

The Foundation Commandments

1. The First Commandment - Mk 12:28-34

A. This is a “trick question,” designed to generate controversy among those who catalogued the laws and emphasized some above others. What would **we** answer? Church autonomy? Necessity of immersion? Permanence of marriage?

B. “*You shall love the Lord your God ...*” - v 29-30.

1. Law of Moses, **any** law, actually demanded this - Dt 10:12; 30:15-16, 19-20.

2. Some find difficulty in *abstraction*: “How do I love God whom I cannot see?”

a. We can “see” through faith, knowledge that God is Creator, Father, Savior.

b. **Illus**: How would I feel toward someone who donated organ to save my child’s life; fireman who dies rescuing my child out of burning house? Never “see” (visually) but gratitude, respect great for what they **did**.

c. Our love for God is not syrupy emotion but depth of gratitude, honor that results in *devoted life*.

3. God ultimately manifested in person of Christ. Helps us relate in human terms.

C. This is the **first** commandment: not of a series but **priority**. It is foundational.

2. The Second Commandment - Mk 12:31

A. Jesus came into a world where men were treated as possessions (slaves could be lawfully killed; some died in sport); women’s rights was oxymoron; assassinations, revolts and even infanticide were order of the day. It was brutal, bloody, barbaric.

B. Jesus gave a “new” command: Jn 13:34-35; 1 Jn 2:7-9. How “new” if in Law?

1. Not new in *time* but *quality*. “I need a new washrag!” **Renewed**.

2. Jesus renewed, redefined love for man in sacrificing Himself: Jn 15:13. See personalized: “... *who loved **me** and gave Himself for **me***” (Gal 2:20).

3. Jn 13:31-34 - “*A new commandment ... as I have loved you ...*”.

C. The crucial connection: Love for God = love for God’s creatures - 1 Jn 4:20-21; Jas 3:9. “Any friend of yours is a friend of mine!” Any whom God loves, we love.

3. But Who Is My Neighbor? - Lk 10:29

A. A similar test from a lawyer - Lk 10:25ff.

1. The Pharisees and other Jewish aristocracy were not practicing this fundamental principle of the Law.
2. They looked down on the “common” people:
 - a. They loved the greeting in the marketplaces but *“this crowd that does not know the law is accursed”* - Jn 7:49.
 - b. Simon the Pharisee was aghast that Jesus would let Himself be touched by a sinful woman - Lk 7:39.
 - c. Even a “loophole” to get out of caring for own needy parents (Mt 15:5-6).
3. A common slur: eats with tax-collectors and sinners (Mt 9:11; 11:19).

B. It is easy to give lip-service to the idea that we love people but our **actions** might suggest otherwise:

1. Do we really love people of other races? Welcome them warmly into assembly?
2. Would we really love a brother if he revealed HIV positive?
3. Do we love people when we never speak to them about Jesus, gospel, study?

C. Our **neighbors** are those people around us with real needs, aching hearts, shredded emotions, aimless living. We cannot say *“Depart in peace, be warmed and filled ...”* (Jas 2:15-16). Example of **dead faith**.

Conclusion:

1. The lawyer in agreeing with Jesus was *“not far from the kingdom”* (Mk 12:34). How far are you from the kingdom?
2. Do you fear the judgment? John says *“There is no fear in love ... but he who fears has not been made perfect in love”* (1 Jn 4:17-19).