

Small Group Guide

A Love You Can See | Mark 12:28-34

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Take a few minutes to welcome everyone and open with a brief prayer, asking God to open hearts and minds to what he wants each person to receive from this time together.

SERMON RECAP

In Mark 12:28-34, a scribe approaches Jesus and asks which command is the most important of all 613 commands found in the Mosaic law. Rather than naming one, Jesus names two -- love God with everything you have, and love your neighbor as yourself. Pastor Mike walked us through why these two commands cannot be separated, and why the ability to love this way flows first from receiving God's love for us, not from trying harder to manufacture love on our own.

ICEBREAKER

Think of someone in your life who has shown you an unexpected or undeserved act of kindness or generosity. Without overthinking it, share a brief description of that moment with the group. How did it make you feel, and did it change the way you treated others afterward?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The great commandment is called singular because even though it contains two commands, there is only one love. Love for God and love for others cannot be separated.

- Loving God is not about religious performance. The scribe himself acknowledged, while standing in the temple, that loving God and loving others is far more important than all the religious activity surrounding him.
 - We do not manufacture love for God or others on our own. As Jesus' disciple John wrote in 1 John 4:19, we love because God first loved us. His love poured into us is what makes love for others possible.
 - God's love flowing through us makes our love for him visible to the world. According to Jesus in John 13, the distinguishing mark of his disciples is that they love one another.
 - Receiving God's love is where it all starts. Until we genuinely receive and rest in his love for us, loving others will feel like an impossible performance requirement.
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Getting into the Text

1. Pastor Mike noted that the scribe asked about the *weightiest* command -- not to find a loophole, but to understand what is most central. What do you think motivated that question? Can you relate to genuinely wanting to know what God is really after?
2. Jesus quoted the Shema from Deuteronomy 6, a prayer faithful Jews recited every morning and evening. What do you think is the difference between reciting something as a habit and actually living it out? Where do you see that tension in your own life?
3. Jesus was not asked for a second command, but he gave one anyway. What does it tell us about God that he refuses to let love for him be separated from love for others?

Going Deeper

4. Pastor Mike described the difference between being a reservoir and being a river -- between keeping God's love to ourselves and letting it flow through us to others. Which of those two images best describes where you are right now, and why?
5. The sermon pointed out that until we trust God as King, we tend to spend our energy protecting and building our own little kingdoms. In what areas of your life do you find yourself doing that most? What would it look like to genuinely hand that area over to God?
6. John writes in 1 John 4:20 that if someone claims to love God but does not love the people around them, they are lying to themselves. That is a hard statement.

How do you respond to it honestly? Is there a person or group of people in your life that this challenge brings to mind?

7. Pastor Mike said that the people Jesus probably had in mind when he said “love your neighbor” are not the easy ones to love. Think of a difficult person in your life to love right now. What would it look like to take one step toward loving that person this week?

Bringing It Home

8. Jesus told the scribe, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” The scribe understood the right things but had not yet chosen to follow Jesus. Is there an area of your own life where you know the right thing but have not yet taken the step of actually following through? What is holding you back?
 9. Pastor Mike closed by describing two kinds of people who might have been in the room -- those who are exhausted from trying to prove their love for God through religious activity, and those who have never really experienced God's love at all. Which description resonates with you more right now? What do you need from God in this season?
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PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose at least one of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

Receive Before You Give — Set aside fifteen minutes this week to sit quietly and reflect on what God has already done for you in Jesus. Do not turn it into a to-do list. Simply receive. Journal what comes to mind.

Name the Person — Think of one specific person in your life who is genuinely difficult to love. Commit to one concrete act of love toward that person this week -- not because they deserve it, but because God first loved you when you did not deserve it.

Examine Your Religious Activity — Take an honest look at your current spiritual habits — church attendance, prayer, Bible reading, serving, giving. Ask yourself whether these practices are deepening your genuine love for God and others, or whether they have quietly become a substitute for it. Talk to God honestly about what you find.

Share the Love — Think of someone in your life who does not yet know God's love. Pray for them by name every day this week, and ask God to show you one way to be a tangible expression of his love to them.

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time together by praying specifically for one another. Ask each person to share one thing they want to trust God with this week. Pray over those things together, and remind one another that we love because he first loved us.

Next week, continue in the Gospel of Mark and come ready to share how your practical application went.