

Mark

STUDENT HANDOUT—Lesson 1



KEY THOUGHTS

KEY POINT

With God's help, I will love God with all I have and I will love others as I love myself.

KEY VERSE

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." **Mark 12:30**



READ

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?"

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 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."

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. (Mark 12:28–34)

If all of God's commands are to be obeyed, why call one the most important? Jesus did it to answer a question. He could have said, "All of them!" Instead, Jesus quoted one of the commands in Deuteronomy. This was no ordinary command.

In Deuteronomy 6, Moses gave the Law of God to the people of Israel. These laws are God's promises to His people. They also lay the foundation for Israel to be His chosen people. If the people were faithful and obeyed God's rules, they would be blessed. If they failed to obey, they would be punished.

When Moses introduced God's commands, he said the same thing that Jesus said in Mark 12.

MARK—Lesson 1

This is known as the Shema. It's a sacred prayer among Jewish people even today.

It begins with a call for the people of Israel to listen. Then, it declares that the Lord is one. This might seem like a no-brainer to you, but in Moses' time, it was a big deal. It made the Israelites different from other nations. Other nations worshipped many gods. Israel worshipped the One True God. This was a radical idea back then. Even today, in some places, the idea of one God is pretty radical.

After declaring that God is one, the next part of the prayer gives us the first and most important command. It can be summed up like this: Love God with your entire being. We are to show our love to God with every area of our life. Loving God happens every minute of the day with every choice we make.

From there, Jesus moved to the second most important command. It's still part of God's Law. It can be found in Leviticus 19:18. "Love your neighbor as yourself." What does this mean? It means the same thing as the Golden Rule: "Do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12). Treat other people as you would like to be treated. Who is your neighbor? According to Jesus, it's anyone you have the chance to help—physically, spiritually, or emotionally. (For more on who your neighbor is, read Luke 10:25–37.)



REFLECT

As a group, discuss the following questions.

- Why does Jesus expect you to love people who are mean to you?
- When have you faced someone who was unkind, and how did you treat them?
- Who do you need to ask God to help you love today?

Review the Key Point and the Key Verse.

PRAYER: Dear God, thank You for giving me Your love, even though I don't deserve it. Please help me to have that kind of love for those who treat me poorly. I want to be a shining example of Your love and forgiveness to everyone around me. Amen.



RESPOND

Read Matthew 18:23–35 and create a short drama acting out Jesus' story. Then, discuss the meaning of true forgiveness and think about people you need to forgive. Ask God to help you show love, forgiveness, and kindness to those people.

Remember to read your Bible this week using the Bible reading plan of your choice. The Fire Bible: Student Edition provides a reading plan that follows a two-year design for reading the entire Bible. Follow that reading plan in order to earn the green Bible Reading merit.