

THE CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY
CHILDREN'S MEETING LESSON

DATE: August 18, 2019

SUBJECT: THE GREAT AND FIRST COMMANDMENT (1 of 2)—You Shall Love the Lord Your God

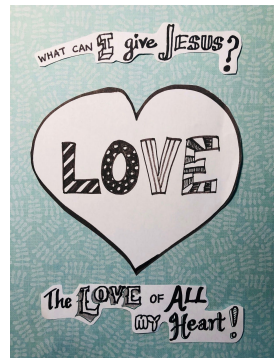
SCRIPTURES: Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28; Romans 5:8; Psalms 116:1-2a; Hebrews 13:6a; Psalms 28:7a; John 14:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Deuteronomy 7:9; 10:12; 30:16; John 14:21; 1 Corinthians 8:3; Ephesians 6:24; Romans 8:28; Psalms 97:10a

AIM: To show the children how lovable and irresistible our Lord is and to inspire them to love Him with their whole heart.

MEMORY VERSES: Deuteronomy 6:5 (And you shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might); Mark 12:30 (And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength.); Psalms 116:1-2a (I love Jehovah because He hears my voice, my supplications, because He inclines His ear to me;...); Deuteronomy 7:9 (Know therefore that it is Jehovah your God who is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and lovingkindness to the thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments,)

SUGGESTED SONGS: 146 (I want the Lord to have the first place in my heart); 3713 (Jesus Lord, I want to love you even more); 151 (We love Him); 152 (What can I give Jesus); 6711 (The Great Command); 6401 (Say to the Lord I Love You); 9013 (I Love God!); 9010 (Thank You, Lord, You are Mindful of Man)

CRAFTS IDEA: Heart craft - see attached template. *Younger children:* Color and cut out the heart on Page 1 of template and paste it onto Page 2 that says "What can I give Jesus?" *Older children:* Color and put the heart into 6-8 pieces creating a puzzle. Exchange the heart puzzle with another child and each child assembles the heart puzzle and glues it onto the craft sheet.



APPROACH: Ask the children which of the Ten Commandments they think is the most important. Tell them they cannot answer, "all of them." They must give reasons for their choice. Enjoy the discussion and see if they touch on all the commandments.

CONTENT: In Matthew chapter 22 a lawyer asked the Lord Jesus what is the great commandment in the law. The Lord told him that the great and first commandment is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." The Lord, however, did not stop there. He continued, "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:36-40). The Lord's answer was like two sides of a coin: on one side, we should love God, and on the other side, we should love our neighbor. The first four commandments are concerned with loving God. The last six commandments are concerned with loving man (our neighbor). God's commandments overall have to do with love. This week we will look at the great and first commandment.

If we look at the first four commandments that God gave to the children of Israel, it seems that these are four different commandments. Actually they can be summed up in one commandment - we should love the Lord our God. We should love Him above all else (1st commandment); we should worship only Him and not any idols (2nd commandment); we should love and honor His name (3rd commandment); and we should love and set apart His day (4th commandment). In the New Testament, the Lord actually told us

that there are two commandments which summarize the entire Ten Commandments. The first is to love God. (We will look at loving our neighbor next week.)

Why does the Lord command us to love Him? The Lord longs to have an intimate relationship with each one of us, a relationship of love. Just like we need to be loved, the Lord has a need to be loved. We know how we feel when someone loves or does not love us. This is the same way the Lord feels. He wants very much to be loved by us.

How can we love the Lord our God? Some people are just like magnets. Something about them attracts us so that we cannot resist them; we cannot help but want to be with them. Ask the children: Why do we like some people? Why are they so attractive to us? It is usually because of what they are like (kind, generous, friendly, loving, etc.) and what they do (they help us, they share things with us, etc.). The Lord is this kind of person and even more so. The more we know of Him, the more we will love Him. What are some qualities of the Lord that make Him so irresistible and lovable?

What is God like? He is *loving, merciful, compassionate, and kind*. He is *wise*. He is *good*. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He went about doing good, helping people, healing them, caring for them (Acts 10:38). He is still the same today. How good He is towards us! He is so *generous and giving*. How many things He has given to us! Our health, our parents who care for us, our friends, our toys, etc. **Psalms 86:5** *For You, O Lord, are good and ready to forgive and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.*

What has God done for us? While we were yet sinners, He died for us (Rom. 5:8). The Lord Jesus loves each one of us. When we confess our sins to Him, He forgives us because He paid the penalty for our sins. How can we not love Him? Our gratitude and thankfulness can never be enough. He is worthy and deserving of all of our love.

What God does for us. (Activity suggestion: give the children the verses only, or one verse each and ask them what that verse tells us about what the Lord does for us.)

- **He hears our prayers and answers them.** *I love Jehovah, because He hears My voice, my supplications, Because He inclines His ear to me... Psa. 116:1-2a.*
- **He helps us.** *So that being of good courage, we say, "The Lord is my Helper..." Heb. 13:6a.*
- **He gives us strength and encouragement in times of trials.** Nothing is too difficult for Him. He is able. *Jehovah is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped...Psa. 28:7a*
- **He comforts us in our troubles.** *Do not let your heart be troubled; believe into God, believe also into Me. John 14:1*
- **He preserves us from the evil one.** *But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. 2 Thess. 3:3*

[Serving ones: Probably the first three points of the following will be sufficient for the younger children.]

Benefits of loving the Lord. His word tells us that...

- **We will be blessed.** *If you obey the commandments of Jehovah your God...to love Jehovah your God...Jehovah your God will bless you. Deut. 30:16*
- **We will know His lovingkindness.** *Know therefore that it is Jehovah your God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and lovingkindness to the thousandth generation with those who love Him... Deut. 7:9*
- **We will be loved by Him...** *he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him. John 14:21*

- **We will be preserved.** *Jehovah preserves all who love Him...Psa. 145:20a*
- **We will be known by Him.** *But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him. 1 Cor. 8:3*
- **His grace will be with us.** *Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility. Eph. 6:24*
- **All things will work together for good to us.** *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God... Rom. 8:28*
- **We will hate evil.** *O you who love Jehovah, hate evil! Psa. 97:10a*
- **We will shine brightly to those around us.** *But may those who love Him be like the sun When it rises in its might. Judges 5:31m*

SUGGESTED APPLICATION:

Ask each child: How can **you** love the Lord? Some suggestions: *Listen to the children's ideas first and encourage simple ways to love the Lord.* They might suggest certain behavior like obeying parents or teachers. Encourage them and say, "Yes, that will make the Lord very happy and show Him that you love Him." There is no need to mention every item suggested here.

- We may not think it is much, but it is very important to **tell the Lord that we love Him.** We can learn to say, "Lord Jesus, I love you." This is one of the best ways to show our love. Tell Him day by day; tell Him in the morning, tell Him during the day, and tell Him in the evening.
- **Do one thing a day to please the Lord.** It's like when we make/bring a surprise to Mommy to make her happy. [Have the children think of some things and even write them down. Make it an assignment and follow through next week.]
- **Sing a song to Him.** Some of the songs are suggested above.
- **Prepare an offering for Him** from your allowance or savings. Even do it secretly, so no one knows—only you and the Lord. Children, however, should check with their parents or guardians.
- Older ones: **Write a letter expressing your love to the Lord** [This can also be an assignment.]
- **Spend some time with the Lord every day.** Talk to Him about everything.
- **Pray that the Lord would give us a loving heart for Him.** Tell Him that we want to give Him the love of **all** our heart—not just part of our heart or half of our heart, but our **whole** heart.

Adapted from the Church in New York City Children's Meeting lessons: 7/19/86; 7/12/98; 7/14/02; 8/10/08; 8/24/14