

Semicontinuous

**Deut. 34:1–12**

**Ps. 90:1–6, 13–17**

Complementary

**Lev. 19:1–2, 15–18**

**Ps. 1**

**1 Thess. 2:1–8**

**Matt. 22:34–46**

# The Golden Rule

**Goal for  
the Session**

*Children will memorize the Great Commandment and seek ways to follow it.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on Matthew 22:34–46

#### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Patrick Gray

No surviving Jewish texts from antiquity read Psalm 110 as a messianic prophecy. Matthew and others in the early church allowed their experience of Jesus to shape their reading of the Scriptures. They did not allow their reading of the Scriptures to define or limit Jesus in his role as the Christ. Jewish expectations in the first century about the identity and character of the Messiah were far from uniform. Christian hopes centered on Jesus were not shared by all Jews, but nevertheless comprised a vital component of this diverse milieu.

#### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Tim Beach-Verhey

God’s purposes are larger than any single people. The Messiah’s mission transcends the salvation of any particular group. Those who follow the Messiah must subordinate all particular interests, identities, and purposes to the Savior’s universal mission. Jesus refuses to identify love of God with rigid religious requirements or to identify faithfulness to himself with loyalty to a particular community of people. As he approaches the cross, Jesus makes clear what it means to love God and be a follower of the Messiah: “Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matt. 25:40).

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Earl F. Palmer

I think it is important for us as interpreters of this Monday event to see these encounters as a deepening journey. The lawyer may or may not be sincere in his question, but what has happened is that what he asks is near to the center of what really matters in life. My own experience as a Christian disciple and pastor is that if we wait it out with those in our lives who have questions on their minds, and then take each question in turn and do our best to say some one or two things in response, then sooner or later even the questions themselves get better, deeper, and more significant.

#### NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Allen Hilton

In his answer to the Pharisees’ question, Jesus gives two separate commands: the “greatest,” to love God; and the “second,” to love neighbor. Although he says the second is “like” the first, Jesus does not collapse the two, as if love of God *equals* love of neighbor. We probably should not collapse them either. “What is it to love God whole-lifedly?” One Ignatian author has hoped to be “seized so completely by the love of God that all the desires of my heart and all the actions, affections, thoughts and decisions which flow from them are directed to God.” How would one obey a command to “be seized”?

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**  
**Matthew 22:34–46**

## Focus on Your Teaching

Children learn many things by heart, often without trying, such as advertising jingles, song lyrics, sports statistics, or whatever captures their fancy. Jesus' words in the focus scripture that make up what is known as the Golden Rule are words worthy of memorization. As children explore these verses, they may be challenged to expand their identification of neighbor. This session does not include verses 44–46, which introduces a new concept that can wait until they are older.

*God, you are worthy of my devotion and I pray that I can show your love to others because I know your love for me. Amen.*

### YOU WILL NEED

- ☐ green cloth
- ☐ votive candle and matches or battery-operated candle
- ☐ Bible
- ☐ offering basket
- ☐ *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- ☐ Resource Sheet 1
- ☐ Color Pack 14
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheet 2
- ☐ pencils

### For Responding

- ☐ option 1: computer with Internet access
- ☐ option 2: Color Pack 14, copies of Resource Sheet 3 on card stock, markers, stickers, scissors, tape
- ☐ option 3: Color Pack 15, 30; *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, print the opening lines from Gathering on poster board if you have not done so, and save to use in future weeks. If you do not know them, memorize the commandments on Resource Sheet 2 (Most Important Commandments Puzzle) if you do not already know it.

As the children arrive, play “The Whole World Is in God’s Hands” (track 19 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Invite them to help set up the worship table with the green cloth, candle, Bible, and offering basket. When everyone is present, recall that the green cloth indicates that the church is in Common Time or Ordinary Time. In this case, it is the weeks after Pentecost until Advent.

Light the candle, and lead the following:

**Leader:** *During these weeks, we gather to praise God and study God’s Word.*

**Children:** *We want to be faithful followers of God’s Word and of Jesus.*

**Everyone:** *Loving God, thank you for our group and our church. May your Spirit show us the way. Amen.*

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle.

To help the children begin to think about that actions indicate love, ask:

✠ What do your parents or other adults do that show that they love you?

This is just to get them thinking. If their answers focus only on what is given to them, don’t attempt to get them to consider other aspects of love. That will come later in the session.

## EXPLORING

Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table and open it to the Matthew 22. Explain that today's Bible story is near the end of Gospel of Matthew. Help the children recall the stories they have heard about Jesus from Matthew's Gospel (Jesus' teaching about reconciliation and forgiveness, the story of the greedy farm workers, and the question about paying taxes).

Tell the story on Resource Sheet 1 (Love God, Neighbor, and Self). Ask:

- ✠ The Bible doesn't tell us, but what do you think the Pharisees said about Jesus' answer?
- ✠ Where do you think Jesus learned about the laws and ways of God?

If you select option 2 in Responding, the children will hear more about the mezuzah.

Show Color Pack 14. Explain that this box is a *mezuzah* (meh-ZOO-zah). Jewish families attach a mezuzah to a door into their home. Inside the mezuzah is a piece of paper with verses from the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament. One of the verses is "Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, and might."

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Most Important Commandments Puzzle) and pencils. Have the children complete the puzzle. If younger children will find it difficult to work on their own, gather them in a small group for a leader to assist while others work on their own. When everyone is ready, read the verses together. Explain that this is another way to say the two commandments. Read the two commandments from Resource Sheet 1 (Love God, Neighbor, and Self). Talk with the group about the importance of remembering these two commandments. Explain the options you chose from Responding to help the children memorize and practice them.

## RESPONDING

If possible, offer two options so children have a choice. Select one option that is more challenging for children who can work on their own.

EASY  
PREP

1. **Sign the Commandments** To teach the two commandments in another way, teach the sign language for *love*, *God*, and *others*. The signs can be found on [www.aslpro.com](http://www.aslpro.com) using the religious dictionary listings. Lead the children in repeating the commandments after you. Then teach the sign for *love*. Say the commandments together and sign *love* in each one. Teach the sign for *God*, and repeat the commandments again. Finally, teach the sign for *others*. By this time, the children will know the two commandments by heart.

The two commandments can be shortened to: *Love God. Love others.*

2. **Family Reminder** The children will make a holder for the two greatest commandments similar to the mezuzah used by Jewish households. Show Color Pack 14. Explain that Jewish families attach the mezuzah holder like this to their door. Inside are important words from God. Read Deuteronomy 6:4–5 to the group. Ask them what words are the same that Jesus called the greatest commandment. Provide copies of Resource Sheet 3 (Memory Box) on card stock for the children to decorate with markers or stickers. Show them how to fold the boxes. Place the two greatest commandments cut from the resource sheet inside the box and tape it closed. Talk together about where they can display this reminder of the two greatest commandments so their family will be reminded of them.

**Let Us Love One Another**

Let us love one another.  
God is love and loves us all.  
One that knows not love  
knows not God above.  
So, beloved, let us love one  
another.

Let us love our neighbors.  
God is love and loves us all.  
One that knows not love  
knows not God above.  
So, beloved, let us love one  
another.

**You Shall Love the Lord  
Your God**

You shall love the Lord your  
God, alleluia!  
You shall love the Lord your  
God, alleluia!  
With all your heart and soul  
and mind, alleluia!  
With all your heart and soul  
and mind, alleluia!

3. **Music** Two songs about the two commandments provide a musical way to remember them by heart. The children will be familiar with “Let Us Love One Another” (track 16 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021) if it was played to begin Closing in each session. It shares the sentiment of the second most important commandment. Listen to it and sing it together. Introduce “You Shall Love the Lord Your God” (track 22 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021), which is the first most important commandment. Read the words on Color Pack 30 to the children. Read it again, asking the children to repeat each line after you. Listen to the recording. Sing it together. Show Color Pack 15. Read the commandments on it together.
4. **Mission Project** Christians show love for God in many ways, but to combine love for God with love for neighbor or others leads to mission. If the group is involved in a mission project, provide more information about it to encourage their participation. If not, talk with the group about a simple way they can follow the second greatest commandment and love their neighbors. Lead them in a practical discussion about how they might help people in their neighborhood. Then broaden the discussion to how they might help people in other places, even other countries.

**CLOSING**

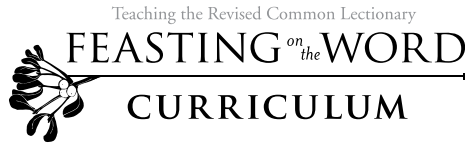
Play “Let Us Love One Another” (track 16 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021) as the children gather at the worship table. Light the candle.

If the children learned to sign the words in the greatest commandments, say and sign them now.

If they sang “Let Us Love One Another,” and “You Shall Love the Lord Your God,” sing them now.

As the children leave, say to each one: “(Name), God loves you. Show God’s love to others this week.”

**October 25, 2020**  
**The Golden Rule**



**Multi-Age**  
**Resource Sheet 1**

## **Love God, Neighbor, and Self** **based on Matthew 22:34–46**

In the last story you heard about Jesus and the Pharisees who were the experts in Jewish law. They tried to trick Jesus with a question about paying taxes to Caesar. Well, they weren't the only ones who wanted to trick Jesus into saying something that would get Jesus into trouble. Another group of Jewish leaders called the Sadducees went to Jesus that same day. They asked him a question and his answer left them speechless too.

When the Pharisees heard about this, they met again to come up with another plan to trick Jesus. This time they asked Jesus, "Teacher, what is the most important, the greatest commandment from God?"

Often Jesus answered a question with another question, but not this time. Many times, Jesus answered a question with a story, but not this time.

Jesus said, "The most important commandment from God is: Love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, and mind."

But Jesus didn't stop there. He continued, saying, "The second most important commandment goes along with it. Love others as much as you love yourself. Every other commandment and law from God follows these two."

Now that gave the Pharisees and everyone else something to think about. Who could argue with that answer?



## Most Important Commandments Puzzle

Code:  
A = 10  
E = 8  
I = 6  
O = 4  
U = 2

**Directions:** Do the math and use the code to help you figure out which letters to write in the blanks.

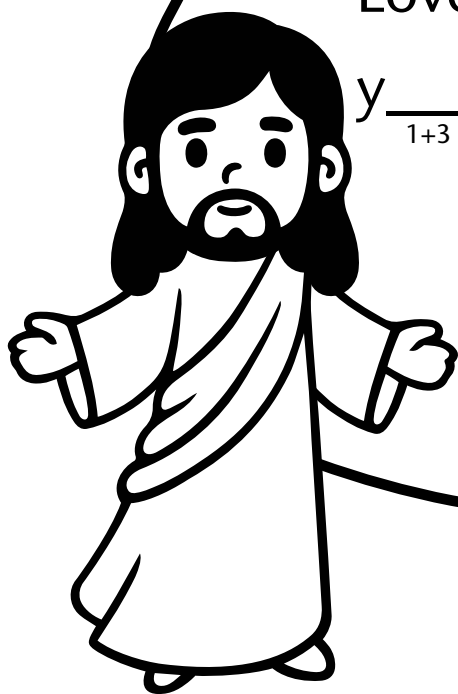
Jesus answered:

L<sub>2+2</sub>v<sub>7-1</sub> the L<sub>1+3</sub>rd your G<sub>4+0</sub>d  
with <sub>5+5</sub>ll your h<sub>6+2</sub> <sub>6+4</sub>rt, s<sub>1+3</sub> <sub>2+0</sub>l,  
and m<sub>3+3</sub>nd.

This is the first and most important  
commandment. The second most important  
commandment is like this one. And it is,

Love <sub>2+2</sub>th<sub>3+5</sub>rs as much as  
y<sub>1+3</sub> <sub>1+1</sub> love y<sub>4+0</sub> <sub>2+0</sub>rs<sub>4+4</sub>lf.

—Matthew 22:37–39, CEV



October 25, 2020  
The Golden Rule

Teaching the Revised Common Lectionary  
**FEASTING on the WORD**  
CURRICULUM

Multi-Age  
Resource Sheet 3



## Memory Box

He [Jesus] replied, *"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself."*  
-Matthew 22:37-39, CEB

**Directions:** Cut along the solid lines. Fold along each dashed line and glue or tape tabs inside the box, leaving the long tab as a flap.

