

# Best Ever – A Lesson Plan on the Great Commandment

This lesson plan encourages youth to consider why Jesus gave us the Great Commandment. What makes it the “best ever” commandment?

## Opening Activity

*Give each youth a pencil and paper.*

We all have a lot of rules in our lives. Maybe we have a curfew. Or we have to take out the trash. Or we have to take care of our little sister. Or get up by a certain time. Or go to Mass on Sunday. Write down a list of all of the rules you have to follow. Come up with at least a dozen.

*Give them a few minutes to do this.*

Now look at your list of rules. Which one of the rules you listed is the most important? Why?

*Spend some time on this discussion. Give everyone a chance to answer.*

## Scripture Reading for The Great Commandment

Read the Gospel:

[Mark 12:28B-34](#) (Jesus identifies the Great Commandment) – the Gospel Reading for the [31st Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B](#)

One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, “Which is the first of all the commandments?”

Jesus replied, “The first is this: Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”

The scribe said to him, “Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, ‘He is One and there is no other than he.’ And ‘to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself’ is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

[Mark 12:28B-34](#)

## Discussion for Best Ever

It is important to remember that Jesus was a faithful Jew and even a teacher. The Old Testament contains many laws which Jesus and his contemporaries knew and followed. The books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy are largely focused on the many laws the Israelites followed after leaving Egypt.

So when the scribe asked Jesus which law was the greatest, he had many many laws to choose from. But Jesus probably didn't hesitate to answer with the one he chose.

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

This is called the Shema Yisrael . That name is Hebrew for the first part of the command – “Hear O Israel”. This is an important prayer in Judaism and is prayed twice daily by observant Jews. It affirms a belief in one God.

The second part is also from the Old Testament.

Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your own people. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

Leviticus 19:18

This command reflects the many laws in the Old Testament which relate to taking care of others, especially the vulnerable such as widows, orphans, and the poor. This was an important part of the Jewish faith.

Jesus never said that the other rules didn't matter. But he did point out that these two are the foundation for all of the other commandments.

For Jesus, the rest of the laws only made sense when seen in the light of these two commandments. To just follow rules without letting them draw us closer to God and to each other is meaningless. They become empty rituals.

This is also true in our own lives. Some of those rules we have to follow every day can have more meaning if we consider how they draw us closer to God and to each other. Or they help us love ourselves. “Love your neighbor as yourself” doesn't make much sense if you don't love yourself!

<https://young-catholics.com/12266/best-ever-the-great-commandment/>

That curfew helps our parents keep us safe and worry less. We have to go to Mass on Sunday so we don't neglect our relationship with God. We have to take care of our little sister because she is vulnerable if left on her own.

## Reflection Questions on the Great Commandment

- What are some ways the rules you wrote down relate to your relationship with God?
- How do they show love for others?
- Do any of them show love for yourself?
- Are there rules on your list which don't fit in these categories? Why are they there? Are they still important?

## Challenge for Best Ever

This week, when you are following a rule which you'd rather ignore, think about how it relates to the Great Commandment. Talk to God about this rule and try to make following it into a prayer. Turn it into an act of love.

## Prayer

Close by praying the Shema Yisrael and the Our Father.