

Our mission statement is “*Building Bridges to Connect Everyone to the Dynamic Life in Christ*”. The passage that this study guide covers is at the heart of living a dynamic life., loving God and others.

These guides will be organized using the acronym HEAR as a way to teach people to read the Bible. HEAR stands for **H**ighlight the passage, **E**xplain the passage, **A**pply the passage, and **R**espond to the passage.

Each week there will be a page to print off for each member of your group. The printed sheet will have the Bible passage you will discuss and some questions in the margins to guide them in examining those verses.

Additionally, there will be a leader’s guide that will give you helpful notes on the passage (i.e. background information and definitions) as well as discussion questions to lead your group. These don’t need to be printed for each member of your group.

These guides are designed to be discussed BEFORE the sermon so the group can discuss the passage before the pastor shares his insights. However, they can just as easily be used after the weekend message.

Our hope is these tools will (a) help your group members learn to study/read their Bibles outside of the group and (b) give you a helpful outline for facilitating the group discussion. If you have comments or questions about the discussion guides we would love to hear your constructive feedback. Send your feedback to us at

[groups@foresthill.org](mailto:groups@foresthill.org).

---

## *How to Use This Discussion Guide*

- Print off the “Life Group Member Guide” for each member of your group – or email it to them in advance.
- Use the main idea for each week to quickly understand the text’s theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the respond section at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That’s okay! You don’t have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Prepare for your group time by reading the passages and the notes in a study Bible.** A good study Bible can give you some insights into the passages and how they connect to the whole book or the whole story of the Bible.
3. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God’s Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
4. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what the teaching pastor said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, “That’s a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we’re studying?”
5. **Encourage participation, but don’t let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. Don’t allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
6. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, “What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?”

We pray that you will hear God speak through Scripture and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him as you build bridges with others in your sphere of influence. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more engaged with His Word and lead you on in a dynamic life in Christ.

**Date of Sermon:** June 7, 2020

**Topic of Sermon:** The Great Commandment:

**Main Passage:** Mark 12: 28-34

**BEFORE your group meeting:**

- Look up the main passage in a study Bible and read the study notes.
- Print or send the “Group Member Guide” (last page) to your group members.
- Review the “Group Member Guide” for yourself.
- Have enough pens for each group member.

**Main Idea:** Living a dynamic life in Christ has as it’s heart loving God and others.

---

Icebreakers (optional)

---

- Tell about a time when you were misinterpreted or misunderstood and wrongly accused.
- Can you recall an incident when this has happened to a public figure? How was it handled?

**Leader’s Note:** Introduce the next part of the group meeting. You can read this introduction or put it in your own words:

*“Take a few minutes to read through the printed passage and then we will discuss it as a group. Focus primarily on the instructions in the “Highlight” and “Explain” sections. Bear in mind that all the passages just before and after these verses help to understand the context. This passage deals with opposition that Jesus encountered early in his ministry which even included his own family.*

When you come back together, use the questions below to guide the discussion.

---

**HIGHLIGHT** the Passage

---

- What key ideas, words or phrases stood out to you from the passage? What is the significance of those?
- Did this passage raise any questions for you?
- How would you summarize this passage in your own words? Would anyone else add or emphasize something to that summary?

---

**EXPLAIN** the Passage

---

- What people are present and what are some things this passage reveals about them? Read context to get more information.
- Do you think the question by the scribe was sincere or a trap? Why or why not?
- What does Jesus affirm in the man and what does that tell us about how He views those who seek truth?

---

**APPLY** the Passage

---

- What truth from this passage do you need to cling to? What makes that truth significant to you?
- By God’s power, what is God calling you to change in how you think, speak, or act?
- What are some practical ways you can live out these “commands”?
- How did Jesus live out what He said?

---

**RESPOND** to the Passage

---

- Take a few minutes in prayer to thank God for the example of Jesus. Ask Him for His help in how to practically love Him and others.

12:28 From the Matthew passage, it is clear that the Pharisees were the instigators in the question of this scribe; but, if the Pharisees had chosen him to "carry the ball," as it were, in this contest with Jesus, they had inadvertently selected a questioner who was almost persuaded to follow the Lord. Nevertheless, he asked the question, as he had been directed, "trying him" ([Matthew 22:35](#)), the purpose of trying Jesus being not that of the actual questioner but that of the class he represented. Jesus quickly discerned this and recognized it. (Coffman's commentary)

With regard to the love of God, St. Bernard says, "The measure of our love to God is to love him without measure; for the immense goodness of God deserves all the love that we can possibly give to him". (Bible Hub Commentary)

12:29 **The Lord is one ...** This is a quotation from [Deuteronomy 6:4](#); and the oneness of God, as set forth in the Old Testament, is a compound unity, like the oneness of the people, or the oneness in a marriage. The Hebrew word that denotes this is [~'echad], and must be distinguished from [~'achid], meaning an absolute unity. There is no argument here against the concept of a Trinity.

The great commandment is the one from which all others are derived, the one that polarizes the soul with reference to the Creator, and is therefore the root of all true worship and obedience of God. "The measure of our love to God is to love him without measure; for the immense goodness of God deserves all the love that we can give him."

Monotheism is dogmatically affirmed in this commandment; and the need for man to love God with his entire being is firmly declared.

**... mind ... soul ... strength ...** "It is impossible to exactly define each of these faculties, though it seems clear that some differentiation is intended. The command is for the complete response of the whole person."

This is actually the goal of all God's dealings with the human family, namely, that they should love God. This purpose of the Almighty explains everything in the Bible. When Adam and Eve were placed in the paradise of Eden, God could have created them so that it would have been impossible for them to have violated his will, just as animals cannot sin. God, however, desired that his human creation should love him; and, because love that is coerced or forced is not actually love, God made the principle of freedom of the will operative in humanity; but with that freedom of choice, the consequences of the wrong choice became inherent in human life. From the Adamic fall there came the need for redemption, and the whole drama of human salvation was set in motion.

God's purpose, however, has never wavered, the great intention continuing to be that men shall love their Creator. Love of God is a far greater thing even than faith; for if men love God, they will also invariably obey him ([John 14:15](#)), something that is not true of faith at all. It is in this supreme truth that the justification is found for Paul's declaration that "the greatest of these is love" ([1 Corinthians 13:13](#)); and it is the undergirding of Jesus' declaration that the first and greatest commandment is to love God.

Here also is the explanation of why there was a forbidden tree in Eden, why Satan had access to the human creation, the environment having been specifically ordered by an all-wise God for the purpose of giving Adam and Eve freedom of choice. Had they not sinned, there is no reason to believe that the testing inherent in such a situation would have been discontinued. It is God's will that every man shall have a right of choice, a choice that derives finally from the man's moral nature. This accounts also for the truth that God's revelation to man has never been so overwhelmingly objective as to take away from men the right of denying it **IF THEY SO DESIRE**. Therefore the love of God cannot be induced by purely intellectual proof, or demonstration, faith having ever been not altogether an intellectual decision but a moral one ([John 3:19](#)).

Full passage commentary thoughts (Enduring Word Bible Commentary):

**Which is the first commandment of all?** With this question, they tested Jesus to see if He would show disregard or neglect for some area of the Law of Moses. Instead of promoting one command over another, Jesus defined the law in its essence: love God with everything you have and love your neighbor as yourself.

**Love the LORD your God... love your neighbor as yourself:** In this we see that what God really wants from man is **love**. We can obey God without loving Him, but if we do love Him obedience will follow.

- Jesus said this was the **first of all the commandments**.
- It is the first commandment in regard to age. Before Adam and Eve had any other command, they were commanded to love the Lord their God who created them.
- It is the first commandment in regard to priority. Every other act of obedience is empty if we do not love God first.

**To love Him with all... and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices:** The scribe's response to Jesus was right on the mark. It is easy to think that religious ceremony and devotion are more important than love for God and our neighbor, but this isn't the case. A thousand empty burnt offerings do not mean more to God than a single act of love done in His name.

This is actually the goal of all God's dealings with the human family, namely, that they should love God. This purpose of the Almighty explains everything in the Bible. When Adam and Eve were placed in the paradise of Eden, God could have created them so that it would have been impossible for them to have violated his will, just as animals cannot sin. God, however, desired that his human creation should love him; and, because love that is coerced or forced is not actually love, God made the principle of freedom of the will operative in humanity; but with that freedom of choice, the consequences of the wrong choice became inherent in human life. From the Adamic fall there came the need for redemption, and the whole drama of human salvation was set in motion.

God's purpose, however, has never wavered, the great intention continuing to be that men shall love their Creator. Love of God is a far greater thing even than faith; for if men love God, they will also invariably obey him ([John 14:15](#)), something that is not true of faith at all. It is in this supreme truth that the justification is found for Paul's declaration that "the greatest of these is love" ([1 Corinthians 13:13](#)); and it is the undergirding of Jesus' declaration that the first and greatest commandment is to love God.

Here also is the explanation of why there was a forbidden tree in Eden, why Satan had access to the human creation, the environment having been specifically ordered by an all-wise God for the purpose of giving Adam and Eve freedom of choice. Had they not sinned, there is no reason to believe that the testing inherent in such a situation would have been discontinued. It is God's will that every man shall have a right of choice, a choice that derives finally from the man's moral nature. This accounts also for the truth that God's revelation to man has never been so overwhelmingly objective as to take away from men the right of denying it **IF THEY SO DESIRE**. Therefore the love of God cannot be induced by purely intellectual proof, or demonstration, faith having ever been not altogether an intellectual decision but a moral one ([John 3:19](#)). (Coffman's commentary)

This is why the greatest commandment of all is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." 6 The more we love God, the more we become the people He created us to be.

Wayne Cordeiro  
The Divine Mentor: Growing Your Faith as You Sit at the Feet of the Savior

#kindquotes

**Life Group Member Guide**

**Focal Passage:** Mark 12:28-34 (CSB)

**Passage in Context:** Mark 12 (CSB)



**Bible-Reading Tip:** The use of parallel passages such as occurs throughout the Gospels helps to give a bigger and fuller context of the stories, encounters and events in the Bible. For example, we see the context for the writing of many of Paul’s letters (that became known as the Pastoral Epistles) by reading the Book of Acts.

**The Primary Commands**

<sup>28</sup> One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, “Which command is the most important of all?”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The most important is Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. <sup>31</sup> The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other command greater than these.”

<sup>32</sup> Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, teacher. You have correctly said that he is one, and there is no one else except him. <sup>33</sup> And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

<sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And no one dared to question him any longer.

Parallel passages: Matthew 22:34-40, Luke 10:25-28

**HEAR Bible Reading Method**

**HIGHLIGHT the passage**

- Underline any repeated words or key ideas you see.
- Note any questions you have about what you read.
- In 2-3 sentences, summarize what was said or what happened.

**EXPLAIN the passage**

- What was revealed about God? His character, desires, and/or actions?
- What was revealed about people? What we are/do or what we should be/do?

**APPLY the passage**

- From this reading, what truth do you need to embrace?
- By God’s power, how will you THINK, SPEAK, or ACT differently based on what you read?

**RESPOND to the passage**

- Talk to God about what you’ve seen and learned in this passage.
- Ask Him to help you apply the truth to your life.