

## **Series: Living to Be a Witness**

### **Lesson #1: “Living to Love”**

**\*Announcements, encouragement to invite people and opening prayer.**



**Connect:** an opportunity for people to immediately interact and connect with each other; icebreaker/attention getters. **Icebreaker:** What are some of the sacrifices you have made for love? How is love the fuel in a Christian’s tank?

Pastor Darrin has been impacted by this simple verse in Galatians. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has **ANY** value. The **ONLY** thing that counts is faith expressing itself **in** love” (Gal. 5:6). The New American Standard Bible and the English Standard Bible says, “...faith working **through** love.” The word for love in this passage is the agape (ah-gaw'-pay), sacrificial love that gives generously by choice. It is not earned, but given as a gift from the heart.

**Bottom Line:** Nothing makes a more powerful statement of faith than agape love. Without it, the church will always be a place of strife and turmoil, riding a wave of highs and lows because it has missed its first love. That first love is the reason Jesus left heaven. To walk with Jesus is to walk in that overwhelming love for the world and those around us.

### **LESSON PLAN**

#### **Read Mark 12:28-34**

1. Who was involved in this debate? God back several verses until you discover the answer.  
*(The Herodians were a group of Jews who were partial to Herod’s family and politics for their own advancement. They joined against Jesus on several occasions. Verse 13 shows us that the Herodians and the Pharisees were trying to debate Jesus into a trap. They lost. Verse 18 says the Sadducees then came to Jesus and try their hand at out debating him. They lost. Now one of the Pharisees hot-shot lawyers is actually impressed with Jesus’ brilliance and decides to join the debate.)*
2. Jesus has just pointed out to the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, how wrong they were. The scribe is impressed at Jesus’ good answer. What question did the scribe, the teacher of the law, ask Jesus? *(Of all the commandments, which is the most important?)*

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**Question:** What do you think Jesus wants out of you more than anything? If you were to grade yourself on giving Jesus the life He wants you to live, what would it be?

3. What does Jesus say is the most important commandment? (*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. He quotes Deuteronomy 6:4-5. This is called the Shema, which is the first Hebrew work that means “Hear!” Obviously this was a very serious command from God.*)
4. Have someone read Deuteronomy 6:4-5. What is missing? (*Jesus added the word “mind.” Why would Jesus add to Scripture? First of all, He was God. Secondly, Jesus came to pull us out of disconnected faith. Jesus tells us that using our minds to embrace the things of God, so they become real in us, is true faith. That is why in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus kept saying, “You have heard it said, but I say....” Jesus was moving religion from legalism to reality, from a limited commitment to total surrender, from a robotic faith to a living faith. This was the John 3:16 of the Jews. They recited it at the beginning and end of every day. They began every synagogue service with it. It was a repetitious act that was presented as being extremely religious, as if faith is found in the number of prayers I pray or the number of days I fast or how many journals I fill with writing. Faith goes beyond repetition. So, Jesus is addressing that fact by adding the words, ‘...with all your mind.’*)

**Questions:** What does it mean to love God with ALL your heart? (*The heart is the center of our emotions. If I have no tenderness, romantic involvement with my Lord, how will I ever love Him completely? Notice the ALL is in everyone on of these commands from God.*)

What does it mean to love God with ALL your soul? (*The physical and spiritual life we have been given is dedicated to being all that God created us to be in this life. Our body is fully God’s to use.*)

What does it mean to love God with ALL your mind? (*How can I know the mind of the one I love unless I continually work to know their mind? God wants me to devote 100% of my intellectual abilities to knowing Him and His will.*)

What does it mean to love God with ALL your strength? (*Paul would say, “To live is Christ and to die is gain...I live by His strength.” Loving God means I have set my will on living for God like an athlete sets their eyes on the finish line, fixed upon running to win.*)

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**Question:** That is only 4 little ‘ALLS’ God requires of us and the result is a life of blessing. Why do you think the ‘ALL’ is so hard for us to give?

5. What was the second command? (*Love your neighbor as yourself. I'm the one I give all the attention to. I'm the one I give grace to. I'm the one I really care about. You mean I should put those actions toward my neighbor on equal ground? How is that possible? It cannot be possible unless I am doing the first command. Only God's love can make it possible for me to live and act like that!*)
6. How important is it then to love myself? (*If I don't love myself, then I obviously do not love God with my ALL. If I were I would allow Him to correct those areas of my life that keep me from loving myself in a healthy way. Then I could love my neighbor in the same healthy way.*)

**Question:** If there are no commandments greater than these, what is the Christian problem? (*We have not chosen to surrender ALL, even though we love to sing the song loudly!*)

7. Does this teacher of the Law believe Jesus' answer? How does he respond? (*You are so right. These commands are more important than all our burnt offerings and sacrifices that God had required. In other words, taking on the character of God because we have this divine intimacy with Him goes far beyond mere obedience to a living faith.*)

**Question:** What are our, the Christians, burnt offerings and sacrifices? (*Attendance, going through the religious motions while not giving our ALL to God or our relationships with our neighbors.*)

**Question:** Who did Jesus say was our Neighbor? (*The parable of the Good Samaritan makes it clear that I have a responsibility to those hurting and in need. When I see a need I could meet I am next to my neighbor.*)

8. How does Jesus respond to the answer of the scribe? (*You are not far from the kingdom of God. He is almost there. He has recognized that God wants more than burnt offerings and sacrifice. Faith expresses itself in true love. This Jewish scholar is on the doorstep of discovering the Way, the Truth and the Life!*)

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9. Why do you think Jesus’ answer silenced His enemies, those trying to trap Him with questions? (*There was no argument against His answer. To argue against Jesus’ response would have been like disputing the very nature of God. I’m sure they went off to plan a new attack, but it wasn’t going to be today. The smoke had to clear from the battlefield first.*)



**Interactive Teaching Ideas:** ideas for learner-focused teaching. (*Assign each table these questions to discuss and then have them share their ideas.*) ***In the three possibilities of love relationships (with God, neighbors, and self), where are you the strongest? The weakest? What have you found that helps love to grow in each area?***

**Final Question:** What is the one idea that stands out to you most from this lesson?