

God's Commandments  
A lesson for fifth grade  
Tom Deaderick

How can we show love for God?

- Obey Him
- Spend time with Him
- Share Him
- Honor Him
- Thank Him

How do we show (or express) love for our neighbor?

These are commandments from God because He knows they won't come naturally to us. We'll need to remind ourselves to do these things, make ourselves do them when we're distracted by our own desires for our time.

What does come naturally to us?

Ourselves and our own wishes, right?

How often do we catch ourselves forgetting to do something we enjoy? Hardly ever. We remember to do the things we consider "fun" don't we?

As usual, we can look to Jesus as an example of God's wishes for us.

How often do we do what God commanded us?

[Draw something that looks like a mountain range, with valleys, small and large peaks.]

This is our life. Think of this as **your** life.

[Draw a horizontal line all the way across, bisecting some mountains and valleys.]

This line is an achievement. This line is God's second commandment...

"But there is a second to set alongside it: "Love others as well as you love yourself" These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law hangs from them." – Matthew 22: 39-40

So Jesus says that all of the guidelines shared for us in the Bible can really all be covered by just two simple-sounding rules. Love God and love others. Is that right? Can you think of any of the other commandments that God gave men down through the ages that aren't covered by these two simple-sounding laws?

[Let them respond]

When we do express or show our love for a neighbor we measure up to God's goal for us [show one of the peaks that just crosses the first horizontal line].

So now, what do you think this line [draw a horizontal line higher with only a few peaks crossing it] represents?

That's right, this is God's greatest commandment...

"When the Pharisees heard how He had bested the Sadducees, they gathered their forces for an assault. One of their religious scholars spoke for them; posing a question they hoped would show Him up: "Teacher, which command in God's law is the most important?"

Jesus said, "Love the Lord, your God with all of your passion and prayer and intelligence" – this is the most important, the first on any list." – Matthew 22:34-38

Let's label some of these high points. Tell me some of the things we could do that would pass the first or second lines of God's commandments?

[Let them try to think of some at first and put them in the proper place on the board. The more the better for later.]

If they start to run dry or miss these, give them some hints...

2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment, Love others

- Listen to someone else's problems or their fears and try to comfort them
- Don't seek vengeance or express anger when we're frustrated or challenged. Maybe something we wanted to do gets cancelled or changed. Do we sulk and complain or do we just go on with a cheerful spirit?

How can you as fifth graders actually help someone else?

Think about it this way and I think it's easier to understand. When did **you** need help?

- When a relative died?
- When you were picked last to be part of a team or something fun, or when you were left out completely?
- When other people said something mean about you, or to you?
- When you didn't understand something that was new to you and you needed help?

How much of the time would you say that you're worried about something, or hurt by something, or sad about something? [Let them give you some percentages]

When we face problems, we almost always think we're facing them alone – that the problems are just ours. It's hard for us to remember when we're facing a challenge that all the people around us are facing challenges too. Every day.

We're so focused on the things that frustrate, worry or even scare us – that we forget every person around us is dealing with the same types of things. They don't have the exact same problems in most cases, but there's really just a few **kinds** of things that we all deal with, being lonely or left out, being worried about the future, being uncertain – everyone around you has these same **kinds** of issues.

So if everyone around us, everyone around you – has the same kinds of issues that you have and they are dealing with these fears and problems about the same amount of time that you are [illustrated by the percentage]...just think about how much opportunity there is for you to do God's second commandment every day.

Every single day, we come in contact with more than one person who is dealing with some fear or challenge, something that if you were dealing with it would be all you could think about. What do we usually do? Do we usually even notice?

I think we don't. I think most of the time we're so caught up in this section of our lives [point to the section below the second line] that we don't even **notice** other people's needs – let alone actually try to help them.

What are the things we're doing when we're in this area of our lives?

[Let them suggest some things]

Working on something creative that we enjoy, building something, playing a board game, playing a sport.

So...hm... are these actually “bad” things? No. These don’t seem to be like bad things for the most part. I mean there are bad things we do down here in this area, but not all of them are bad.

In fact, we might be creating something that is used for good or even great things by other people later. I think about Steve Jobs, the creator of Apple. Steve Jobs was one of the most inventive people of our time. He created things that changed business, education, music and movies – probably every part of our lives is impacted by something he helped create. When Steve Jobs created all of these things what part of his life do you think he was in? [point to the three areas of the chart]

From everything I’ve read, he almost never came out of this area. He almost never talked about pleasing God and he almost never did anything to help another person. He loved to create new things, but he did this because he enjoyed it. And he created things that other people use to do one of these commandments every day, but his life [point to the chart] was mostly spent down here.

This is not a “bad” area, but we need to understand that God designed us. He wrote the instruction set for us [show the Bible], He knows what makes our “engine” run well and what makes us run poorly – or what will make us ultimately happy and fulfilled or what will leave us empty and alone. Steve Jobs was one of the most successful humans in this area [point to the lowest] and he lived a life that was constantly filled with frustrations and petty arguments – rarely being focused on even his immediate family. I think he probably died a scared and lonely person and I believe he would wish to have spent more time up here [point to the two lines] rather than being so focused here.

If I were to ask you to draw an arrow on this chart pointing in the direction of greater “Joy/Peace/Happiness” which direction would it point? Would it point down, to say that you get more joy/peace/happiness by doing these kinds of things or by these kind of things?

I think it would point up. I think you could live 100 years of a life in this area [below the line] and not feel the pleasure of being close to God, or you could have a short life focused in these areas [above the line] and be content with God for eternity.

So God gave us two great commandments. He set the commandments as stepping stones. One helps us reach the other. Sometimes, we feel close to God and that encourages us to reach out to our neighbor in a loving way to help them. Sometimes, it's the other way around, we reach out and help a neighbor and feel closer to God.

So now it's time to think about where your focus has been and where you want it to be.

Does anyone want to spend more time in one of these areas?

[Let them answer and discuss.]