



The Greatest Commandment(s)

Matthew 22:34-46

Welcome to 'Together Apart', free intergenerational resources to help us be church together while we are apart.

All the sections explore the same Bible passage in a range of creative ways. Choose whichever parts work best for you, and remember that 'All Age' does not mean 'only for the kiddies'!

You can find lots more free resources like this at www.reflectionary.org

Here is what you can find in each section:



A Word in Your Ear

A section from the Bible passage that we can all learn from together, whatever our age. With space for notes or art around the edges



Food for Thought

Aimed at adults and teens, some thoughts and questions on the passage. Occasionally there might even be some Greek or Hebrew!



Inner Space

A journaling space for you to record what's in your head, whether that is worries, dreams or a shopping list.



Looking Closer

A creative and interactive look at the Bible passage. Great for older children and anyone who likes an immersive approach.



I Wonder...

An imaginative style of Bible study based on Lectio Divina and Godly Play wondering.



Take a Break

A chill-out zone, with meditative colouring for adults and children, and links to audio recordings of the passages.



Creation Station

A craft for children (or young-at-heart adults!) to help us think about the passage. Glue sticks at the ready!



High 5

Some creative prayer ideas for helping us to spend time with God. Five minutes, or as long as you want.



The Full Text

Just like it says on the tin.



A Word in Your Ear

Take your time reading this extract from our Bible passage. Ask God to help you hear. You can decorate the space around the words if you like.

Matthew 22:36–40

“Teacher, which commandment is the greatest
in Moses’ Teachings?”

Jesus answered him,

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

This is the greatest and most important
commandment.

The second is like it:

‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’

All of Moses’ Teachings and the Prophets
depend on these two commandments.”

God’s Word translation



Food for Thought

It's like the million-pound question on Who Wants to Be a Millionaire! All the lifelines are gone, the lights are down, the heart-beat music is pounding. All eyes are on Jesus. What will he answer? Will he get it right?

This passage comes as part of a series of challenging questions for Jesus: Should we pay taxes to Caesar? (£250,000 - Answer: C) Whose wife will the much-married widow be? (£500,000 - Answer: D) And now it's the big one. For £1,000,000, which of the commandments is the most important?

The spotlight focuses in. The camera frames a close-up shot. Someone in the audience coughs. (No, scrub that.) Jesus replies, "It's A, final answer." "And B, also final answer."

Confetti from the ceiling, tumultuous applause and a hearty clap on the back from the host. He's done it!

Q: Why do you think Jesus chose these two answers out of all the commands Moses gave? Why not one of The Big Ten? Why not just 'love God'?

Jesus was quoting a couple of passages from the Old Testament. The first is from Deuteronomy, which re-tells the story of God's people from their rescue out of Egypt through to the death of Moses. Just after it recounts the Ten Commandments, chapter 6 reminds us to take them seriously. We are to talk about them as we sit at home and when we walk along the road. We are to teach them to our children and to keep them on our hearts. Verses 4 and 5 are called The 'Shema', the Hebrew word for 'listen', and that's what Jesus was quoting. *Listen, Israel: The Lord is our God. The Lord is the only God. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*

Q: The Shema forms a part of Jewish daily prayer. Why is it important to remind ourselves of these words? Why did Jesus choose them as THE most important part of the Old Testament?

Jesus' second quotation is a bit more deeply buried. Deep in the gloomy bowels of Leviticus! This is the book where many read-the-Bible-from-cover-to-cover attempts fall down. It contains an awful lot of detailed instructions for how to tell if a house has mildew and what to do if a dead lizard falls on a pot. Hardly relevant for us today, surely?

But Jesus chose to quote from the middle of these laws, and the section Lev 19:1-18 is another of the readings for this week, so it's worth checking it out. A lot of the commands sound remarkably like The Big Ten: respecting your parents, not lying, not stealing, not using God's name carelessly. And then there are the weird ones: eat up your peace offering by the third day (?), don't gather the gleanings from your fields (??) "But", we protest, "we don't do burnt offerings these days, and I don't have any fields to gather gleanings from."

Let's 'retranslate' these into our own context. How about 'Worship is important, so don't be disrespectful' and 'Look after the poor and make sure you are generous to those in need'?

Q: What other commands, which might seem irrelevant to our lives today, could we 'retranslate' into modern terms? How do we actually love our neighbours as ourselves?



Inner Space

What's going round your head? Here is a space for you to put your thoughts on paper. You can write, draw ... whatever you like. What will you put here?



Looking Closer

The religious leaders were giving Jesus a hard time. They had already asked him two

trick questions, trying to trip him up, and now they tried a third time.

"Which of Moses' commands is the most important?" they asked.

Hmmn, one of The Ten Commandments, perhaps? For Jewish people it was very important to follow Moses's laws in the Old Testament. But there are loads! Hundreds!

Q: What would you have answered?

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a double-line border, intended for a student to write their answer to the question.A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a double-line border, intended for a student to write their answer to the question.

Jesus chose two answers, and neither is from The Ten Commandments!

The most important, said Jesus, is to love God with everything you have – all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength.

Wow! It's easy enough to say, but it's really hard to do.

Q: What does it mean to love God with everything that is in us? How could you do that today?

The second command is like the first: Love other people as we love ourselves. Again, easy to say but not always so easy to do. Perhaps you can think of some people you know who are not very lovable.

Jesus talked about this to his disciples. 'Love your enemies', he said, 'and pray for people who are horrible to you.'

What? Really? I have to love people who are mean to me and pray for people who are nasty? Yup.

Q: Imagine you are one of Jesus' followers. What would you have thought when you heard Jesus saying that?

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a double-line border, intended for a student to write their answer to the question.



I Wonder...

Read or listen to the passage a few times and let it sit in your mind.

Which words, phrases or ideas do you notice? Does anything stand out for you? Hold that in your heart and listen to what God might be saying.

I wonder who you might be in this story.

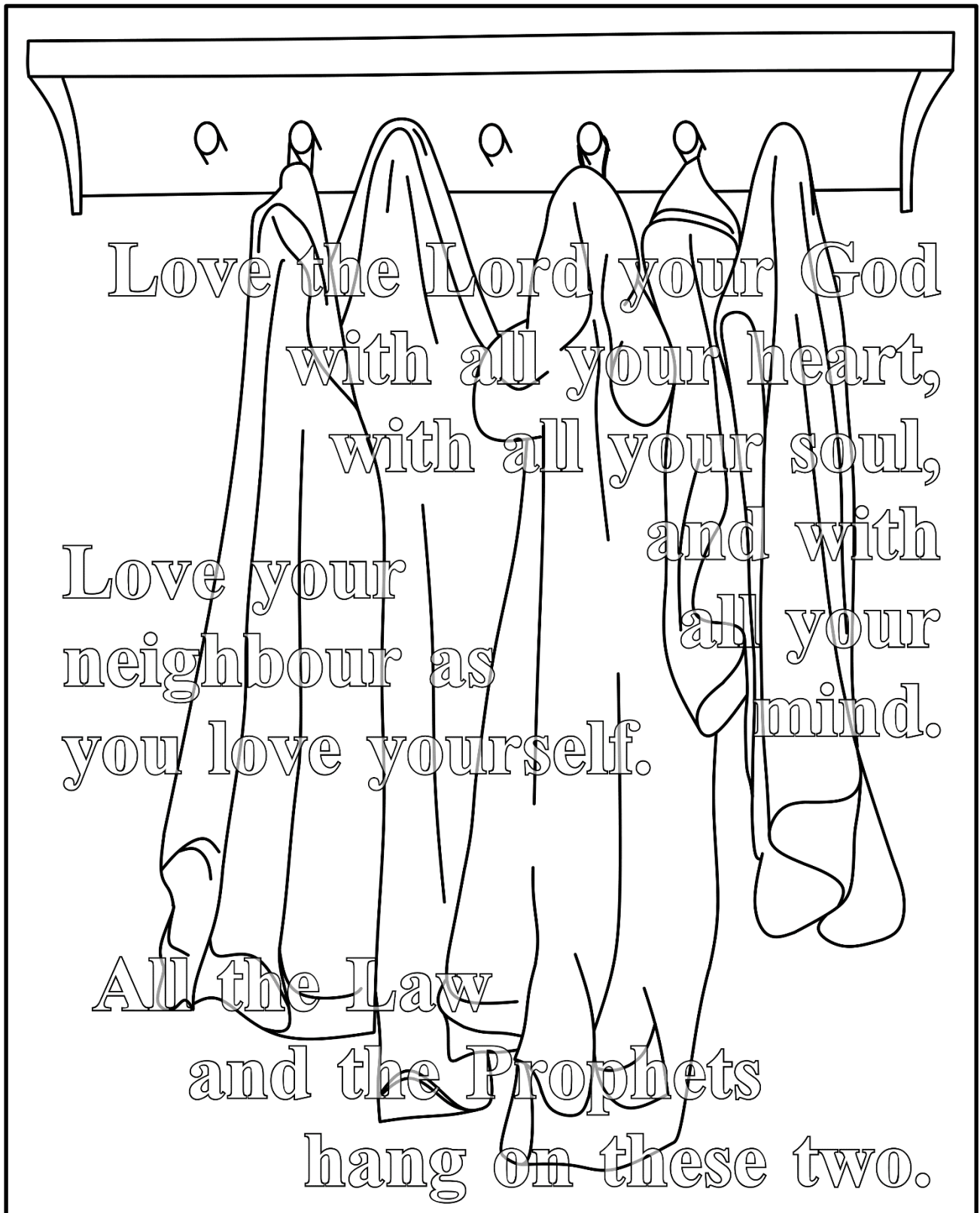
I wonder which part will stay with you today.



Take a Break

Put on some music, or listen to the passage being read out while you simply sit and be. You can colour the picture below, or fill it with zentangles, or you can just spend the time breathing.

Matthew 22 on Bible Gateway audio [ESV](#) – [Message](#) – [NIV \(Dramatised\)](#) – [NIV \(Suchet\)](#)





Creation Station – Coathanger Mobile!

Jesu said that all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commands: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength' and 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. So we can hang lots of things from a

great coat hanger mobile!

You will need:

- Coat hanger – adult sized
- Strips of fabric
- Coloured yarn
- Scissors, coloured pens and glue stick
- Templates (see the next pages)
- Hole punch

What to Do:

1. Cut strips of fabric and wrap them around your coat hanger to make it thicker and nicer-looking (No offense coat hangers, but you are a bit boring.)
2. Wind some yarn over the fabric to add more colour and to hold the fabric in place.
3. Print out the templates for the two greatest commands, cut and fold where marked to make two long, narrow, double-sided cards. Glue them together and colour them in.
4. For The Big Ten, you might already have these from a previous Together Apart, but I've included the templates again in case you have not. Print out the sheets and stick them back-to-back, then colour them in. You can write different commands or verses using the blank template if you like.
5. Punch holes in the top corners of the greatest commands, and a series of holes along the bottom. Make sure you have enough holes for all of your other commands.
6. Thread some yarn through the top holes of the greatest commands and hang one along each arm of the coat hanger.
7. Punch a hole in the top of each of your other commands and use yarn to hang them from the holes along the bottom of the two greatest commands.
8. Now hang up your mobile and see how "all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two".

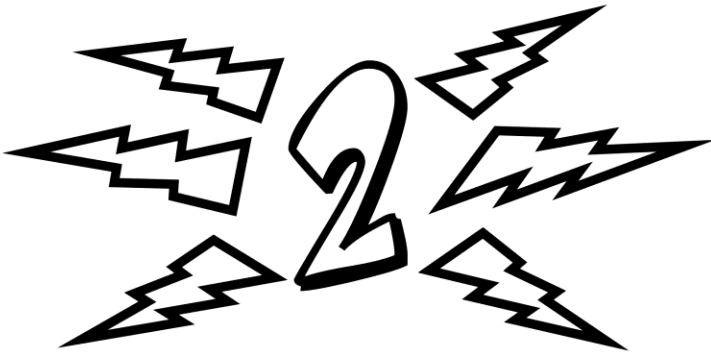


Love your neighbour as yourself.

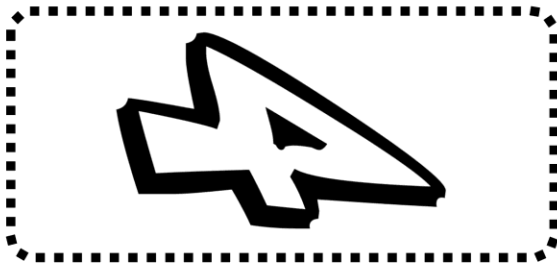
Love your neighbour as yourself.

Love the Lord your God with all
your heart, mind and strength.

Love the Lord your God with all
your heart, mind and strength.



1 ONE



three

SIX!

five

eight



NINE

Never have
any other gods

Never put things
in God's place

Never use God's
name carelessly

Keep God's
holy day of rest

Honour your
mum and dad

Never murder

Respect
marriage

Never steal

Never lie

Don't be envious
of people's stuff



High Five

The Shema

This is an ancient prayer and part of Jewish daily devotions. It is based on Deuteronomy 6 and starts with the Hebrew word 'shema', which means 'listen up'!

Listen, Israel: The Lord is our God. The Lord is the only God.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your strength.

This a great prayer to pray, and we can write our own versions, too. Put your name in place of 'Israel' and add your own statements about God. Then add your own commitments for how you will show your love to God. Try to make them specific and do-able.

My name:

Two true things about God:

1:

2:

Three ways I can show my love to God:

1:

2:

3:

Now use the prompts above to write your own 'Shema'. Start with Listen ...



The Full Text

Leviticus 19:1–18

The Lord spoke to Moses, 2 “Tell the whole congregation of Israel: Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.

3 “Respect your mother and father. Observe my days of rest as holy days. I am the Lord your God.

4 “Don’t turn to worthless gods or cast metal idols. Never make any gods for yourselves. I am the Lord your God.

5 “When you bring a fellowship offering to the Lord, sacrifice it properly so that you will be accepted. 6 Eat your sacrifice on the day you bring it and on the next day. On the third day burn whatever is left over. 7 If you eat any of it on the third day, it is repulsive and will not be accepted. 8 Those who eat it will be punished because they have dishonoured what is holy to the Lord. They must be excluded from the people.

9 “When you harvest the grain in your land, don’t harvest the grain in the corners of your fields or gather what is left after you’re finished. 10 Don’t harvest your vineyard a second time or pick up fallen grapes. Leave them for poor people and foreigners. I am the Lord your God.

11 “Never steal, lie, or deceive your neighbour.

12 “Never swear by my name in order to deceive anyone. This dishonours the name of your God. I am the Lord.

13 “Never oppress or rob your neighbour. Never keep the pay you owe a hired worker overnight. 14 Never curse deaf people or put anything in the way of blind people to make them stumble. Instead, fear your God. I am the Lord.

15 “Don’t be corrupt when administering justice. Never give special favours to poor people, and never show preference to important people. Judge your neighbour fairly. 16 Never gossip. Never endanger your neighbour’s life. I am the Lord.

17 “Never hate another Israelite. Be sure to correct your neighbour so that you will not be guilty of sinning along with him. 18 Never get revenge. Never hold a grudge against any of your people. Instead, love your neighbour as you love yourself. I am the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6:4–5

Listen, Israel: The Lord is our God. The Lord is the only God. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Matthew 22:34–46

34 When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 One of them, an expert in Moses' Teachings, tested Jesus by asking, 36 "Teacher, which commandment is the greatest in Moses' Teachings?"

37 Jesus answered him, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the greatest and most important commandment. 39 The second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.' 40 All of Moses' Teachings and the Prophets depend on these two commandments."

41 While the Pharisees were still gathered, Jesus asked them, 42 "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?"

They answered him, "David's."

43 He said to them, "Then how can David, guided by the Spirit, call him Lord? David says,

44 'The Lord said to my Lord,

"Take the honoured position—the one next to me [God the Father] on the heavenly throne until I put your enemies under your control.'"

45 If David calls him Lord, how can he be his son?"

46 No one could answer him, and from that time on no one dared to ask him another question.

GOD'S WORD Translation Copyright © 1995 by God's Word to the Nations. Used by permission of God's Word Mission Society.