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# The Greatest Commandment

Children's Sermon on Matthew 22:34-40

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## The Greatest Commandment

**Children's Message:** Love God and Love Your Neighbor

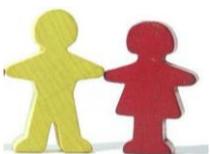
**Main Objective:** This Gospel lesson reminds us of what should be the most important element of our lives as Christians. At the end of the day, the essential "rule" to follow is that we love God and love one another. If we put that first, other things should fall into place. This message seeks to communicate that to children. There are always laws, instructions, or regulations to follow. First and foremost in these should be our commitment to love the Lord and His people.

**Law/Gospel Theme:** It can be tricky to navigate through the law sometimes. We might become wrapped up in what we "should" or shouldn't do, and wonder how to recognize if we are doing "enough." The good news is that Jesus is enough. We will never perfectly keep the Law, but that's okay! This message reminds us that we are saved by God's grace. In turn, we should offer love to one another, recognizing that other things fall into place when we put love first.

**Optional Materials:** List of rules or instructions; voting ballot (second option); Bible; heart

**Bible Passage:** Matthew 22:34-40

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# Children's Sermon (Matthew 22:34-40)

## Love God and Love Your Neighbor

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*Greet children, carrying a list of rules or instructions, or perhaps a voting ballot of some sort, if that is timely. Choose what is most relevant...*

Hello, children of God! Do you know what I have here? Well, this is a set of rules (*describe whether the rules are for a game, a certain place, or otherwise...alternatively, you might have instructions. Or if it's near an election season, consider holding up a voting ballot. Adjust exact wording depending on which you are using*).

Now, sometimes people argue over rules. They might say certain rules are more important than others. They might even argue over which things are most important for us to follow. Sometimes people grow pretty upset if others disagree with what they think is essential. Sometimes people don't follow rules, and often we make mistakes! What do you think might be the most important rule on this list? (*Read off the list if necessary, and allow for responses*). You know, it's pretty tough to say.

Actually, Jesus was asked a similar question in the Gospel lesson today. The Pharisees tried to stump Him again. They came and asked what the most important commandment was. See, the Jews had the ten commandments, which were a big deal for them. But they had even more laws on top of that, actually, hundreds of specific rules that governed how they were supposed to live. They wanted Jesus to mess up somehow by picking out one of those rules over the other ones. As always, though, Jesus was too smart to fall for a trap.

He narrowed the commandments down to two key things: Love God and love others. Jesus said that the number one rule was to love God with heart, soul, and mind. That means that everything we do, think, or say should be done with God in mind. He is the most important thing. Jesus also said that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. That isn't just the person who lives next door, but all of the people we come in contact with. Jesus said that when we do those things—love God and love our neighbor, everything else comes into place. The other laws all hang on love. If we truly love God first and foremost, then we will want to follow His other commandments, too!



Now, this isn't always easy, of course. Sometimes people are hard to love. When others say unkind things or argue, we might want to be rude back at them. When rules seem unfair, we might want to disrespect the people who made them. We might even grow frustrated following God's laws, and we will probably mess them up somehow!

The good news is that we know Jesus perfectly kept the Law on our behalf, and died for us to show God's love. He knew that the greatest of all is love. He loved others, and still loves us. Because of that, we can share His love with those around us, no matter what they might do to us. And when that seems hard, we can ask God to help us. Why don't we take a moment to do that right now? Let's pray.

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## Children's Prayer Moment

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(Have kids repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for your laws

Help us to remember that love is the most important one!

Help us to share your love with those around us

Thank you for your love

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!

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## Bible Verses/story to Reference:

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*But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. <sup>35</sup> And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

*-Matthew 22:34-40*



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