

Invitation to the Greatest Commandments

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Mark 12:28-34 NIV

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.”

32 “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Theme: Of the 613 laws in Judaism, Jesus directs his conversation partner to only two: The Shema (Deut 6:5) and Lev 19:18. We tend to make things much more complicated. Not only is Jesus’ teaching so amazing because it simple and clear, but also because he make it plain that you can’t keep one commandment unless you keep the other, and that as we grow in authentic love for one, we grow in our capacity for the other.

Opening Illustration: The “Need” Box

Posted on FB page: Julia Brown Food, Fitness and Fun, September 23, 2018 ·

A few weeks ago I posted about the “I need” box I was starting in my class. I wanted to give everyone an update.

If you recall, it was a way for my students to ask for help without having to come directly to me. They would write it on a card and leave it in the box.

The first week, two boys let me know about a bullying situation. We got it taken care of.

The next week I changed the format a little and starting having EVERY student put a card in the box every day. They didn’t have to write on it, but every student visits the box daily.

Since then, I’ve had a plethora of “needs” submitted. They range from specific supply needs,

seat changes, special handshakes when entering class, after school help, bullying situations, and even daily hugs.

What's even better is students are starting to come to me directly with issues/challenges they are having bypassing the box completely.

I've been teaching middle school for 15 years, and I can honestly say this is the best thing I've ever done to reach my kids this early in the school year.

Thank you to everyone who liked, commented on, and shared that original post. I hope many other teachers find it as successful as I have.

The Greatest Commandments are simple.

- The Scribe would really fit in well in Silicon Valley because he says: Boil it down for me. Give me a simple graphic, a bullet point.
- Jesus gives two bullet points, but these two points are – thankfully – dynamic and inseparable.
- That is, as we grow in our capacity to do one, we will inevitably grow in our capacity to do the other.
- What 1 John 4 put negatively – People who say they love God but keep hating others are liars – we can put positively. The more you love God, the easier it is to love who God loves. And the more we love others, the more we see how they are made in God's image and find ourselves loving God more.
- These are rules to live the way life was intended, to live in the best possible way. [Pro tips]
- If you don't follow the "commands" of basketball, it's not fun to play.
- If you don't follow the rules of the road, things get pretty scary!
- This is the very best way to live.

The Greatest Commandments are hard.

- Of the 613 laws in Judaism, Jesus directs his conversation partner to only two: The Shema (Deut 6:5) and Lev 19:18. We tend to make things much more complicated.
- Jesus says love God with your everything. How much is "all"? All is a lot.
- Internal dialogue checks:
 - That is so vague I don't know where to start.
 - I'm so hurting right now. I can't love others when I feel so in need myself.
 - I'm stressed. This is just another burden, I feel guilty, etc.
 - I'm shy.

- My ability to overthink, be self-critical, be perfectionistic is incredibly high. When Jesus says, “Love God with Your ALL” I immediately think about all the ways I FAIL to do this. my first thought is: I don’t, I can’t, it’s impossible.
- The same is true for loving my neighbor. We know Jesus doesn’t just mean the person who lives in the house next door – though sometimes that is hard enough. No, Jesus means loves all people – everyone.
- Love God with your ALL, and love ALL people.
- And the more I reflect on this, the more we may notice that it’s hard to love God and hard to love others when I don’t like myself too much.

The Greatest Commandments are a call to greatness.

- Where should we start? We can start by “putting out the box.”
- We put out the box for God by asking, “Lord, what do you want from me in the way of loving You more, and with more of myself?”
- We can “put out the box” for others by asking God to help pay more attention to others, make ourselves more available to others, and more open is simply asking, “Is there something you need from me?”

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