

# Lesson 1: The Greatest Commandments

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 09 January 2025

Preacher: Pastor Shane Eccles

[ 0 : 00 ] So, tonight we're going to begin a series of lessons. These are discipleship lessons that I created years ago for the series church that I never actually got to put forth.

So, I had a meeting with Pastor Hanks and he wanted me to put together a discipleship series. And I put it together and it took a while to put together. And we, I guess, just moved on with other plans and things and never got really put to use.

And I called it Disciples of Jesus Christ. That was what I called the series of lessons. And it's based on the ministry of reconciliation.

So, hey, look, here we are. We got an opportunity now to, God's already planted this seed into my heart a long time ago. And so, here we are.

And, of course, we need to be disciplined. And that's what we would like to do on our midweek services is go in deep into the word and try to learn what it is God would have for us.

[ 1 : 02 ] And so, we can apply it to our lives. Amen. And so, tonight we're going to talk about the greatest commandment. So, help me pray. Lord Jesus, I thank you for your word. I pray you'd be with us tonight as the remainder of this service.

I pray your word be received, God, that you would give us spiritual ears to hear and spiritual eyes to see your word and how it can be applied to our lives, God.

And I pray, Lord, that it is, that it would be received into our hearts today and that you would touch us today. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. So, we probably don't think about it often.

We certainly don't appreciate it like we should. We probably don't consider how incredible it is that our God and Savior went through the miraculous act of manifesting in flesh to suffer and die for a specific cause and purpose.

What is that cause? What is the purpose behind such a dramatic action by our God? That cause and purpose was to allow us, mankind, the opportunity for a second chance at having eternal life and experiencing that eternal life with God.

[ 2 : 18 ] And it's very apparent through the actions of our God that had really no obligation to act. That the cause and purpose that moved him into such a dramatic action is the greatest cause and purpose there is.

The very fact that God was willing to do what he did, to die for this purpose, should leave us with an impression that this purpose must be greater than any other purpose in life.

The purpose of being saved from hell. When we say that I'm saved or I need to be saved, what are we talking about? Being saved from what? We're talking about being saved from hell, from eternal separation from God, eternal destruction.

The purpose of being able to live with God forever and ever. That's the purpose that we're talking about. The creator of all things, the most powerful in the universe, the almighty God willing to humble himself to become a man and experience hunger like we do.

To be thirsty like we get thirsty. To get tired like we get tired. To be tempted of things just like we're tempted. And finally to be beaten by his very creation.

[ 3 : 38 ] And then murdered by his own creation. To die on a cross in nakedness and shame. Why would God almighty do that for us?

And the answer is because he loves us. He loves us. And because he put on flesh, he now can sympathize with our weaknesses.

He was tempted in every way as we are but without sin. Allowing him to be our kinsman redeemer. We needed a kinsman redeemer.

You could say, you know, Jesus was just a man. And, you know, but if he wasn't God, you could argue and say that, you know, a man could give a life for another man.

Right? I mean, the value of one life for another. But to be able to die on a cross and save all of humanity and all of existence for all of time from their sins, he had to be God.

[ 4 : 43 ] He was God in flesh. And he became so selfless that he would come off of his throne in glory to allow himself to be murdered by his own creation. To be our kinsman redeemer.

And looking at what he did through his great act of selfless love, we should ask ourselves, if he gave everything for such a great cause, what are we to give as his followers?

If he was willing to do that as God and creator, us as his creation, what should we be willing to do for the same cause that he felt that it was so important?

Shouldn't we get us to think about it? Shouldn't we consider his act of stepping down from that heavenly throne to make himself humble and lowly and give his life unto death to save our souls?

Shouldn't we consider it? And then consider for ourselves, if it was that important to him, how important should it be to us? It's an obvious answer.

[ 5 : 47 ] His selfless act gave us a second chance at eternal life. And I'm thankful for that. To not accept that there is now much required of us after receiving the promise of eternal life through God's selfless act of giving his life to save our souls, in which he had no obligation to do.

To not accept that much is required of us, too, is not only arrogant, but it demonstrates the exact opposite view and the exact opposite attitude that our God has and has demonstrated to us.

How can we be so arrogant? How can we, as his creation, be okay having an attitude of carelessness for our own soul or the souls of others?

When our creator has greatly demonstrated to us that saving souls from eternal damnation is the greatest cause and purpose there is. Demonstrating an opposite attitude of our savior doesn't seem to be a good position to take with our God.

Amen. And after we have received so much from him in which we didn't deserve and could never earn, how can we not be moved into action by that? What is that cause, that purpose, the saving souls from eternal damnation in hell and giving them eternal life in the presence of God called?

[ 7 : 06 ] What is that called? It's called the ministry of reconciliation. Reconciliation. Reconciliation is the act of causing two people to be on good terms again after a falling out.

And like I said, that's exactly what had happened in the garden in the beginning of time. We were created to have eternal, everlasting communion with God.

That's what we were created for. And we were deceived by Satan and we lost that. We gave up our right to eternal life.

In our disobedience and in our sin, we were stripped of eternal life and instead were handed death and damnation. We need to be reconciled back into God.

We need to be reconciled back into good standing with God. We need to be on good terms again with God. Reconciling lost souls to their creator is the greatest cause, the greatest purpose, the greatest endeavor that you can commit yourself to in this world, in your lifetime.

[ 8 : 21 ] Your first action should be to ensure your soul is saved. You need to be reconciled to God. I need to be reconciled to God. That should be your first action, your first goal in life, your first number one priority.

Make sure that you are saved. Make sure that you are on good terms with God. The next action should be to lead others to be saved, to help others find reconciliation with God.

And so you need to examine the calling that every disciple of Jesus Christ has on their lives. And that is to advance the kingdom of God through the ministry of reconciliation.

Like our mission, to be ambassadors for Christ. To make disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen. Who wants to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? I want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

So if you have your Bibles, because we don't have screens, so we have to make points to bring our Bibles or have our phones ready. It's important to have the word at your fingertips.

[ 9 : 27 ] 2 Corinthians 5. Verses 17.

When you have it, say Amen. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away.

Behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. And hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

Verse 19. To wit that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

And hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Verse 20. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ.

[ 10 : 30 ] As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. So I am committed to learn from myself and to teach you, disciples of Jesus Christ here in Houston, what it is to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

To be ambassadors of Christ. To have a ministry of reconciliation. And so far I've discovered there's several components and they all fit together.

The primary components are what are known as the greatest commandments. Have you ever heard of the greatest commandments before? Raise your hand if you have.

Okay. That's why we're talking about it. So we have a few, but not everybody. So it's found in Matthew chapter 22. You can go there now. In Matthew chapter 22, a Jew asked Jesus what the greatest commandment in the law was.

Matthew chapter 22, verse 36. Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, thou shall love the Lord thy God with all of thy heart and with all of thy soul and with all thy mind.

[ 11 : 54 ] This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law of the prophets.

So this Jew asked Jesus what's the greatest commandment and Jesus gave him two. He gave him the greatest commandment. And then the second one, which is like unto it, meaning that it's just as important.

These two commandments are the centerpiece of the disciple of Jesus Christ because the man, Christ Jesus, the one that we are to be disciplined followers of, of his example.

Jesus demonstrated these two commandments for us perfectly in his life and his ministry. The example in Christ Jesus was to love God by being obedient to his word. Christ was obedient unto death.

And remember in the garden before he went to the cross, not my will, but thine be done. Not my will, Lord, but your will be done.

[ 13 : 00 ] And so he was the example for us to be, to show that we love God with all our hearts, all mind, that we would be obedient to his word, even unto death.

And the example in the man, Christ Jesus was also to love his neighbors as himself, his fellow humanity, to lay down his life for his friends. There's no greater act of love than to give your life for another.

Right. And Jesus did that. OK. And first Timothy, chapter three, verse 16. And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.

God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world and received up into glory.

So the first great commandment, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. To truly love God like you should, you need to know who God is.

[ 14 : 09 ] That's why I read Matthew, I'm sorry, Timothy 3, 16. He was manifest in the flesh. Jesus was God. The journey to becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ begins with the understanding there is only one God and his name is Jesus.

The Lord our God is one Lord. And we should love the Lord our God with all of our heart, all of our soul and all of our might. This is the very fundamental teaching first found in the Old Testament.

You've heard this probably a hundred times. Deuteronomy 6 and 4. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. It doesn't say the Lord our God is one God. Because the Trinitarians are going to tell you there's three Lords that make up one God.

There's God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. And together they're one God. But it says there's one Lord. There's only one head.

There's only one person. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might.

[ 15 : 12 ] So the man Christ Jesus not only demonstrated this in his life, but he also echoed this commandment in the New Testament when he told the Jew that questioned him.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul and mind. Okay. So he demonstrated it, but he echoed it as well. In Isaiah chapter 44. So we're going to the Old Testament. Isaiah chapter 44 verse 6.

Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts. I am the first and I am the last. And beside me there is no God.

So God speaking through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah said, thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, Israel's Redeemer, the Lord of hosts.

I am the first and I am the last. And beside me there is no God. Okay. So when you interpret that for yourself, what do you see in your mind?

[ 16 : 17 ] There's only one God and Savior. In the Old Testament, God speaks to his people through that prophet. Let him know that God is the Redeemer and God is the first and the last. And beside him there is no other God.

And then we find in the New Testament, it's revealed to John when Jesus is speaking to him, that Jesus is the same God who spoke to Isaiah long before. Revelation chapter 1, verse 17.

And when I saw him, this is John speaking, that when he saw Jesus glorified. This is in a future, this is the revelation.

So this is John going into the future in a vision. And John said, And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.

And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth and was dead. And behold, I am alive forevermore.

[ 17 : 20 ] Amen. And have the keys of hell and of death. Who was it that was alive and then dead and then alive forevermore? Jesus. In Isaiah, God was clear that he was the first and the last.

And beside him there was no other God. In Revelation, Jesus is telling John he's the first and the last. So these two scripture settings give us the picture of who God is.

And his name is Jesus. It makes it very clear. And this fact comes by revelation. And it's not, when you read in the book of Acts, when people were converted to Christianity, they became disciples of Jesus Christ.

They didn't instantly get a download from heaven that gave them every bit of knowledge and understanding there is to know or understand about God. Okay? Okay? So if this revelation of Jesus hasn't been discovered yet for you, that Jesus is God, or you still have a hard time understanding how is it that Jesus is praying to the Father?

You know, if they're the same. If you're still struggling with those things, I understand. But as long as you obey the teachings and the commandments of Jesus and believe in him, you're good standing with God.

[ 18 : 42 ] Okay? So fully understanding the apostle doctrine is not absolutely necessary. It's not a requirement of salvation. Okay? But, of course, you want to aim for that.

You want to understand. You want to have revelation. You want to know the mysteries of the Bible. They are explained. They are obtainable. But fully understanding it is not explained. Necessary for salvation.

But being obedient to the word is. So you might not understand it completely, but you need to be obedient to it. And you can experience the gospel and salvation through obedience to the word of God and through Jesus Christ.

Okay? So John 14 and 6 says, Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. And no man cometh unto the Father but by me. Okay? So if we love Jesus Christ with all of our heart, all of our soul, and all of our mind, then guess what?

We love God with all of our heart, all of our soul, and all of our mind. And if we love God with all of our heart, soul, and all of our mind, then guess what? We love Jesus with all of our heart, soul, and all of our mind.

[ 19 : 45 ] Okay? There's only one God and Savior. Only one first and last. And beside him there is no other God. And you can call him by his name, Jesus. Okay? The name's been revealed.

Okay? Remember, without controversy, great. It's the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh. Okay? So the love of God that God demonstrated to us is perfected and pictured in his actions.

Right? It was God that died for us. He did not assign that task to someone else. Okay? A Trinitarian is going to tell you the Father told the Son to go die for humanity. Okay? My son's here tonight.

Son, I'd like for you to go and die for the city of Houston. Would you please? Because I would like... I'm pastoring here in Houston now. I'm trying to have revival here. And I would like for the people of Houston to be saved.

So would you mind going and letting yourself be murdered? What would you tell me? If it's that important to you, do it yourself.

[ 20 : 49 ] And that's exactly what God did. He didn't assign it to God Jr. to go die on a cross. Okay? God did it himself. Amen? Amen? And nothing was going to keep God's love from us.

Okay? And from saving us. So the first commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And we should be able to do that because if we understand what he did for us, he first loved us.

So how could we not love him? Okay? Okay? So the first great commandment leads us to our own reconciliation. It leads us to reconciliation with God. Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind.

This first great commandment will lead us to salvation. If you learn to love God the way that this commandment says we should, you're going to find salvation. You're going to stumble upon it because if you love God, you're going to love his word.

In the beginning was the word. The word was with God. And the word was God. Man, I'm a rookie.

[ 21 : 54 ] Right? So in the beginning was the word. The word was with God. The word was God. So if we love God, we're going to love the word because the word is God. Okay? So you're going to study the word of God. And you're not going to study it long before you're going to find what's there required for salvation, which we know it's easily found in Acts 2.38.

Repent of your sinful ways. Turn to God. And you want to be baptized in the only saving name, the name of Jesus Christ. So your sins will be washed away and you'll be filled with his spirit.

And you want that gift of the Holy Ghost. Right? And so the first two great commandments, loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind, that first one will lead you to salvation because you're going to love God.

You're going to love his word. You're going to want to please him. So if you truly are loving God, you're going to want to please him. Right? And so you're going to figure that out. So ultimately it does lead you to salvation. The second great commandment is equal to the first.

Right? Remember it said, and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Okay? The second commandment is to love your neighbors as yourself.

[ 23 : 03 ] It says, love your neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. That inherently means that you love yourself.

You're not going to want to hate yourself and then love your neighbor as you love yourself because then basically you're going to hate your neighbor. That's not what the Bible is teaching. So when the Bible says, thou shalt love your neighbor as thyself, it inherently means that you should love yourself.

You should care about yourself. You should treat yourself correctly. Why is that important to God? First Corinthians 3.16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

If any man defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which you are the temple. So my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

God dwells inside of me. Three chapters later in 1 Corinthians 6.19 What? That's what it says. What?

[ 24 : 14 ] Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you? Which ye have of God? And you're not of your own? For he bought you with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

They belong to God. So you realize that you're valuable to God, right? That's the whole point of everything I've said so far. What was he willing to do for our souls? He bought us with a costly price, right?

And it involved everything. So you realize, I'm a child of God. I'm valuable to God. You don't violate your body with drugs.

You don't violate your body with alcohol, smoking, perversions, piercings, tattoos, surgeries, trying to change your sex appeal, liposuction.

Surgery is trying to change your God-given gender. You don't intentionally set evil things before your eyes.

[ 25 : 20 ] You're careful about what you watch and listen to. What you're consuming through your eyes and ears matters. Because you understand that I'm not my own.

I was purchased with a large, a very expensive price. God himself was willing to die for me. He redeemed me. I have his spirit dwelling in me. I'm the temple of the Lord.

God, like how I adorn myself, you know, adorn, my wife always has a table runner and like a centerpiece in the table.

And by doing that, by putting a table runner on the table and putting a vase or whatever in the middle with flowers or whatever it is that she does, she's adorning that table.

That's what adorning means, okay? How you adorn yourself or how you dress, how you arrange yourself, it matters to God. It's in God's word.

[ 26 : 19 ] What you wear matters. How you represent yourself matters. Because you realize it isn't you that you're representing anymore. It's God that you represent. For you are bought with that price.

Therefore, glorify God in your body. So the second commandment, love your neighbor as yourself, inherently means that you love yourself. Right? Which, if you follow that commandment, that leads you to holiness principles.

Okay? And also, if you love your neighbor as yourself, you want to be saved. Right? You do. You want to be saved. You don't want to go to hell. You want to go to heaven.

You want the spirit of God in you. Right? So if you want salvation and blessings of God for you and your family, but what about your neighbors? Because we're supposed to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Right? So that second commandment then leads us to sacrificing your life's ambitions, your time, your efforts, your money, all of it. Willing to sacrifice it all for the kingdom of God so that it advances to save souls.

[ 27 : 20 ] Because now our priorities are correct. Okay? If God was willing to, like I said in the beginning, willing to do what he did, that should demonstrate to us how important this is to him.

And so it should be that important to us. And you do all that because you love your neighbor as yourself. And just as much as you are concerned that you want to make it to heaven, you're equally concerned that the people in your life make it to heaven too.

And so you can't help but share your testimony with someone. What did God do for you? Right? You can't help tell someone. I know you're going through something.

Look, this is what God did for me. And if he did it for me, he can do it for you. And you become a true witness of Jesus to others and lead others to him because you know there's a life more abundant waiting for them to enjoy.

So put these two commandments together and into action in your life and you're going to be led to that great purpose. You will be a disciple of Jesus Christ and ambassador of Christ.

[ 28 : 34 ] Stand with me. The ministry of reconciliation has the three fundamental concepts that disciples of Jesus Christ should understand.

Okay? First, salvation, holiness, and sacrifice. Okay? It causes us to become new creations in Christ Jesus. Remember when we read that? If any man in Christ be in Christ, he's a new creature.

Old things are passed away and all things become new and all things are of God. Okay? We've become new creations, new creatures. Secondly, the greatest need, this is something we need to understand, fundamental concept, to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Because the greatest need of all humanity is not that we have more firefighters, not that we have more police officers, not that we have a better military, not that we have the best welfare system.

That's not the greatest need of all humanity. Okay? It's not Starlink or Tesla. All the latest technologies. It's not. No.

[ 29 : 38 ] The greatest need of all humanity is the need for sinful mankind to be reconciled to their holy God. Because everything you see around you all the time, it's temporary. Okay?

And then the third concept, fundamental concept, that disciples of Jesus Christ need to understand is that there's that single overriding mission that we as new creatures in Christ inherit as ambassadors for Christ.

And that is that we are to bring light to a dark world in Christ's stead. We're supposed to be the light. We understand that we inherit the advancement of the greatest cause and purpose there is, the ministry of reconciliation.

Okay? And that's what we're doing. That's the whole purpose of why we're doing everything we're doing here in Houston. Houston. Houston deserves to have an apostolic Pentecostal church that preaches Jesus' name, that preaches one God, that can show people how they can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and have what they need to make it to heaven.

Amen? Don't you believe that Houston deserves that? But so do your neighbors. So do the people on your street wherever you live. They all deserve that. So we should be a light.

[ 30 : 54 ] We should be a witness everywhere we go, in the workplace, at home, with our families, just everywhere. And just be that witness. Be the light. You know?

And let's engage in the ministry of reconciliation. So for the next few Thursdays, I'll be breaking down this a little bit more. This was just kind of a general overview of the ministry of reconciliation.

And I think that we're going to learn some things. So hopefully it helps you understand what's the purpose of all this. It's not just so we can be saved.

Because as soon as we experience salvation, it's not about us anymore. It was about us before because our soul was in jeopardy. But once we experience salvation, it's not about you no more.

It's about the unsaved soul. Amen? Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you, God, for the knowledge of truth. God, I thank you that somehow, some way in our lives that you called us out of all the other things in this world, all the other things in this life, all the other doctrines, all the other teachings, all the other denominations, all the other religious views.

[ 32 : 08 ] God, somehow, some way you called us out and given us truth. God, that your word is truth. God, we thank you for that.



We thank you. We don't understand why. But we thank you, God, that you called us and given us the opportunity to experience you, to have your spirit in us, that we could be a light to the people around us, and that you would be willing to allow us to work in your kingdom and be in the ministry of reconciliation.

God, I pray, Lord, that you go with each and every single one of us today. God, as we travel and journey home, keep us safe on the roads. God, I pray you bring us back together on Sunday for a great anointed time in your presence.

And I pray, Lord, that you begin to make things happen in this city through us as lights. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. And you're dismissed in the name of the Lord.