

## Gospel of Mark Chapter 12D

Marital Communication can be difficult. Often One person is very detailed in their communication, providing a meticulous play by play of how something happened but most times that person is married to someone who only wants the Headlines”

- There are times when one spouse has to say: “OK What’s the Bottom Line?”

In the annals of history it is written that someone approached a prominent Rabbi named Hilell and asked him to summarize the law while standing on one leg.

- Hilell was a scholar, not an athlete. Obviously this needed to be a very short summary. He replied:

*“What you do not want done to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the essence of the Law. Everything else is mere commentary on it.”*

- I am sure this sounds familiar to you; it is a negative expression of what we know as “the Golden Rule.”

Let me ask you this:

If someone asked you to summarize the Word of God standing on one leg, if they inquired, “What is the Bottom Line of the Bible?” How would you answer?

- Would you be like Hillel and quote the Golden Rule? *“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”* Is that a true summary of Biblical Doctrine?

Maybe you would refer them to:

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

- Genesis 3, the seed of a woman, Genesis 12, The seed of Abraham, The Son of David.

You might look to the book of Ephesians for your summary:

Ephesians 2: 8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

- Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness, Habakkuk, was told by God, “the just shall live by faith.”

As we return to the Gospel of Mark The Lord Jesus (like Hilell) is asked to summarize the Law. Considering all of the Law of God what is the Bottom Line

Remember that Jesus has been dealing with a series of verbal attacks from the ruling body of Israel, the Sanhedrin.

- ALL of these verbal assaults failed to discredit Jesus.
- He answered every question in perfect divine wisdom. Instead of turning the people against him his answers caused the people to marvel at his incredible insight, his unlimited understanding, his perfect perception.

Well (*you may be happy to know*) there is only one more question. In today's study, a Scribe who was standing there listening to Jesus' responses now speaks up:

- Unlike the Pharisees and the Sadducees this question does not come to Jesus dripping with venom. It does not appear to originate from a hostile heart.
- As a matter of fact, the question seems to come with at least some level of sincerity

Here is our outline for today: From Mark 12:

1. Lawyers and Laws,
2. Whole hearted devotion,
3. My neighbor and myself,
4. Near but not in.

#### 1. Lawyers and Law

The Scribes were the Lawyers and Theologians of their day. They were experts in biblical interpretation so it is fitting that this particular scribe comes to Jesus with a question about the law of God.

Mark 12:28 **And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"**

- Taking all of the Law into consideration, "What is the bottom line?" If you were to evaluate the Law of God and come up with a summary statement.
- If you were to prioritize the Law, what would you say was the most important commandment?

From very early childhood, every Sunday School curriculum contains with a teaching on the 10 commandments.

- We learn to recite those commandments early in life. Hopefully committing them to memory.
- BUT to the Jews of Jesus Day and even today, when you speak of the Law, there is much more involved than the 10 commandments.

The leaders of Israel took those 10 commandments and all God communicated with Moses there on Mount Sinai and expanded it, elaborated on it.

They came up with 613 laws for the people of Israel. (*245 positive / 365 negative*)

- WHY 613? Believe it or not, they counted the Hebrew letters contained in the 10 commandments and there were 613 letters so they came up with a law for each letter.

- Of those 613 laws the Rabbis also differentiated between what they called “Heavy” and “Light” commandments.
- The Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees labored with all of their might to fulfill the Law. (All 613) They believed that they would be accepted by God on the basis of their performance, their obedience.

How does Jesus answer the Question: “Which commandment is the most important of all?”

## 2. Whole Hearted Devotion

Mark 12: 29 **Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’**

- This first part of Jesus’ response clearly points the Scribe to the Book of Deuteronomy. It is here that Jesus quotes Deut 6:4-5.
  - (The Shema - Hear - *Jews repeated 2 times a day*)
  - They kept this verse in a Phylactery on their forehead, on the door-frame of their home.

It was this portion of Scripture that separated the Jews from the rest of the world. The whole world was lost in a mire of polytheism, the Jews uniquely believed in one God.

- Take note of the 4 fold repetition of the word “ALL.” Love God with ALL your heart, love God with ALL your soul, love God with ALL your mind, love God with ALL your strength.

If one was to OBEY the LAW perfectly: The True and Living God would be the single OBJECT of devotion in the hearts, the center of one’s whole being and all of one’s energies must be directed toward God for His glory.

- The HEART is the seat of man’s affections, the fountain from which my very existence flows and that heart is to be fully committed in love to God.

The SOUL is that part of man possessing his Will and Emotions. It is the seat of human volition. So the whole of my will is to be submitted to and driven by the Will of God. He is to be the sole object of my worship and the aim and focus of all of my affection.

My MIND is to be filled with a consuming desire to know HIM, hence all of my thoughts and all of my meditations are to be fixed upon his revealed Word resulting in purity of mind, wisdom in all of my dealings and soundness of thought.

ALL of my STRENGTH, every ounce of my energy is to be poured out continually for the glory of God and not for selfish pursuits.

Sinclare Ferguson: Jesus' answer underlined the fact that any man's attempt to measure himself against the law for his own reassurance is bound to lead to disaster, because the very FIRST Law requires a comprehensive, universal, undiluted love for God with every ounce of one's being.

- The Law requires 100% of one's devotion and strength 100% of the time

If you are honest with yourself, you have to admit, this kind of Love for God: the total commitment of body, soul and spirit is impossible for the natural man to attain.

- We are easily distracted by the things of this world. (pleasures & Hardships)
- AND it doesn't get any easier when Jesus ADDS: **The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'**
- To Love God with all of our hearts also implies that we will love our fellow man (our neighbor) who was created in His image.

### 3. My Neighbor as Myself

Mark 12: 31 **The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."**

- Jesus combines the consuming love for God expressed in Deuteronomy 6 with the command to love your neighbor found in Leviticus 19:18.
- It is important that we see, throughout the scriptures, these two principles are fundamentally linked together.

The Law of God, the Decalogue, the 10 commandments, when viewed together reflect the pure and holy heart of God, they can be easily divided into Two Tablets:

- The First Tablet are the Laws concerning man's love for God;
  - **You shall have no other gods before Me.**
  - **You shall not make idols....**
- The Second Tablet of the Law is made up of those laws dealing with Man's love for his fellow man.
  - **Honor your father and your mother.**
  - **You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery.**

The 2 Tablets of the Law form a unity that expresses both love for God and for our fellow man.

- We see this clearly communicated in the writings of the Apostle John:

1 John 4: 20 **If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.**

21 **And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.**

- John's Logic is this: It is more reasonable to expect that we should love someone we have seen, our fellow man, more than God who we have never seen.

John Calvin: But this love (for God) cannot exist, except it generates brotherly love. Hence he says, that they are liars who boast that they love God, when they hate their brethren.

Let's STOP here and remember the Question that the Scribe asked Jesus:

Mark 12:28B **“Which commandment is the most important of all?”**

- The question was asked by an individual who sought to justify himself through the works of the Law. Observing all 613 legalistic demands. (Mission Impossible)
- We need to remember that Jesus' answer also comes directly from the LAW.

SO Jesus is saying that the Law is perfectly fulfilled when an individual loves God with every fiber of his being and that Love is then shared with his fellow man.

- IS it possible for anyone to live in perfect obedience to the Law?

Galatians 3: 10 **For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”**

- Paul tells us that everyone who desires to be justified by the Law is required to live continually, perfectly by them.
- Example: Lost at sea on a raft made out of 10 planks of wood (9 are good.)
- A helicopter comes to your rescue. The pilot drops a chair on a chain made out of 10 links.... 9 of those links are good.
- Any way you look at it if you break one link in the chain of God's Law and the consequences are disastrous.

Romans 3: 20 **For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.**

- Paul tells us: BY the LAW comes the knowledge of Sin
- It is impossible for man, apart from the redeeming grace of God to LOVE God with all of his heart, soul, mind and strength and you can forget about loving your neighbor as yourself.
- The Law was give to us to show us that we are sinners in need of a Savior.
- SO the LAW can BRING you CLOSE but it cannot BRING YOU IN.

4. Near but not in.

Mark 12: 32 **And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. 33 And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”**

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

- The Scribe speaks to Jesus with great delight. He wholeheartedly approves of Jesus' response.
- He is enthusiastically in agreement with Jesus summation of the Law.
- His response, "You are right," could also be translated, **Excellent! Beautiful!**
- Regardless of his original motive it certainly appears that Jesus' words had a significant impact on this Lawyer.

Jesus also commended the Scribe saying: "You are not far from the kingdom of God,"

- What did Jesus mean by that? I am fairly certain that this Scribe believed that he was in the Kingdom. After all, he was a Hebrew by blood, a descendant of Abraham, a Scribe, a member of the Jewish ruling counsel?
- BUT according to Jesus he was only CLOSE but not IN the Kingdom.
- You and I both know that close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades.
- Some of us know what it is to be close but not IN?

Waiting for a subway after a Promise Keeper's Gathering in Washington D.C. Along with 70,000 friends.

- The doors open and a mass of humanity flow into the rail car. Packed like sardines I finally made it up to the subway door but there was not one square foot, not six square inches left inside of the train where I could place my 190 pound frame and the doors closed just short of amputating my nose.
- I was not far from the train BUT I was not IN the train.
- To miss a train is one thing (there is always another one coming shortly, BUT to miss the Kingdom of God is to remain in the Kingdom of darkness, destined for an eternity of torment away from the presence of the Lord.

Jesus sends this Scribe home in deep thought, What have I missed, What do I lack?

- He was not the FIRST official to walk away scratching his head.

John 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

- WE KNOW you are a teacher come from God. (They recognize his wisdom, his authority and great power)
- BUT Jesus responds in a very strange way.

3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- Jesus' response is like a puzzle? What does he mean by that?

4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

- Nicodemus is in the same place as the Scribe. He is NEAR but not IN the Kingdom.
- How does one enter the Kingdom?? Answer: He is BORN into it. According to Jesus he must be born a second time. Born of water and Spirit.

HOW much of your Physical Birth did you accomplish on your own??? You were there BUT I am fairly certain that your mother did all of the work.

- It took an outside source, someone other than yourself to bring you into this world.
- SO it also takes an outside source to bring about the second birth. It is the regenerating, life giving power of God that brings about the New Birth.

THE Bottom Line:

God washes a sinner with clean water, (that's what it means to be born of the water)

He cleanses us from all of our uncleanness.

He removes our dead heart of stone and gives us a new heart (A heart that is inclined to love God and to love our neighbor)

He places a new Spirit in us and causes us to walk in all of his statutes. (LAW)

This is the New Covenant of grace that Jesus pointed Nicodemus to:

It is the Gospel that we proclaim.

- If one will repent of their sins, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ he will be saved.
- ONLY THEN can we truly love God and love our neighbor as ourself.