

A 6-WEEK, NO-HOMEWORK BIBLE STUDY

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Loving God and Others: The Heart of True Faith



Kay Arthur, David & BJ Lawson

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BIBLE STUDIES

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PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



WATERBROOK
P R E S S

LOVING GOD AND OTHERS: THE HEART OF TRUE FAITH

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This small-group study is for people who are interested in learning for themselves more about what the Bible says on various subjects, but who have only limited time to meet together. It's ideal, for example, for a lunch group at work, an early morning men's group, a young mothers' group meeting in a home, a Sunday-school class, or even family devotions. (It's also ideal for small groups that typically have longer meeting times—such as evening groups or Saturday morning groups—but want to devote only a portion of their time together to actual study, while reserving the rest for prayer, fellowship, or other activities.)

This book is designed so that all the group's participants will complete each lesson's study activities *at the same time*. Discussing your insights drawn from what God says about the subject reveals exciting, life-impacting truths.

Although it's a group study, you'll need a facilitator to lead the study and keep the discussion moving. (This person's function is *not* that of a lecturer or teacher. However, when this book is used in a Sunday-school class or similar setting, the teacher should feel free to lead more directly and to bring in other insights in addition to those provided in each week's lesson.)

If *you* are your group's facilitator, the leader, here are some helpful points for making your job easier:

- Go through the lesson and mark the text before you lead the group. This will give you increased familiarity with the material and will enable you to facilitate the group with greater ease. It may be easier for you to lead the group through the instructions for marking if you, as a leader, choose a specific color for each symbol you mark.

- As you lead the group, start at the beginning of the text and simply read it aloud in the order it appears in the lesson, including the “insight boxes,” which appear throughout. Work through the lesson together, observing and discussing what you learn. As you read the Scripture verses, have the group say aloud the word they are marking in the text.
- The discussion questions are there simply to help you cover the material. As the class moves into the discussion, many times you will find that they will cover the questions on their own. Remember, the discussion questions are there to guide the group through the topic, not to squelch discussion.
- Remember how important it is for people to verbalize their answers and discoveries. This greatly strengthens their personal understanding of each week’s lesson. Try to ensure that everyone has plenty of opportunity to contribute to each week’s discussions.
- Keep the discussion moving. This may mean spending more time on some parts of the study than on others. If necessary, you should feel free to spread out a lesson over more than one session. However, remember that you don’t want to slow the pace too much. It’s much better to leave everyone “wanting more” than to have people dropping out because of declining interest.
- If the validity or accuracy of some of the answers seems questionable, you can gently and cheerfully remind the group to stay focused on the truth of the Scriptures. Your object is to learn what the Bible says, not to engage in human philosophy. Simply stick with the Scriptures and give God the opportunity to speak. His Word *is* truth (John 17:17)!

LOVING GOD AND OTHERS: THE HEART OF TRUE FAITH

Have you ever asked yourself, *What does God really want from me?*

Those who truly want to please God can easily get confused. One Bible teacher details a long list of all of the commands you should be keeping. The next teacher says you are not under law at all; all that matters is grace. Does that mean you don't have to keep any commands? Who is right?

What does it take to live a God-pleasing life?

Centuries ago, the experts in Jewish law took the Ten Commandments and multiplied them into 613 laws. Talk about confusing. Jesus, however, took the

Ten Commandments and divided them into two: love God and love people.

In the next six lessons we'll look at these two great commands that define the very heart of Christian faith—and learn how following them can transform not only your life but the lives of those around you.

WEEK ONE

When an expert in the law asked which was the greatest commandment, Jesus answered by referring to the Shema, a basic confession of faith in Judaism that calls the people to love God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength. This answer is what the lawyer expected; however, what Jesus said next surprised His listeners and changed the course of history. Not only were God's people to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, but they also were to love others as themselves.

OBSERVE

The religious leaders of the day had one goal: to get rid of Jesus. To that end, they had been challenging Jesus' authority. The scene we're about to look at opens just after the Sadducees tried unsuccessfully to trap Him into saying something that would get Him in trouble with the people and the Roman rulers. Now the Pharisees were trying to do the same. They sent a lawyer to Jesus with a question hotly debated among the religious leaders of the time.

***Leader:** Read Matthew 22:34–40 aloud. Have the group say aloud and...*

MATTHEW 22:34–40

34 But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together.

35 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him,

36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

37 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.’


38 “This is the great and foremost commandment.

39 “The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

40 “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

- *mark every reference to **Jesus**, including synonyms and pronouns, with a cross:*



- *draw a heart over each occurrence of the word **love**:* 

As you read the text, it's helpful to have the group say the key words aloud as they mark them. This way everyone will be sure they are marking every occurrence of the word, including any synonymous words or phrases. Do this throughout the study.

DISCUSS

- What did the Pharisee ask Jesus?
- What was Jesus' response?
- What did Jesus identify as the second most important commandment?

- What do we learn about these two commandments in verse 40?

INSIGHT

The phrase *the Law and the Prophets* was the standard way of referring to the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament). When Jesus said, “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets,” He meant that all other commands are summed up or contained in these two.

OBSERVE

In boiling the Law down to two commands, was Jesus doing away with the rest of the Law and the Prophets?

Leader: Read Matthew 5:17–20 out loud.
Have the group say and...

MATTHEW 5:17–20

¹⁷ Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

18 For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

19 Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

- *mark each occurrence of the pronoun **I**, which refers to **Jesus**, with a cross.*
- *draw a box around every reference to **the Law**, including pronouns and synonyms such as **commandments**:*

DISCUSS

- What did you learn from marking the references to Jesus?
- What did you learn from marking the references to the Law?
- To be sure you don't miss it, what was Jesus' intent with regard to the Law?

OBSERVE

Paul, writing later, commented on what the law meant for a Christian.

Leader: Read Romans 13:8–10 aloud. Have the group...

- *draw a heart over each occurrence of the word **love**.*
- *underline each **commandment**.*

DISCUSS

- Look where you marked *love* and discuss what you learned.

- What do you know about the one who loves his neighbor? How does verse 10 relate to verse 9? Explain your answer.

ROMANS 13:8–10

⁸ Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

⁹ For this, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

MARK 12:32–34

32 The scribe said to Him, “Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that He is One, and there is no one else besides Him;


33 and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to

- A line from a popular song asks, “What’s love got to do with it?” So what *does* love have to do with obeying the commandments?
- So that you don’t miss it, is God’s highest goal for a believer simply to keep the “rules”? Explain your answer.

OBSERVE

The gospel of Mark expands on the same story we saw in Matthew 22. The lawyer, or scribe, is still speaking to Jesus.

Leader: Read Mark 12:32–34 aloud. Have the group do the following:

- mark every reference to **Jesus**, including synonyms and pronouns, with a cross: †
- draw a heart over each occurrence of the word **love**: 
- underline **the two commandments** in this passage.

DEUTERONOMY 6:5

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

LEVITICUS 19:18

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

OBSERVE

Where would one get the idea to sum up all of the laws with only two commands?

Leader: Read Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

- Have the group say aloud and mark with a heart each occurrence of the word *love*.

INSIGHT

One way to better understand what the text is saying is by asking the “Five Ws and an H” questions—*who, what, when, where, why, and how*—about the passage. By asking these questions, you slow down and actually see what the writer is saying.

DISCUSS

- What did you learn from marking *love* in Deuteronomy 6:5?
- **Who** are you to love?

- **How** are you to love Him?
- **What** does that mean? Explain your answer.
- What did you learn about love in Leviticus 19:18?
- **Who** are you to love?
- **How** are you to love them?
- **Why** are you to do this?

OBSERVE

Now let's look at the Law, the Ten Commandments.

Leader: Read Exodus 20:3–17 aloud. Have the group...

EXODUS 20:3–17

³ You shall have no other gods ^① before Me.


⁴ You shall ^②not make for yourself an idol, or

any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

7 You shall ^③not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

- mark every reference to **God**, including synonyms and pronouns, with a triangle: 
- number each of **the Ten Commandments** in the text. The first three are already marked for you.

DISCUSS

- Make a list of all of the commandments connected directly to our relationship with God.
- Make a list of all of the other commandments.

