

Mark 12: 28-34

Jesus taught that love for God involves every aspect of our being, as you consider your devotion to God, does he have all of you?

Your heart - is he the focus of your affections? Is your love for him warm and real? Do you take pleasure in his ultimate worth?

Your soul - Are you willing to give him your life itself? Does your worship genuinely reflect your inner desires and intentions? Do you love him with your total being?

Your mind - Does your commitment fully involve your intellectual capabilities? Is your faith fully informed or based on blind trust? Is your mind trained to think of his moral perfection?

Your strength - Do you strive to love and serve him energetically? Have you devoted all your physical and material capabilities to him? Can you sustain intense love even under pressure or when doubts arise?

God's laws are not burdensome. They can be reduced to two simple principles: Love God and love others. When you love God completely and care for others as you care for yourself, then you have fulfilled the intent of the Ten Commandments and the other Old Testament laws. According to Jesus these two commandments summarize all God's laws. Let them rule your thoughts, decisions, and actions. When you are uncertain about what to do, ask yourself which course of action best demonstrates love for God and love for others.

Do you recall the Black Friday sales the day after Thanksgiving? The ads would arrive in the newspaper, and many would plan their Black Friday shopping trip to try to get exactly what they were after. Examples of specially priced items are, appliances, TVs, tablets and laptops, gaming systems, Christmas decor and TOYS! However, if there is a very special toy in the current year, it is best to purchase it in advance of the holidays so you can get it. You likely have seen newspaper photos or news casts of people rushing in the doors of a store or literally camping outside an electronics store to be first in line. Likely people have been to visit the stores they will go to to scope out the layout. Once the crowds are inside the stores, especially when there are limited numbers of items, people jockey for position. Who got to the item first??? You see shoving, pushing, running, climbing over others just to be FIRST! Who got to the item first??? How many were physically hurt in the process? Do you see people loving God and others at times like this?

Scribes were a group of people whose profession was mainly writing, Scribes needed to be adept at writing, drafting, and being familiar with legal knowledge. The Sadducees **refused to go beyond the written Torah** (first five books of the Bible) and thus, unlike the Pharisees, denied the immortality of the soul, bodily resurrection after death, and the existence of angelic spirits.

Love God; how easily we forget to do so. We obey God, fear him, and ask him for help and forgiveness, but do we stop all our activities just to love him? Remember to love God for his absolute goodness and perfect holiness. Pause to thank him for his loving care for you. Praise him for the wonderful gifts he provides for you to use serving him and others. Appreciate his unsurpassed grace and long-lasting mercy toward you.

‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall 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, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Amen.

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