

Feeling the Love
Matthew 22:34-40
The Laurel Center
October 16, 2015

Main Idea: We are called to love God and others with our whole being.

Introduction

There is always been movements to shorten laws so that they are easily understood. Think about our own Congress which makes laws that are thousands of pages long! No one understands what the law actually says. Plus it takes a lawyer to understand it. Our tax code is over 70,000 pages long. Even the IRS has trouble figuring out which law supersedes another. When was become complicated no one can fault people for not being able to follow them. Simplicity is the spice of life. To catch Jesus and try to trap him a lawyer attempts to take Jesus to task on the greatest commandment in the Mosaic law of 613 laws. Let's see how Jesus reacts.

Matthew 22:34–38

34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. **35** And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. **36** “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” **37** And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **38** This is the great and first commandment.

I. Loving God is most important (vv. 34 – 38).

A Jesus withstood testing from religious hypocrites.

- 1 The Pharisees and Sadducees were constantly attempting to trap Jesus in front of the people so that he would lose his popularity among the people. But this never worked even though they continued to do it.
- 2 In Matthew 22:34 a lawyer attempted to use the law against Jesus and trap him into giving a bad answer that people would not like or that the lawyer would be able to rebut him on.
- 3 The Pharisees wanted to take a shot at Jesus after finding out the Sadducees had failed and were silenced by Jesus' authoritative teachings. The Pharisees and Sadducees were vying for popularity that Jesus held among the people.
- 4 Their strategy was to find a way to get the people to dislike Jesus' teachings and return to their rabbis for answers and explanations of the Old Testament.

- 5 Most common were there attempts to trap Jesus between two possibilities that would both be distasteful to the populace. They took him to task on everything from taxes to marriage.
- 6 On this day the Pharisees sent a lawyer to Jesus to debate the Mosaic law itself. His attempt was to find out how Jesus could summarize the whole law into one great commandment.
- 7 The Mosaic law contained over 613 laws, many of which required a lawyer in the illiterate days of Jesus to understand them. This lawyer intended to take Jesus to task when he provided a bad answer.
- 8 The lawyer's question suggested that he knew the answer and that Jesus had to guess the right one. This would be like someone trying to provide their own defense and the court of law today. It is safer to have the lawyer defends you.

B Jesus commands us to love God with everything.

- 1 Jesus responded in a much better way than a lawyer would ever have thought he could. Jesus offered a two-step answer. The first answer was to answer his question about the greatest commandment.
- 2 Jesus' response came from Deuteronomy 6:5. This is the follow-up to what is called the Shema. It is called this because the very first word, "Hear" is the verb Shema.
- 3 After stating that the Lord is one, a monotheistic approach to God that was different from all of the nations around Israel, Moses followed this lot up by explaining how to worship God properly based on his oneness.
- 4 Taken together, the greatest law and the second lot will actually explain the Ten Commandments. The first four commandments can be explained by loving God while the second six are explained by the second greatest commandment.
- 5 The first four commandments focus on our vertical relationship with God while the second six Commandments focus on our horizontal relationships with other human beings.
- 6 It is from the Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, that the Pharisees took literally wearing God's laws on their foreheads and right hands by using phylacteries, small wooden boxes tied to their bodies with small scrolls containing the Ten commandments in them.
- 7 Jesus changed the original wording of the Shema by subtracting "might" and adding "mind." The first word, "heart" in Hebrew included both the emotions and the mind.

- 8 The second word, “soul” referred to the entire life of the person and the part of humanity that makes up coalition and personality. This would’ve also included the body.
- 9 The last word, “might” referred to the strength of a person, worshipping God with the body. But Jesus changed this to “mind.” The Pharisees and Sadducees refused to acknowledge that they tightened the meanings of the law so that they can say they followed it perfectly.
- 10 Jesus challenged their interpretations of the law as shortsighted and intellectually dishonest. Because they used their minds to skirt the law and redefine it, Jesus added this word to the Shema so that they would not be able to escape it.
- 11 **Application:** Jesus was calling the people of his day and calls us today to love God with our everything. We are to love God with every facet of our being. We can use our minds to think on God’s goodness and greatness. We can use our hearts and involve our emotions in our worship. We can use our bodies to do what God has told us to do. We can use every moment of every day to glorify God. Jesus has challenged us to live for God with our whole being.

Matthew 22:39–40

39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. **40** On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

II. Loving people is next (vv. 39 – 40).

A Jesus commands us to love our neighbors.

- 1 Jesus calls this Shema the greatest commandment that fulfills the first commandment. The first commandment in the 10 Commandments is that we shall have no other gods before Yahweh.
- 2 To love God completely is to obey the first commandment. This is why Jesus says that the Shema guarantees we fulfill the first commandment. It also summarizes the top four commandments that all deal with our relationship with God.
- 3 The second commandment Jesus brings up goes beyond the lawyer’s question. Jesus not only properly answers his question but also goes beyond what the lawyer expected.
- 4 In this way he not only wins the debate but slams the opposition. He provided not only to deal with our relationship with God but also our relationship with our neighbor, every other human around us on this planet.

- 5 Interestingly, this law comes from Leviticus 19. Leviticus 19 is known as a summarization of Israel's ethical laws. Ethical laws have to do with how we treat each other as human beings. Therefore Leviticus 19 is a summarization of the last six laws of the 10 Commandments.
- 6 Leviticus 19:17-18 talk about how to treat your brother and your neighbor. To the Israelites, the neighbor referred to national neighbors and foreigners while the brother referred to other Israelites.
- 7 Jesus took on this definition in a parable about the Good Samaritan who treated the injured Israelite along the roadside better than two other Israelites. Everyone is our neighbor.
- 8 More of the 10 Commandments deal with our human relationships rather than our relationship with God. We must remember that every human contains the image of God and therefore the way we treat one another bears direct correlation to our worship of God and our relationship with him.
- 9 **Application:** The way we treat one another is most important to God. We may think that we can get away with putting each other down and mistreating one another but someone who is truly godly cares how they treat other human beings. It is not enough to have a vibrant and intimate relationship with God. We must treat one another the way that we would treat God himself without worship.

B Jesus expects us to go the extra mile.

- 1 Jesus went the extra mile in his debate with the lawyer and he expects us to go the extra mile in our relationship with God and with humanity. Not only did he answer the question but also gave the second greatest commandment.
- 2 Verse 40 sums up that this one-two punch of commandments effectively summarizes the 10 Commandments and the whole lot, as well as the prophets.
- 3 As mentioned, the first four commandments refer to our relationship with God as does Jesus' quotation of Deuteronomy 6:5 in loving God with our whole being.
- 4 But Jesus went the extra mile in giving the second greatest commandment from Leviticus 19:18 that summarizes the last six Commandments dealing with our relationship with other human beings.
- 5 Not only does this one-two punch sum up the law but also sums up the prophets. The prophets were constantly bringing Israel's relationship with God up in the common phrase, "Return to the Lord" and repentance.

- 6 But equally important to the prophets of the Old Testament was human relationships between brothers and neighbors. These mouthpieces for God to Israel show that these two issues are most important to God and Israel's failure in them caused their exile from the promised land.
- 7 **Application:** Jesus expects us to go the extra mile in our relationship with him and with other human beings. God expects us to bring our very best before him and to give our everything in worship and service to him. He also expects us to treat one another with respect and kindness because everyone contains the image of God. The way we treat God and his creatures matters deeply to him and it should matter deeply to us.

Conclusion

when Jesus was challenged on the greatest commandment out of all of the laws he not only answered the question but went the extra mile to give the second greatest commandment. Through this process he applied the 10 Commandments of the law to every single person. In the book of Luke, in this same episode the lawyer tells Jesus that he is answered well. Jesus has high expectations of you and of me that we would treat God with reverence and awe and treat our fellow human beings with respect and dignity. God cares the way we treat one another and if we mistreat each other it hurts his heart. Let us follow the whole law with our whole being and treated God with our and reverence and fellow human beings with respect.