



DEVOTIONAL

DECLUTTER | JANUARY 10, 2021

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: What are some things that can “clutter” a person’s heart and hinder them from loving God with their total being?

Key Passage: “And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”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.’³¹ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:28-31)

The Shema

The event this passage refers to occurred during the week before Jesus’ crucifixion. Jesus spent much time teaching people and debating the Jewish religious leaders and civil leaders – such as lawyers – in the courtyard just outside the temple. A scribe asked Jesus which of God’s commandments was most important.

Jesus replies by quoting the *Shema* prayer. The Hebrew word *shema* means “hear” and begins the most important daily prayer in Judaism. The *Shema* prayer was so significant that Jesus used it to introduce His answer, the “greatest commandment.” The *Shema* is recorded in Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

“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.”

By starting his answer with the *Shema* prayer, Jesus acknowledged God as supremely preeminent and emphasized that full commitment to Him is the most important of all the commandments. By telling the people to love God with all their “heart...soul...mind...and strength,” Jesus is saying that when we love God with the totality of our being, we will, by extension, be obeying all other commandments.

Discuss: Read the *Shema* Prayer in its entirety again (Deut. 6:4-9). How can we apply verses 7-9 to our lives today as 21st Century followers of Jesus Christ?

What does it mean to love God?

In Mark 12:30, Jesus used the verb form of the Greek word *agape* for love. *Agape* means to choose to delight in someone and act faithfully on their behalf. Expressing *agape* toward God means to find joy in Him, to trust Him, and to obey Him.

Discuss: How can a person find their joy in God?

Discuss: How is loving God—with *agape* evidence of trust in God?

Discuss: How is loving God with *agape* evidence of obedience?

Love God with all your “heart.”

The word “heart” in Mark 12:30 refers to the center of one’s life. The heart drives one’s thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and intentions. So, to love God with all your heart means to choose to put God first in your thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and intentions.

It is difficult to love someone we don’t know. Therefore, knowing God and growing in our knowledge of Him is life’s top priority—everything else flows from it. Even after knowing and walking with the Lord for several decades, the apostle Paul wrote in one of his last letters, “*I want to know Christ*” (Philippians 3:10). To know God is to love God, to love God is to trust God, and to trust God is to obey God.

Discuss: How can getting to know God better lead to loving God more?

Discuss: How would you advise a new Christian to get to know God better?

Discuss: Why does loving God more lead to trusting God more?

Discuss: How would you advise a new Christian to grow in their trust of God?

Discuss: Why does trusting God more lead to greater obedience toward Him?

Discuss: In your own experience, in what ways is obedience toward God easy? In what ways is it difficult?

For Further Study

“The Call to Love God with All Our Heart” article by Debbie Przybylski at www.Crosswalk.com.

The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God by D.A. Carson

The Four Loves by C.S. Lewis