

The Two Greatest Commandments

Main scripture passages for personal study and preparation: **Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34**

Cross reference scriptures for additional study:

Part 1 - Deuteronomy 6:5; 11:1-15, Joshua 22:5, Psalm 31:23; 97:10; 116:1, John 14:15, Romans 5:8, 1 Timothy 6:17, 1 John 3:18; 4:19

Part 2 - Matthew 5:44-48, Luke 10:29-37, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Ephesians 3:17-19, Philippians 2:3,4, James 2:1-4, 1 John 5:1

Part 3 - Exodus 20:3-17, Romans 13:8-10, Galatians 5:14

Memory verses: Deuteronomy 6:5, Joshua 22:5, John 14:15, Galatians 5:14

General outline of topics:

I. Love the Lord thy God. *(To love the Lord thy God is to obey the Lord thy God.. Obedience is how we show our love for Him who first loved us. It does not suffice for us only to say that we love the Lord, as much as it does not suffice if we only tell one another that we love; we must show forth the deeds of our love. Like "faith without works is dead being alone", so love without it's deeds is most certainly dead being in word only. If we love because He first loved, then it is most important for us to understand the ways in which God loved us first. He made us. He sustains and preserves us. He gives us "richly all things to enjoy." He hears our prayers. Ultimately, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." What great love He has shown us! What great reasons we have to love Him!)*

II. Love thy neighbor as thyself. *(When our love for the Lord is established, then our love for our neighbor can also be established. Whether unsaved or especially saved, our love should not be withheld from our neighbors. The good Samaritan teaches us that all in our path are neighbors to us. He did for that man as he would have wanted done for himself, without respect of persons. When we love our neighbor as ourselves, we speak and do those things that are in the very best interest of that person. When we love **not** our neighbor as ourselves, we speak and do those things that appear to be in our own best interest. We should, however, "let each esteem other better than themselves", and look "every man on the things of others." When God's love flows through us, it fits us to be able to love our neighbor in Christ's stead. Only then can we truly desire, say and do the best things for others, even if they are our enemy!)*

III. All the law and the prophets. *(All the multitude of laws given from God to man can be easily summarized by these two great commandments! All righteousness and holiness toward God and man flows out of these two precepts. You cannot categorize any law outside the shadow of these two laws. With the many hundreds of commandments throughout the scriptures, it may seem as if pleasing God was meant to be complicated and difficult. However, the simplicity of the law and the prophets is remarkably beautiful and simple to comprehend when we realize that all laws flow from these two chief and great commandments: love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, heart, soul and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself! Observe. Commandments one through four of the ten commandments call us to love the Lord our God, while commandments five through ten call us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Therefore, let us love God and our neighbor.)*

The Temptation of Christ

Main scripture passages for personal study and preparation: **Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13, Hebrews 2:16-18; 4:14-16, I John 2:16**

Cross reference scriptures for additional study:

Part 1 - Exodus 34:27,28, Deuteronomy 18:15-19, I Kings 19:5-8, Isaiah 58, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Hebrews 4:16

Part 2 - Genesis 3:1-6, Romans 5:12-21; 8:13

Part 3 - Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12, Revelation 6:9-11; 12:11

Part 4 - Genesis 3:6, Exodus 16:1-3, John 4:32-34, Romans 6:13, I Corinthians 6:13, Galatians 5:16,24,25, Ephesians 3:17, 1 Peter 4:1,2, 1 John 2:16

Part 5 - Genesis 3:6, Deuteronomy 6:16-19, Joshua 1:8, James 4:13-16, 1 John 2:16, 1 Peter 6:14

Part 6 - Genesis 3:6, Matthew 6:22-24, Philippians 4:19, Revelation 5:2-5

Memory verses: Joshua 1:8, Romans 6:13, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Galatians 5:16, Hebrews 4:12, 1 John 2:16

General outline of topics:

I. A Spirit-led fast. *(Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness and there He fasted forty days and nights in preparation for His temptations or tests. Surely, there will be times in our lives where we will find ourselves in need of fasting before the Lord. There will be times when we need strength to live righteously in this present evil world. A fast is dedicated for such times. It is not merely the setting aside of food for a few hours or days, rather, it is the Spirit-led setting aside of all temporal labors and pleasures in order to focus fervently on getting Divine help, and continuing until our soul is at rest over the petitions we have offered up before the Lord.*

Both Moses and Elijah fasted forty days and nights for the service of the Lord. They, being prophets of the Most High God, were incredibly used of God. It fits Christ, being that Prophet that should come, to have also endured such a fast as this. Being stripped of the strength of his flesh, Christ would now show us how to enter into these temptations by the all-sufficient grace and triumphant power of God Almighty!)

II. "If thou be the Son of God." *(Though he knows who Jesus the Son of God is, the Devil's corrupt nature compels him to try and make Jesus submit to his own wicked will. Adam and Eve failed this test in the garden of Eden, so now Christ must succeed where all of mankind has failed. As our wonderful Savior, He will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves! Adam surely was the son of God, but He truly is the Son of God, the Holy One that cannot sin!)*

III. The sword, the word of God. *(The word of God is the source of our victory in our battle over sin. It is the only offensive weapon we possess to fight against spiritual wickedness in high places. We cannot craft more powerful words than what has been preserved to us in holy scripture. We must learn to trust in and use God's word as Christ showed. The strength of conviction lies in its source. If it is the word of man we trust--we will soon fail. If it is the word of God Almighty--we shall overcome!)*

IV. The lust of the flesh. *(In this first of three temptations, the Devil will use the lust of the flesh, [physical desires like hunger, etc...], to distract Christ from His service to God. The Devil wants Christ to listen and respond to his directives as Adam and Eve did, and how tempting it must have been to suffer such hunger and be posed with such a proposition! But Christ would not give in to such a proposition. Though He and the Devil knew that he could turn a stone into bread, yet Christ does not take directions from him and therefore would not yield his members to the will of the Devil. Therefore we should never allow the impulses of our flesh, [sleep, thirst, hunger, fatigue, etc....], to lead us into unrighteous murmurings and unholy deeds. Remember how the grievous sins of the children of Israel during the wilderness journey were caused by the lusts that dwelt in their flesh.)*

We can overcome the lusts of the flesh, however, by the strength of the Spirit of God in the inner man. We can overcome the lusts of the flesh by the spiritual strength of the word of God which liveth and abideth forever! It is much better to have God be satisfied with us rather than to have our own belly be satisfied.)

V. The pride of life. *(The second temptation here focuses on the pride of life, [being indifferent to the Lord's will and desire to satisfy our own.] To try the Lord's hand of blessing and comfort at the expense of your life and livelihood is not wise. We must not make decisions assuming that the Lord will bless them when we do not consult Him first. Don't make a mess and then ask God to bless it! "If the Lord will we shall live, and do this, or that." In particular, we should never do things that would endanger ourselves without cause. We should not live dangerously. Yes, Paul's preaching endangered himself, but that was done at the commission of the Lord. He suffered "for righteousness sake." The Lord did not commission Christ to cast Himself from the temple's pinnacle, and therefore casting Himself down would only serve to tempt, (try and test), the Lord's ability to fulfill the scripture concerning Christ.)*

Pride of life will cause one to live under presumptive guarantees like Adam and Eve presuming that all would be well, and even better, if they ate of the fruit. We say things like: "O, that won't happen to me.", "I won't let that happen.", "Don't worry. What could possibly go wrong?" We come to believe that we also should "be as gods," determining for ourselves what our course in life should be. And so we do "this, or that" without regard to what God wants for us and expect God to prosper us and give us good success. Understand. We can guarantee no good thing of ourselves, especially when not following the instruction of the Lord. How the Devil would love for us to think that we can live in such pride and prosper!

*Now, doing certain things to cause God to prove himself is tempting the Lord. Whether one would do what is wrong in order to see **if** God would respond accordingly, or one would do what is right in order to see **if** God would respond accordingly is unnecessary. God will do what He says He will do and that is accepted by faith. We don't need to test and see Him like we would a mouse trap! That is not of faith. Many times the children of Israel needlessly tested the Lord's wrath. God forbid we should follow their footsteps in living carelessly despite the warnings we have been given. But too often we test the boundaries, like an adolescent with the rules, just to see if what we are warned about will come to pass. Christ therefore had no need to prove to Himself or to the Devil that angels would bear him up.)*

VI. The lust of the eyes. *(The third and final temptation here of Christ is that of the lust of the eye, [turning our focus to temporal gain and achievement.] What an awesome sight it must have been! What a powerful proposition it was! Christ would one day inherit the kingdoms of the earth, and indeed it was a day He greatly longed for. But this was not the way. The Devil has the power to offer us now what pleases our eye if we would bow to him just once. Being the “god of this world” he has somewhat to offer us, but through his subtleties he disguises the destruction that soon follows. What destruction followed when man ate of the forbidden fruit! Truly, we cannot serve God and mammon or else we will do that which is evil. Our eye must be single, focused on the Lord only and wholly satisfied with the supply that that focus brings. He will supply all our need.*

To worship the Lord is to serve Him. And we should serve no other. No other is so worthy. No other is so gracious. No other is so tender in mercy. No other is so loving. No other is so faithful. Let us serve the Lord our God and bow ever before Him!)