but for the same old reason: desiring acceptance and love.

However, we are called to: **Love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.** If our hearts were truly set on fulfilling this call, then we wouldn’t be compartmentalizing the different areas of our lives in this way. Rather, we would seek to integrate the various areas of our personalities in the knowledge that the *totality* of who we are is always completely loved by God.

At this point in our program, the students should have developed some understanding of how much they are loved by God our Father and His Son Jesus Christ, our Savior. They should also have developed an appreciation for the reality that God created them in His image: which means that their essential identities are truly wonderful (except for the sins we choose). If they understand those two Biblical concepts: God’s love in creation and salvation, then they next need to overcome the fear of worldly rejection and begin to live into the image of a follower of Jesus. If we lack this Biblical understanding of who we are as total persons, then the “Great Commandment” becomes merely a discouraging and burdensome “law” instead of a source of life and joy.

When you read the Great Commandment, you can’t help but be struck by the “totality” or “completeness” of it. Living the Great Commandment therefore is a 24 hour a day /7 day a week proposition; real followers of Jesus don’t have different personas depending on their environment.

The second problem we face is the question: So, then how do we teach this understanding to young people? The good news is that Great Commission teaches itself; it is not hard to understand. The other good news is that the participants should be able to grasp quickly where they have “compartmentalized” themselves. In this lesson we need to focus on these two questions:

- 1) How can you better live the Great Commission?
- 2) What parts of your life are most challenging for you to live the Great Commission?

We all need to develop the ability to see ourselves in the context of the totality of God’s love. We also need to realize that this understanding is not enjoyed by many (or most!) in our society. Therefore, our identity as Christians will naturally and necessarily set us apart. We are different; we can’t be afraid to be who we are and to live that difference. The challenge that our students must be able to rise to – and be free to choose to live out – is pointed out in Holy Scripture:

¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 1 Peter 4:12-16 (NIV)

Don’t be surprised if you suffer: if time permits, discuss with the participants about how the world might reject them – or in what ways they may already have experienced this rejection for following Christ.

Opening Prayer (5 min.)

O Lord, you have taught us that without love whatever we do is worth nothing: Send you Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts your greatest gift, which is love, the true bond of peace and of all virtue, without which whoever lives is accounted dead before you. Grant this for the sake of your only Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, on God, now and for ever. *AMEN.*

(Book of Common Prayer, page 216) *Also give the students time to offer their own prayers.*

Introductory Activity (5-10 Min.)

Choose *one* or *two* of the following activity options:

- Post large pieces of newsprint paper on an easel or on the wall, and ask the participants to draw a Pictures of “A typical follower of Jesus”.
- Use the blank “Facebook” profile pages and have the kids build a “facebook” page for “Joe Christian”.
- Have the participants use “all their strength” by doing something physical - just keep safety in mind and be alert to it becoming overly competitive – you will know your group and can gauge the activity accordingly.

Lesson (20-25 min.)

Read the following verse of Scripture to the class: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30 (NIV)

Discussion questions:

- Is any “part” of our person is left out of this command? So what is Jesus’ point?
- How is it possible to love a God we cannot see? Knowing Jesus, personally, is the key to knowing and loving God. Jesus said, “If you have seen me you have seen the Father, John 14:9.
- Invite the participants to take turns shouting out what “love” looks like and write them on a chalk board or a large piece of paper posted on an easel or on the wall. Discuss the responses.
- End this part of the lesson by asking: “How *do* we love God?” (Expect answers like: going to church, praying, etc.
→ But press them to think outside this box. Jesus said, “When you do this to the least of My brethren, you do it to Me.” (Matthew 25: 31 – 45) Be sure to discuss with the class how the ways in which we relate to other people is deeply connected with our love for God. When we love each other, we are loving God.

Reflection (10-15 min.)

Give each student a piece of paper and instruct them to draw a line down the center. On one side of the line list the things God has done to show them His love for them, and on the other have them list how they will show their love for Him.

Take-home Activity (5 min.)

Briefly and simply explain the assignment:

Each student receives a a piece of paper with the following quote already printed on it:

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." Mark 12:28-31 (NIV)

Ask the students to reflect on the question: "Who is the hardest person in your life to love? (Give them a minute or two to think this over. Explain that they are not to shout out any names.) Instruct them to write a journal entry over the coming week about some ways in which they might be able to show love to that person.

Closing Prayer (5 min.)

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. *Amen.* (BCP page 101, top)

Also give the students time to pray in their own words for those in their lives whom they need to be able to love, and to give thanks to God for all those who love them.

Scripture References

- Mark 12:28-31,
- Matthew 22:37-38,
- Matthew 25: 31 – 45
- John 14,
- 1 Peter 4:12-16