

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

All Activity Sheets

### KEY WORDS

LOVE HEART SOUL MIND LIFE STRENGTH GIVING NEIGHBOR

### BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Exodus 19:1-20:21; Matthew 5:17; Mark 12:28-34

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help preadolescents learn to express their love for God by giving their whole life to him.

### MEMORY VERSE

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Mark 12:30-31a, NIV\*).

### PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

As Christian discipling teachers we have a huge responsibility, and a great privilege. Our responsibility is to plant evangelical seeds in the hearts of our students and help them on their walk with Christ. Our great privilege is to be the Lord’s instruments and evangelize all of creation.

In these resources you will find teachings and activities that will help facilitate your work of discipling preadolescents. But remember, for these teachings to be effective it is so important to follow the direction of the Holy Spirit.

There are many things these days that compete for preadolescents’ attention: friends, sports, music, fun activities, etc. All of these options can confuse their priorities since they do not know how to prioritize in the first place.

With this lesson, they will learn that God should take first priority in any Christian’s life.

God gave rules to his people to serve as a guide, and in this way, they could live in holiness and harmony. As your students learn this commandment, they will understand that when they love God above all other things, everything else will come to fruition.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Read Exodus 19:1-20:21. God gave the Ten Commandments to his people and clearly explained that he desired to be the most important thing in their lives. After rescuing them from Egypt, he helped them cross the Red Sea and took them to Mount Sinai to hear his words. Before giving them the Ten Commandments, God reminded them of everything that he had done for them and he asked for their love in return.

Their obedience of the Ten Commandments would be how they would show love to God in response to the covenant that God had made with them. He desired them to be a holy people and the commandments would help them live holy lives. The rules did not make the Israelites God's people; rather, they received the commandments because they were God's people.

Read Matthew 5:17 and Mark 12:28-34. One time, a teacher of the law came to Jesus and asked him a question. When God gave the Ten Commandments to his people, the leaders saw to it that more rules were added to form a complete law. In the New Testament times, the Jews had 613 laws and commandments that they had to follow. Of those, 365 were negative things to avoid and 248 positive things to do.

The answer that Jesus gave ended in the central point of the Jewish system of laws: "love the Lord" (one single phrase taken directly from the Shema) "and love your neighbor as yourself". These are the basis of all the other commandments.

Jesus identifies love as the most important characteristic that someone could give to please God.

God loves us and gave us everything necessary for us to be reconciled with him. But, it is necessary that we love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

As Christians, we are not to worship idols because we know that does not please God. But, are we giving God the place He deserves in our life?

God simply asked the Israelites to remember his laws and hoped they would respond with the same love and obey His commandments.

In the same way, our obedience to God should come from the love we have for him.

## INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Welcome the group and let them introduce themselves, their age and their progress in school. A lot of them probably already know each other and that is okay too. Regardless, it will help everyone get to know any new students and help the new students get to know their peers. If you have many new students, we suggest that you make up words/ phrases that will help you remember everyone's names easily. If this is your first class of the year, it is probable that your students are still excited about everything they just did during their Christmas vacation and new year celebrations. Let them each give a short account of their time away from school. This will help them be able to focus on today's biblical theme.

### Classroom rules

Explain to the students that in an organized society, there are a series of rules that you should follow to maintain harmonious relationships. Then ask them what kind of rules they have. Listen to their responses.

Then, tell them that between all of you, you will come up with Group Rules that all of you will follow. We suggest that you let the students collaborate and assist by contributing their own ideas for rules. That way they will not feel like the rules are an imposition but will see them as things they helped make and will be more likely to follow.

Write on a poster the rules that you all decide on and hang it somewhere where everyone can see it. We suggest that instead of saying things like "Do not run in the meeting area", say, "Avoid running in the meeting area". In this way, the students will receive the message without feeling reprimanded.

### What do you think about the rules?

Say to the students, "It is been a few moments since we decided on our class rules. In this activity we will dig a little deeper into rules."

Hand out Student Activity Sheet #314-A for this activity. Have the students circle the answers that describe what they feel when they have to obey rules.

### Concentration game

For this activity, you will need 30 white cards, separated into 15 pairs. On each pair of cards, draw a geometric figure (square, triangle, rectangle, etc.) or write a word (house, tree, flower, etc.)

To start the game, divide the class into two teams. Explain to them that the game will require concentration, while they put the cards on their table, face down. Ask a player from the first team to choose two cards and turn them over. If the figures/words are the same, they will keep the cards; if they are different, they turn the cards back over and it is the next team's turn.

Then, ask each member from the first team if they would like to change the rules and how they would like to do so. Follow the new rules the next time you play. Then ask the second team how they would change the game and follow their rules.

Continue changing the rules each time you switch teams.

After the games finishes, ask them how they felt when the rules kept changing. Maybe they felt it was unjust, frustrating, or just that it was difficult to remember all of the rules.

Explain to them that in today's lesson they will see why it is so important to know and obey the rules.

## **READ MARK 12:28-34 BEFORE THE SESSION AND BE PREPARED TO TELL THE STORY IN YOUR OWN WORDS.**

Jesus changes the rules?

See Student Activity Sheet #314-B for this activity. It is important to bring Bibles to class. Tell the class that each week you will be using the Bible in class and that it is important for them to bring theirs as well if they have one.

If some of the students do not have a Bible, they can share with others. Figure out whom you can talk to see if you can supply the students with Bibles. Sometimes there are Bible organizations which can assist with Bibles. Another option would be to find people in your congregation who can donate Bibles to your group.

After making sure that all the students have a Bible that they can use, ask them to find Mark 12:28-34, and have a volunteer read it.

Then, divide the group into two teams, and have each team select its leader and secretary.

The first team should analyze and respond to the questions in A, and the second group will do the same in B. The secretary of each team will write down the answers on a piece of paper.

Then, each team leader will choose a member of the opposite team to answer one of the questions. They can use the secretary's notes for help.

## **CONNECT THE LESSON**

### **Special cards**

Ask your group to talk about specific ways that they can express their love for God and make him first in their life. (Pray and read the Bible every day, be loving to their siblings, forgive those who have offended them, etc.)

Ask them to look at Student Activity Sheet #314-C and respond to the question: "What should I do?" by writing a card to God and telling him how they will honor and obey him. Also see Student Activity Sheet #314-D and discuss: "What idols do people worship today?" Note the two rules on the activity sheet, and ask: "Have we changed the rules?"

## **PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE**

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

[Download Suggestions for Bible Memorization PDF](#)

Review the memory verse again to help your children memorize it. Invite your children to write it down at home to help them remember it better. Tell your children that we must love God with our whole self: heart, soul, mind and strength. We must love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

## **WRAP-UP**

**Pray**

Ask your students to tell their prayer needs. Then conclude with prayer and challenge them to make God the top priority in their lives.

**Encourage**

Thank your students for attending class and remind them that in order to grow in their knowledge of God, it is necessary that they attend Bible study regularly. Encourage the children to express their love for God by giving their whole life to him.

**Invite**

Ask the children to pick up the materials that they used and that they can help put things away before leaving the meeting area. Tell them a few things about the next session to make them curious. Remind them that their friends are also welcome.