



## FJBC

DISCIPLE: HOPE IN THE BOOK OF MARK • DISCIPLES LOVE GOD AND ALL AROUND THEM •  
MARK 12:28-34 • THIS SESSION CORRELATES WITH BEN'S SERMON ON 1/15/2020

## MAIN POINT

Following Christ means loving God and loving others.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What are some of the unique or quirky ways you've shown love to someone you are close to (spouse, child, parent, etc.)?**

**What are some ways you've seen the word "love" used that fall short of the biblical meaning?**

As Christians, one of the goals of our lives is to grow in Christlikeness, a journey we will be on for the rest of our lives. As we learn to be like Jesus, it is important that we learn to follow His command to love God and others. He set the example for us. Following Jesus well means loving God and others well.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

This passage is just a part of what Ben preached on Sunday. Take some time to review all the characteristics of a disciple that he mentioned on Sunday.

**What did Ben mean when he said "You can't be religious enough to earn God's favor"?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MARK 12:28-31.

Jesus gave His great commandment in response to a question a religious leader raised about the most important of God's laws. Although the leader only wanted to know the single most important, Jesus gave it to him in two parts: love God and love your neighbor as yourself.

**Describe what it looks like in your life to love God the way Jesus put it in verses 29-30.**

**What are some of the things that make it challenging to love God as Jesus tells you?**

**The final component of Jesus' great commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. Why does it matter so much that we love others?**

**What are some specific ways Jesus demonstrated His love for God and others throughout His earthly ministry?**

**Think of a need in your community. How can you demonstrate the love of Christ by meeting that need?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MARK 12:32-34.

**What surprises you most about the scribe's answer to Jesus?**

**What do you think was the scribe's biggest issue?**

**What did Jesus mean that the scribe was not far off from the kingdom of God? What else was needed?**

**What do you think is so daring about bringing your deepest questions to Jesus?**

Loving God with everything in our beings is a challenge for us because we live in a world that tempts us to love it and everything it offers, including money, security, power, acceptance, and so on. All of these temptations lure us away from God, and we end up loving Him halfheartedly. However, Jesus makes it clear that **we should love God more than anything else** in the world. Out of that love grows a love for others that leads them to Christ and changes our world for the better.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Why do you think love is such a defining mark of the Christian? Do we tend to think of love as the primary mark of the Christian life? If not, what do we think of as that mark? Why?**

**What are some tangible expressions of God's kind of love you might practice this week: At your workplace? In your home? With your friends? In your neighborhood?**

**Is there someone in particular in your life who most needs to know the love of Christ? What can you do to demonstrate God's love to them today?**

## PRAYER

Thank God for the love He's shown us in sending Jesus to die for us. Pray that He would help us to love well, as we are called to do—to love Him with our whole being, and to love others as ourselves. Pray that we'd see the needs of our neighbors, wherever they are and we'd be moved to act on their behalf as we testify to the Lordship of Christ.

## COMMENTARY

| MARK 12:28-34

This pronouncement story contains two authoritative sayings, one in vv. 29–31 and one in v. 34. The former is by far the more important. This story differs somewhat from the preceding one in that it does not involve a controversy. Indeed, the friendly attitude of the scribe, which is different from all other exchanges between Jesus and these teachers of the law, supports the authenticity of Mark's account.

12:28 The question reflects the fact that the scribes had identified 613 separate commandments, 365 of which were negative and 248 of which were positive. They divided them further into "heavy" and "light," i.e., more important and less important. An example of a similar question but a different answer is found in the reply of Hillel (ca. 40 b.c.–a.d. 10) to a Gentile who asked him to summarize the law while he stood on one leg: "What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbour: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof."

12:29–30 The quotation is from Deut 6:4–5, the first part of the famous Shema. In the second century the confession of faith that consisted of Deut 6:4–9; 11:13–21; Num 15:37–41 was recited twice daily by pious Jews. Matthew and Luke do not have the prefatory sentence, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one"; but it is crucial because the obligation to love God is based on his oneness. Because he is one, love for him must be undivided. The inclusion was important for Mark's church in their debates with Jews in order to affirm that they also were monotheists, not polytheists as the Jews sometimes accused them of being. "With all your mind" is added to the statement in Deuteronomy. The piling up of the terms "heart," "soul," and

“mind” is just a way of saying “with your whole being” and is not intended to designate the component parts of human nature.

The New Testament contains comparatively few references to loving God. In addition to the present passage and its parallels in Matt 22:37 and Luke 10:27, there are: Luke 11:42; John 5:42; 14:31; Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9; 8:3; Jas 1:12; 2:5; 1 John 2:5, 15; 4:20; 5:2–3; Jude 21; Rev 2:4. John 14:15, 24; 21:15–17; 1 Cor 16:22; Eph 6:24; 1 Pet 1:8 refer to loving Christ. If any significance can be attributed to this phenomenon, it is that the New Testament writers were preoccupied with the amazing love of God for sinful human beings.

12:31 The second quotation is from Lev 19:18. In the first part of that verse the neighbor is defined as “one of your people,” i.e., a fellow Israelite. Leviticus 19:33–34 extends the love command to resident aliens. It is not likely that many first-century Jews extended it any further. Therefore one of the most significant elements in the teaching of Jesus was to redefine the neighbor as everybody, including the hated Samaritans and Gentiles (cf. Luke 10:30–37, which follows immediately his account of the discussion about the greatest commandment).

One of Jesus’ other great teaching contributions was to bring together and virtually merge the commands to love God and to love fellow human beings. Some deny that Jesus was the first to relate the two. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (second cent. b.c.) seem to do so. Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of Jesus who probably died about a.d. 50, seems to have also. Even if a few others before or during the time of Jesus saw the interrelationship of the commands to love God and love others, no one else put such great emphasis on the combination and made it essential. Jesus showed that it was impossible to really love God without loving neighbors. Love for God is expressed by loving others.

The statement “as yourself” does not justify the self-love advocated by modern psychology as necessary for a healthy self-image. It merely acknowledges that human beings do love themselves—far too much in fact—and that God deserves as much—actually far more.

12:32 The material in vv. 32–34 is peculiar to Mark. Verse 32 is the only place in the Gospels where a scribe is described as being favorably disposed toward Jesus, and v. 34 is the only place where Jesus commends a scribe. Not all scribes and Pharisees were bad. Indeed, at their best they represented the finest element in Judaism.

12:33 The elevation of an ethical quality over sacrificial worship stands in the tradition of 1 Sam 15:22; Hos 6:6; and perhaps also Isa 1:11–17. The word translated “burnt offerings” refers to those offerings totally consumed on the altar. The word translated “sacrifices” refers to offerings in general, only a small portion of which was burned, and the remainder was given to the priest

or returned to the worshiper to eat as a sacred meal. The two terms summarize and represent the entire sacrificial system.

12:34 There is not much difference in loving God and trusting him. In addition to acknowledging the necessity of loving God and humanity, the man evidently committed himself to do just that. He was receptive to Jesus as a person as well as to his teaching. No wonder Jesus indicated that the man was not far from entering the kingdom, from letting God reign in his life. By saying that he was not far, Jesus encouraged him to go the remainder of the way by wholeheartedly following Jesus. Whether he did so cannot be known, but every reader of Mark hopes so.