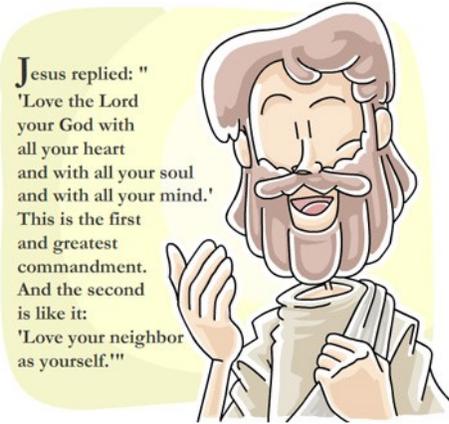

“Love God, Love People”

Sunday School Lesson on the Greatest Commandment from Matthew 22:34-40



Children, in ideal circumstances, grow up in “safe” environments, to a certain extent, yet they are no doubt exposed to a host of negative behaviors in the world around them. People on the news, social media, and even everyday life can be cruel and unkind to one another. Hopefully youngsters recognize a lack of love when they see it. However, we want them to understand the importance of kindness, and to grow to be people who exhibit a love for God by sharing it with others around them. According to Christ, everything else hinges on the commandment to love. This is a principle we want to instill in students as early as possible.

Lesson focus: This lesson looks at the words of Jesus to recall the importance of “keeping the main thing the main thing.” Kids are surrounded by rules in various elements of their lives: at home, in school, in sports. How can we determine which rules are the most important? Are some rules more essential than others? The same question was asked of Jesus, and His simple answer provides us with a guide to life: love God, and love one another! These elements are as key today as they were in the New Testament.

Passage: Matthew 22:34-40

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade (variable for activity emphasis)

Materials Needed: Construction paper, scissors, decorations, glue, string, hole punch, paper plates, Bible (optional materials, depending on crafts and activities of choice).



Games and Lesson Introduction

Lesson Opening: This lesson celebrates loving God with all that we have and all of who we are. It also emphasizes that love as the most important “rule” we can live by.

Here are some activities to get kids thinking...(select the best ones for your audience and age group):

- Rules rule! Start a game with kids, but add extra rules continuously as you go. Ask them if it's tough to follow so many rules. Which one is the most important?
- Following directions. Read a recipe or list of instructions for something, and ask kids which one is the most essential. Is part of the recipe/rule list more important than other parts? Which part should we follow first and foremost?
- Heart, soul, mind, and strength. Ask students a series of questions that reflect decisions they might have to make or things they might have to do in their lives. If the issue deals more with the mind (like “what is the capital of Germany?”), have them point to their heads. If it seems like a “heart issue” (“what is your favorite memory?”), they should point to their hearts. Note: this one might be a little too deep for younger audiences.
- What do you like best? Get kids moving around the room with a “four corners” style game. Arrange designated areas to distinguish how much kids like something: you might have a space for “dislike”, “it's okay”, “I like it”, and “I love it!” List off various things, ranging from puppies to summer time to cheese pizza to family members. Have kids move to the space in the room that matches how much they like each listed item.
- Put God first visual: hold up a large clear jar, and invite students to place one large rock and several small marbles inside. If the small items go in first, the rock won't fit. You have to put the biggest item in before the smaller ones, just like we put God before other things.

Discuss with students how important it is to put God first and foremost in our lives. When we focus on loving God and loving His people, other things will fall into place. The Gospel lesson of focus here involves words that Jesus said about the “Greatest Commandment” of them all.

Ask: What are the Ten Commandments? Which one of them do you think is the most important one to follow? What rules at home are most important to follow?



Sunday School Lesson (Matthew 22:34-40)

The Greatest Commandment

Bible Lesson: This Gospel lesson is pretty simple and straightforward. It can be read pretty quickly, but lends itself to several follow-up questions regarding rules and putting God first. Set the stage by reminding students that the church leaders frequently tried to trick Jesus by asking questions that seemed very challenging to answer. They were trying to make Him trip up or say something that could get Him in trouble. This was one of those instances.

But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” -Matthew 22:34-36

The Pharisees had a LOT of laws. In addition to the Ten Commandments, they had hundreds of other laws that governed the way that they worked, the things that they wore, the way they honored the Sabbath, and pretty much everything about their lives. The Law was extremely important to these people. How could you pick one great commandment? Surely they could trick Jesus by asking Him which rule was the best, because if He pointed to one thing as being most essential, they could ask why He didn't pick others. Of course, Jesus is much too smart for their schemes.

Ask: Where do you see rules or laws? Do you ever see people breaking the rules? What's the most important thing for us to remember about the laws of the Bible?

Explain that the answer Jesus gave sums up for us what should be the most vital thing in our lives. It also seemed to quiet the probing Pharisees.

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 first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” -Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus was saying that if we put God first, everything else will naturally follow. If we truly love God with all that we have, we should want to follow the other Laws, because we genuinely love Him. All of the other Commandments and rules rest on loving God. How can we love Him with all that we have? Well, when we make decisions, or do anything really, we can do it with the fact



of His presence in mind. We recall that He is always with us, watching and loving us. We recognize that He created and controls all things.

The “second commandment” Jesus gave is that we love our neighbor. Who is this? Not just people that we like, or people in the house next door to us. Our neighbors are all of the people God created. We love them by showing kindness and respect, and remembering that Jesus loves them and died for them. We don’t always see that care and love demonstrated in people around us today, do we? But we can make a difference when we show God’s love by sharing it. We can prove that we care for one another and recognize that Jesus loves them, too. We can look for ways to be considerate and loving to those around us every day!

Ask: How can you love God with your mind?

How can you show that you care about someone? Note: caring about someone doesn’t always mean you feel warm and fuzzy when they’re around. It could just be offering a smile or helping someone out. Think of at least one person that you can act loving towards today.

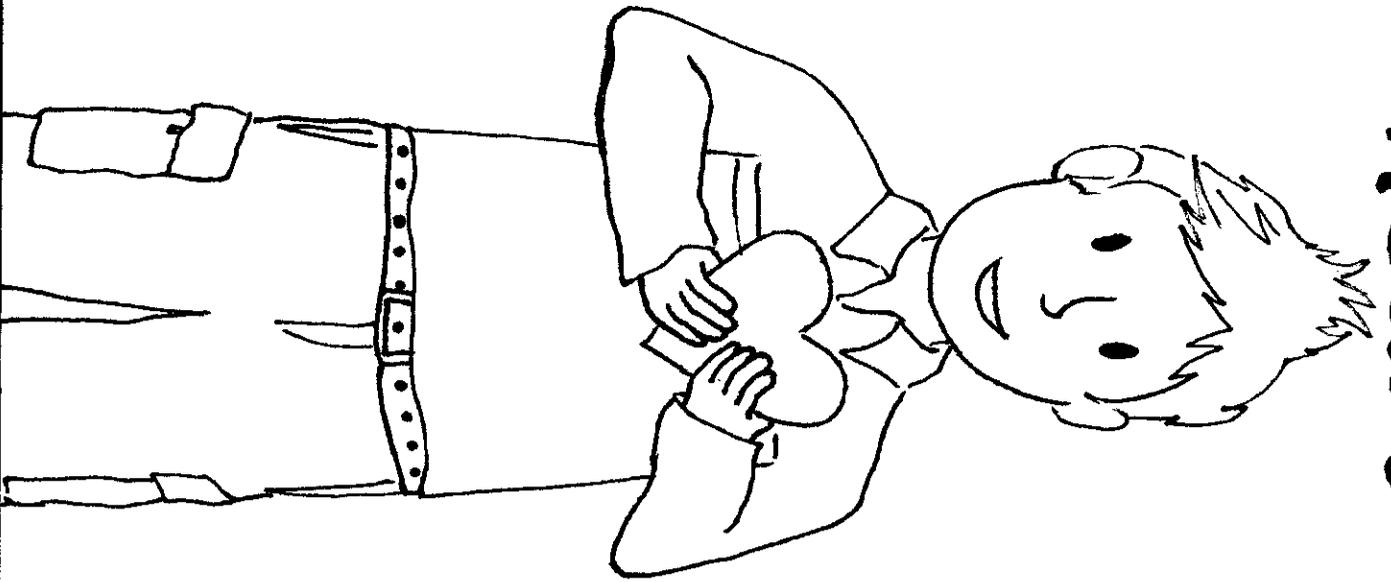
Close with a prayer thanking God for His never-ending love. Ask for help in putting Him first and foremost in all that we do, and ask for opportunities to love and serve others as ourselves.

Crafts: With things like Valentine’s Day and abundant Bible verses emphasizing love, there is no shortage of heart-themed crafts. Here are a few that could be particularly relevant to this passage:

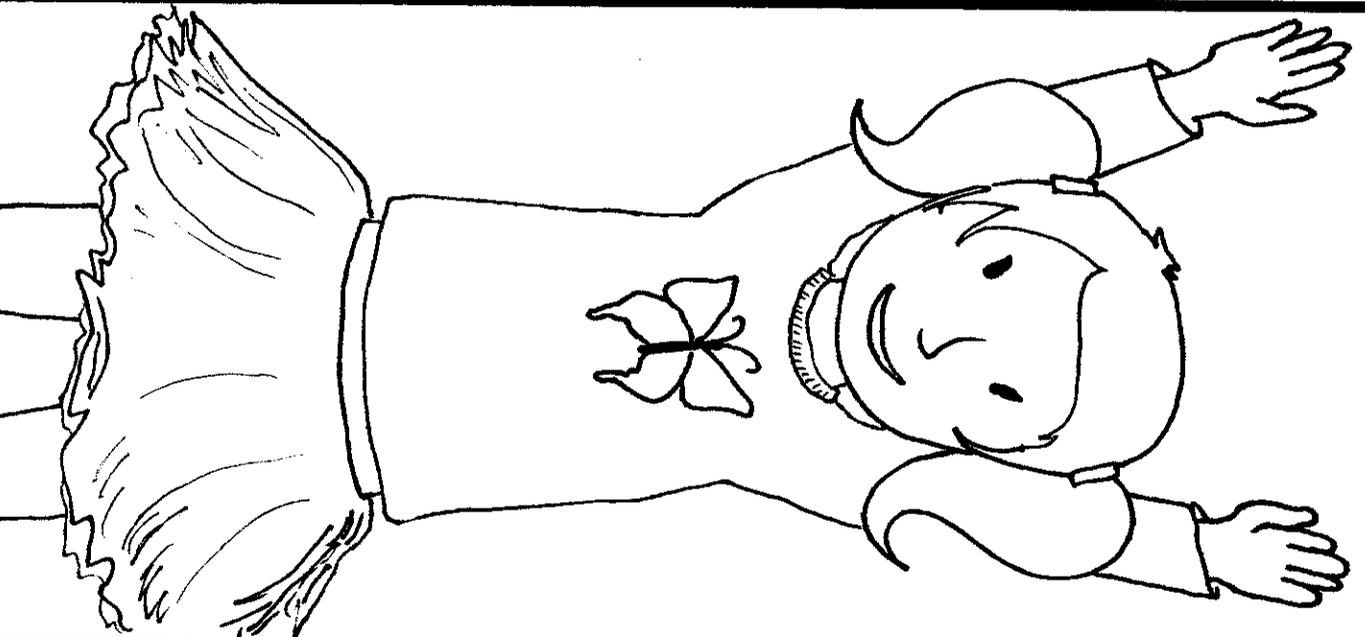
- “Aim for the heart” dart board
- “Love with all your mind” headband
- “With all your heart” memory verse necklace



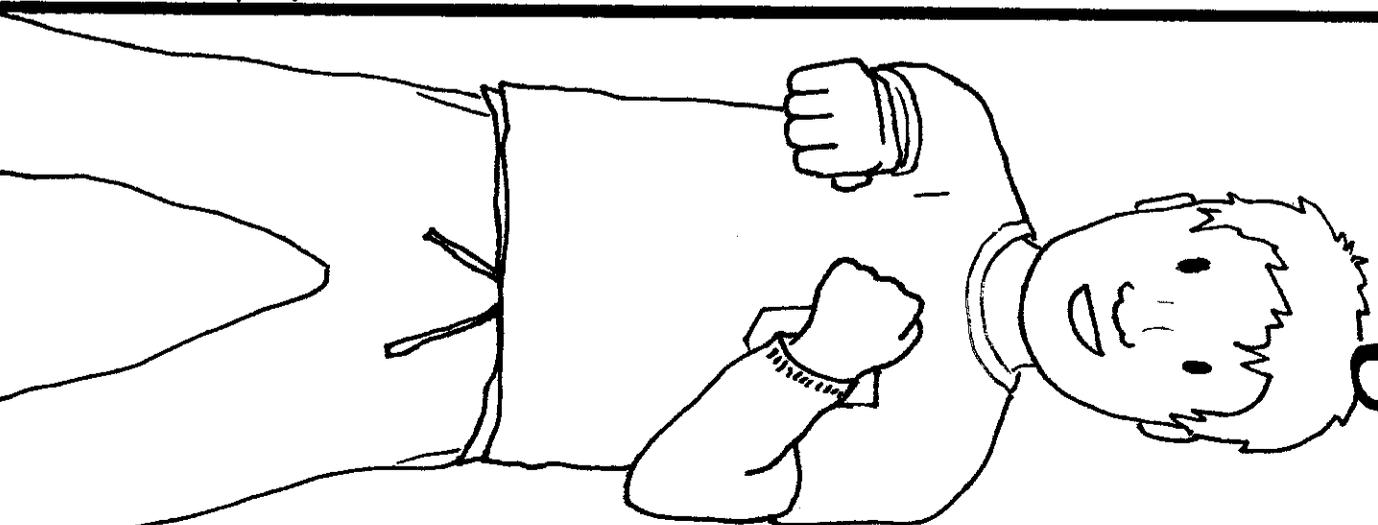
♥ heart ♥



✿ Soul ✿



☀ might ☀



Mandy Grace '11

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“The Greatest Commandment” Bible Craft Ideas on Matthew 22:34-46



Just Love! Craft Ideas for “The Greatest Commandment”

This week’s Gospel lesson focuses on the importance of making the main thing the main thing. When asked about the “most important” commandment, Jesus emphasized the simplest of explanations: love God, and love others. As we communicate this to students, here are a few crafts to remember how essential it is to love one another. A couple of wear-able features keep in mind loving God with all we have, and a game incorporation adds to the craft-worthy fun!

Additional Suggestions:

- Create a hanging collage or mobile of sorts with hearts and strings.
- Make a wind sock/streamer with a large heart in the center.
- Using a long sheet of paper, make a heart-shaped envelope for prayer requests.

Verses or Captions to Consider...

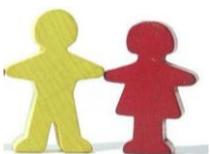
“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. -Matthew 22:37-39

Aim for the Heart... Love Wins!

Love God with all your mind!

The Greatest Commandment... LOVE

Everything hangs on Love!



Craft one: “Hide it in your Heart Necklace”

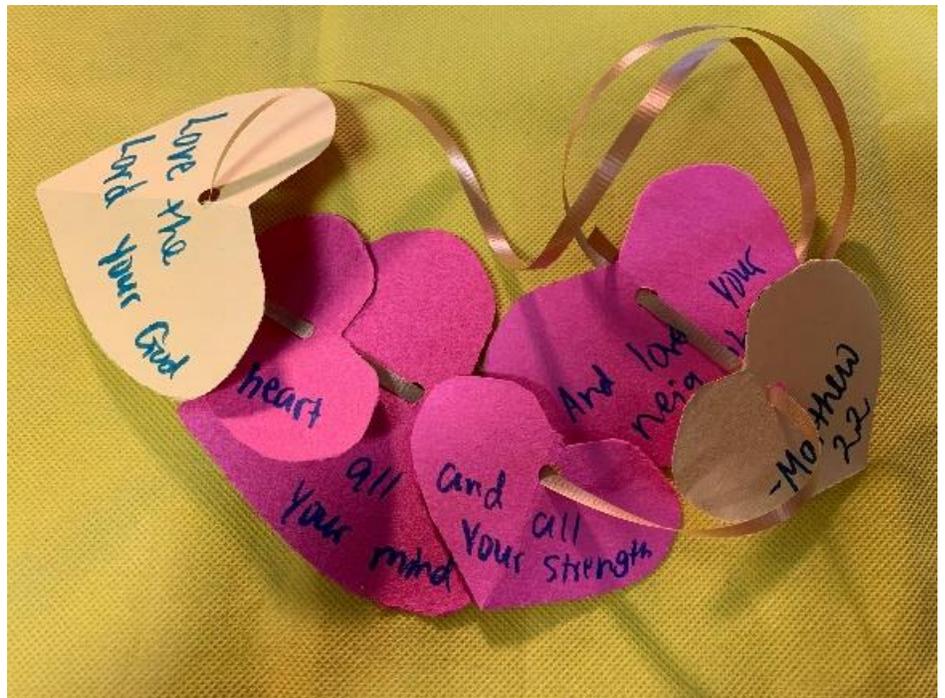
You will need:

- Scissors
- Construction paper
- String/ribbon
- Markers or decorating materials
- Hole punch



Procedure:

1. Cut out several hearts from paper, in varying sizes and colors.
2. Write out the Bible verse, placing a few words on each heart.
3. Punch a hole in each heart.
4. String the hearts through a ribbon or pipe cleaner to create a necklace or decoration. Wear or hang it to remember the verse and message it conveys!



Craft Two: “Love with all Your Mind” Headband

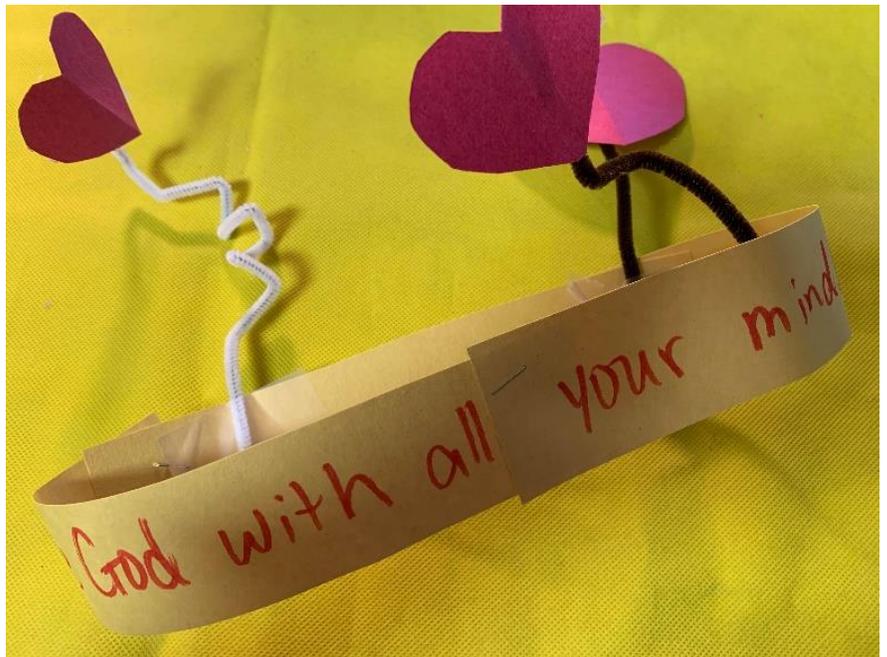
You will need:

- Scissors
- Construction paper or cardstock
- Glue and/or tape
- Decorative materials (markers, crayons, stickers)
- String, pipe cleaner, etc. (optional)
- Hole Punch
- Stapler



Procedure:

1. Cut strips of paper out, and attach them together to be long enough for a headband.
2. Write a verse or caption on the headband. Staple together to secure.
3. Cut out several hearts to decorate the headband.
4. Attach the hearts to the headband using twisted pipe cleaners or ribbons.
5. Add extra decorations (stickers, glitter, etc.) if desired. Wear and remember to love God “with all your mind”!



Craft Three: “Aim for Love” Target Game

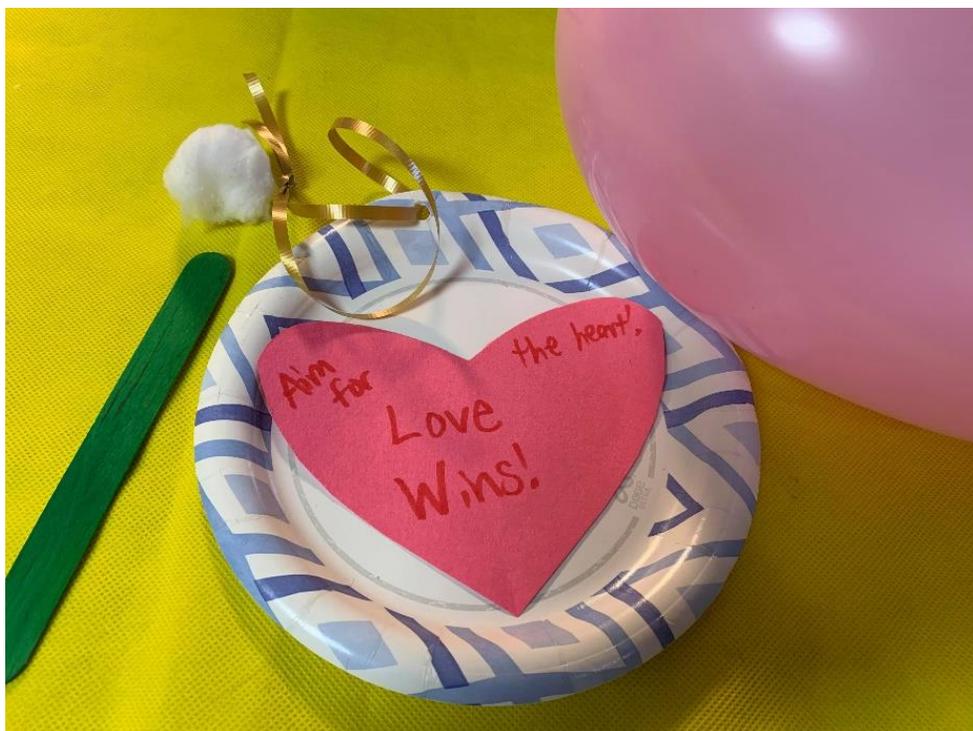
You will need:

- Paper plates (large or small)
- Scissors
- Construction paper or cardstock
- Glue and/or tape
- Decorative materials (markers, crayons, stickers)
- String, pipe cleaner, etc. (optional)
- “Ammunition” (pom-pom, balloon, etc.)



Procedure:

1. Design your “dart board” on a small or large paper plate.
2. Attach a paper heart (or a few of them in different sizes) to the plate.
3. Add extra decorations, verses, and captions, if desired.
4. Use a ribbon or pipe cleaner to hang up the “board”.
5. Gather small soft items to throw at the board. Options



include pom-poms, cotton balls, pieces of paper, balloons, etc. Use a rubber band or popsicle stick to launch items at the target in attempt to hit the smallest heart.





This lesson was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#), who serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO.

She has shared her teaching gifts through *Ministry-To-Children* since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.

Kristin has a professional background in elementary and pre-school education. A graduate of Biola University, she holds a Master of Education and will receive the Master of Theology degree from Concordia University, Irvine, California, in May 2020. Kristin grew up in southern California and lived the past 10 years in Georgia. She is a long-distance runner and voracious reader.

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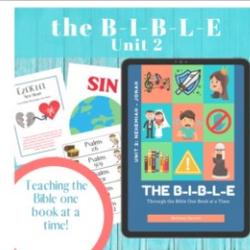
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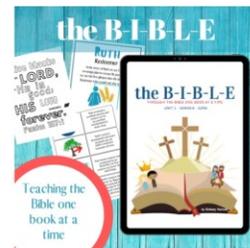
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