



## ELEMENTARY LARGE GROUP

### LESSON 1

## THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

**WONDER TRUTH:** God Wants Us to Love Him and Love Others

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 22; 25

**GOD'S BIG STORY:** An expert in the law asks Jesus which is the most important commandment, and Jesus says that the greatest commandment is to love God and the second is to love others.

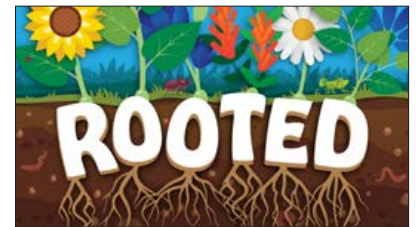
**WORD OF WONDER:** Jesus replied, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your mind.' This is the first and most important commandment." —Matthew 22:37–38

### CURIOSITY

### BELIEF

### FAITH

- Brain Teaser: Match It!
- Welcome Question: Some things just go together, like peanut butter and jelly. What things do you think should go together?
- SMALL GROUP
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- Worship: He Is the Light, Your Love for Me
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Responding in Worship: Great Are You Lord
- Blessing Your Kids
- SMALL GROUP: Responding in Worship Activity



[Rooed Elem Spotify playlist](#)

### INVITATION

**We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...**

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**WORD OF WONDER:** Matthew 22:37–38

Hold up your arms and put them in the shape of a cross. One arm points vertical, the other, horizontal. This simple illustration reminds us that God wants us to love Him (the vertical arm) and love others (the horizontal arm).

What would happen if, while you were holding your arms up like this, one of the kids in your ministry poured a jug of juice on your topmost fingers? Would it simply drip down your arm, or would it splash out on the kids around you? Obviously, it would splash out. This is an even better illustration of God's love! When He pours His love onto us, it naturally splashes out to other people. Love for God and love for others go hand in hand. Read Matthew 25:31–40. When we follow Jesus, God gives us power through the Holy Spirit to love like Jesus, including the ways Jesus describes in these verses.

Have you ever sensed God's love splashing down all over you?

He loves you completely, exactly as you are. You don't need to do more or be more for Him to love you. Letting God's love flow through you to your neighbors is as simple (and sometimes as hard) as living in the splash zone of God's love for you.

—**Christie Thomas**

Children's Ministry Volunteer and Author

Contributor to Wonder Ink

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS**

**WHO?**

Pharisees were influential Jewish men who promoted their religious traditions based on their interpretation of the Law of Moses. In this story, a Pharisee who was an expert in the Law tried to trap Jesus in His words by testing Him with a question.

**WHAT?**

Jesus teaches that the two greatest commandments are to love God and love others. The Law and the Prophets hang on these two commands, which go hand in hand. Jesus equates loving others and meeting each other's needs with loving and serving Him.

**WHERE?**

Jesus was in Jerusalem. The Pharisee in Matthew 22 questioned Jesus while He was teaching in the temple courts. By Matthew 25, Jesus had left the temple and was teaching His disciples on the Mount of Olives, east of the city across the Kidron Valley.

**WHEN?**

These teachings happened during the week leading up to Jesus' death. Jesus was in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Feast with His disciples. Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25 looks ahead to the judgment at the end of history, when God's kingdom comes in its fullness.

**CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY**

For all eternity, God is love. He gives of Himself for the good of others. God's love changes our hearts so we might be found walking in love on the day of Christ's return. This will show that we love God and belong to Jesus.

### Large Group

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

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### As kids arrive...

Around 20 minutes before service begins, display series theme loop. Play high-energy music in the background.

LG Leader walks around the room on mic and greets kids by name as they enter the room. Welcome kids by name and greet them with enthusiasm. Be extra intentional about hearing and responding

**SLIDE: SERIES THEME LOOP**

**VIDEO: COUNTDOWN** (2min OR 30sec) Start a countdown to begin game 10 minutes prior to service start)

### Brain Teaser: Match It!

8–10 MINUTES PRE-SERVICE

**SUPPLIES:** table or stool, tray, towel, items to put on the tray (fork, spoon, cup, saucer, apple, banana, toy car, toy truck, different kinds of athletic balls, hat, gloves, scarf, socks, etc.), microphone (optional), scissors (optional)

**SLIDE: MATCH IT!**

**Allergy Caution:** This activity includes possible food allergens!

Ahead of time, place at least 10 various items on a tray and place it on a table. Cover the tray with a towel to hide the items.

**I've got a brain teaser for you!** Point to the covered tray. **On this tray there's a collection of random items. Which ones will you choose to use together in a new game called Match It?**

Remove the towel and point to (or pick up) each object so everyone can see it clearly. Put the items back on the tray.

**Now that you've seen what we've got, what would you choose to put together for a game?** Call on a few kids to gather around the tray and hold the items they want to match. Line kids up across the front of the room so everyone can see what they've chosen to go together.

Encourage creativity! Some things might go together in surprising ways! Once matches are made, comment on what kids chose to put together. Consider asking kids to explain their matches:

**Why did you put those two items together to use in a game?**



If your group and space are large and it would be difficult for all the kids to see the tray clearly, consider using the Match It! Slides rather than a physical tray. Invite kids to speak into a microphone, sharing what items pictured on the slide they would choose to go together and why.

Thank the volunteers for their creative ideas and ask them to put the items back on the tray before sitting down. **We've been talking about things that go together. Jesus taught about two things that go together too—love for Him and love for others. Jesus made it very clear we can't have one without the other.**



#### **SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH**

Today's Wonder Truth is **GOD WANTS US TO LOVE HIM AND LOVE OTHERS.**

### **Welcome Question**

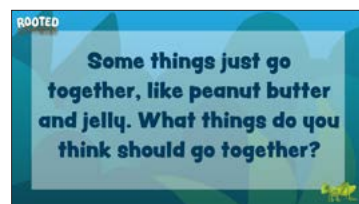
**SUPPLIES:** paper, coloring utensils, poster board OR , whiteboard, dry-erase markers (if needed)

#### **SLIDE: WELCOME QUESTION**

**At service start time,** draw kids' attention to the Welcome Question.

Invite kids to write answers on the poster board or whiteboard.

**Some things just go together, like peanut butter and jelly. What things do you think should go together?**



**What creative ideas you have! I never would have imagined putting \_\_\_\_\_ (choose an example that kids shared) together. Some things just go together, and today we'll hear about two things Jesus taught. In fact, you can't have one without the other. But, first, it's time to be curious.**

### **Small Group**

Introduce small group time. While kids are in small group, consider sitting in the groups for a few minutes each. Engage and interact as is appropriate.

### **Countdown**

After about 15 minutes of small group, give a 5 minute warning and begin the countdown.

#### **VIDEO: COUNTDOWN**

**"Hey everyone! Welcome to our Large Group Worship time! My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm excited to take this time to worship God, review what we just read, and talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning about God! We are going to pray as we prepare our hearts to worship God!"**

## Declaring God's Wonder

### SLIDE: DECLARATION

Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

**Thank You, God, that You are good!** (Kids repeat.)

**You made me on purpose, for a purpose.** (Kids repeat.)

**And I am Your kid!** (Kids repeat.)

**You know me, love me, and lead me.** (Kids repeat.)

**Help me find ways to show my love for You,** (Kids repeat.)

**And help me find ways to show love to others!** (Kids repeat.)

**My life can tell of Your wonder!** (Kids repeat.)

**ROOTED**  
Thank You, God, that You are good! (Repeat)  
You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Repeat)  
And I am Your kid! (Repeat)  
You know me, love me, and lead me. (Repeat)  
Help me find ways to show my love for You. (Repeat)  
And help me find ways to show love to others! (Repeat)  
My life can tell of Your wonder! (Repeat)

## Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use your own words. Here is an example: **Father God, You know us and love us. Help us to hear and understand Your Word today. May Your Spirit show us how we might show love to You and to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

## Worship

Consider sharing some about the songs you are going to sing. What they mean, why we sing them, why they are meaningful and important to you!

**"We're going to stand and sing together! One way that we show love to God is to worship through song! So stand up, sing loud, and join in the motions with us. God loves to hear us sing praises to Him! Let's stand together and sing!"**

**WORSHIP VIDEOS: He Is the Light, Your Love for Me**

## God's Big Story

### SLIDE: TITLE

Encourage kids to open their Bibles to the book of Matthew, the first book in the New Testament. They can find the large number 22 for the chapter and the small 36 for the starting verse. Explain that in this passage, some religious teachers were testing Jesus by asking Him hard questions.

**Let's start by watching part of God's big story directly from the Bible. Afterward, we will experience more of the story!**

**VIDEO: GODS BIG STORY**



# LESSON 1 THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

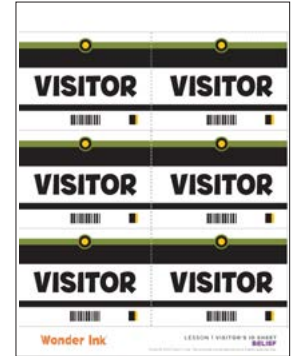
## EXPERIENCE IT! SCRIPT

**SUPPLIES:** cardstock, scissors (prep only, name badge holder (3" x 4" with lanyard, paper, marker, envelope, shopping bag, crown, bread, bottled water, envelope, small coat or sweater, empty OTC medicine bottle, chairs (6), Bible or scroll

**RESOURCES:** Visitor's ID Sheet (1/LG)

Ahead of time, print the Visitor's ID Sheet onto cardstock and cut out the cards. Print two cards back-to-back in a name badge holder with lanyard attached, so the image is visible from both sides. With a marker, write the words "Shopping List" in large letters at the top of a sheet of paper and list these items below: food, water, invitation, clothes, medicine, visitor's card. On a sealed envelope write "You're Invited!" with a marker.

Gather your props. In a shopping bag place these six items: bread (or any food item), bottled water, the "You're Invited!" envelope, a small coat or sweater, an empty OTC medicine bottle, and the visitor's card on a lanyard.



Set six chairs in a row at the center of your stage area. Place the crown on one of the chairs.

Casually enter with the full shopping bag and the shopping list in hand. **Before I went shopping, I made a list of all the things I needed so I wouldn't forget.** Pause. **Oh, no!** Quickly look through your bag—look at your list—and back through your bag again. **Whew! It's all here.** Set the bag down.

**Lists can be helpful. In the Old Testament, God gave His people lists of rules—called commandments—to help them know how to live. These commands set them apart as special and helped the people live good lives. Of course, with sin in every heart, no one could follow the commandments perfectly. No matter how hard we try, every person sins and does wrong things. In that way, the commands showed the people they still needed something ... they needed someone.**

Sit on one of the chairs and notice the crown. **When Jesus began His ministry, He told people, "Turn away from your sins! ... The kingdom of heaven has come near"** (Matthew 4:17). Hold the crown. **God's kingdom—God's new creation and new way of life—was showing up. Jesus was letting people know that God is in charge and that the broken parts of the world are being fixed. He was showing people how to love.** Set the crown down.

**Once, some Pharisees got together. One of them came to ask Jesus a question. This Pharisee was an expert in the law—the lists of commands (hold up a Bible or a scroll) God gave His people after delivering them from slavery in Egypt. The Pharisee came to test Jesus.** You may want to use a different voice for the Pharisee: **" 'Teacher,' he asked, (tap the Bible or scroll arrogantly) 'which is the most important commandment in the Law?' "** (Matthew 22:36; emphasis added).

**Jesus replied with words from Scripture. He said, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your mind.' This is the first and most important commandment. And the second is like it. 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself' "** (Matthew 22:37–39; Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18).



Jesus then explained that everything God commands us to do is a way of loving God and loving others. You can't love God without loving what God loves. And God loves people! So we can show our love for God by loving others just as we love ourselves.

**Make It Inclusive!** Engage kids who are especially active and those who struggle to focus by inviting them to be volunteers on stage for this storytelling.

**But what does it mean to love others as we love ourselves?** Invite six kids to sit in the six chairs. **Each of our friends here—let's call them our neighbors—has a problem.** Starting on one end, stand behind the kids as you introduce them. Encourage the kids to make a silent gesture or facial expression that shows each problem. **Our neighbor** (say the kid's name) **is hungry. Our neighbor** (say the kid's name) **is thirsty. Our neighbor** (say the kid's name) **is a stranger in a new place. Our neighbor** (say the kid's name) **is cold. Our neighbor** (say the kid's name) **is sick. Our neighbor** (say the kid's name) **is in prison.**

Stand again behind the first kid and move down the line as you address each problem. Ask the kids in the audience to respond to these questions: **Let's imagine: If you were hungry, what would you want from someone?** Pause for responses. **If you were thirsty, what would you want?** Pause for responses. **If you were a stranger in a new place, how would you want someone to treat you?** Pause for responses. **If you were cold because you didn't have the proper clothes, what would you need?** Pause for responses. **If you were sick, what would you need?** Pause for responses. **And finally —if you were in prison, or if you had done something wrong—how would you want to be treated?** Lead the kids into compassionate responses by reminding them we have all done wrong things. **This is how we love others: by loving them as we want to be loved.**

**Leader Tip:** There may be kids in your ministry who have loved ones who are incarcerated, so be especially sensitive when talking about prison. Keep in mind that kids might have hurts or be dealing with difficult situations that you're unaware of.

Pick up your shopping bag. **I have some items in here that could help our neighbors.** Invite six more volunteers—one at a time—to come up and reach into the bag for an item. Here is a list of the items and the need each meets: bread (hungry), water (thirsty), invitation (stranger), coat (cold), medicine (sick), visitor badge (in prison). Have the kids who are standing describe their items and then match them to the needs of the kids who are seated, giving away their items. As the items are given, briefly discuss how each item meets a need. Thank the six standing volunteers for loving their neighbors as they would love themselves. Ask them to remain as a group on the right side of your stage.

**Jesus told His followers that He will return someday and sit on His throne as the everlasting King.** Put the crown on your head. **When He returns, Jesus will separate all people into two groups. Jesus will welcome one group** (hold out your arms to the six kids standing in a group to the side) **into God's forever kingdom, saying, "I was hungry. And you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty. And you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger. And you invited me in. I needed clothes. And you gave them to me. I was sick. And you took care of me. I was in prison. And you came to visit me"** (Matthew 25:35–36).



**The people will ask** (invite the standing group to repeat after you when you pause), **“Lord—”** Pause. **“When did we do these things for you?”** Pause. **They wondered when they had seen Jesus hungry and fed Him, or thirsty and gave Him a drink. When did they see Jesus as a stranger and invite Him in, or cold and clothe Him? And when did they see Him sick, or in prison and visit Him? They did all those things, but they did them for** (point to and list the names of the six kids in the chairs).

Stand behind the kids in the chairs. **Jesus will answer** (talk to the group of kids standing), **“Anything you did for one of the least important of these brothers and sisters of mine** (look down at the kids in the chairs and tenderly list their names), **you did for me”** (Matthew 25:40; emphasis added). Thank the six standing volunteers and ask them to rejoin the audience.

**Jesus said the other group** (point to an invisible group on your left side) **will have no part in His kingdom. Unlike the first group, these people did not care for those who were** (as you mention each problem, gently take back the items from the kids in the chairs and put them in your bag) **hungry or sick, thirsty or a stranger, cold or in prison. Jesus will say to them** (say to the invisible group), **“Anything you didn’t do for one of the least important of these** (point to the kids in the chairs), **you didn’t do for me”** (Matthew 25:45; emphasis added). Thank the six volunteers in the chairs and ask them to rejoin the audience. Remove the crown from your head and set it down.

**Love for God** (refer to the crown) **and love for others** (refer to the six empty chairs) **go hand in hand. The love Jesus showed on the cross made it possible for all people to be part of God’s forever kingdom, written into God’s big story as God’s adopted sons and daughters. Now followers of Jesus can live as part of God’s family by loving God in a way that overflows into a love for others.**

**God cares about His people—His sons and daughters. He cares about how we treat each other and how other people treat us. When we follow Jesus, God changes our hearts and gives us power through the Holy Spirit to love like Jesus.** Place one item from your bag onto each of the six chairs while saying: **We show our love for Jesus by loving and serving our neighbors, giving of ourselves for their good. This is the way we live when we follow Jesus. This is the way of God’s kingdom.** Shake out your bag—make sure it’s good and empty. **God wants us to love Him and love others.**

## Connecting the Wonder Truth

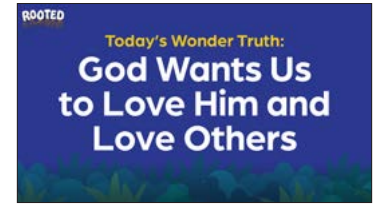
### SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

Pose the following question to kids to help them connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

Our Wonder Truth today is **GOD WANTS US TO LOVE HIM AND LOVE OTHERS**. Where did you see our Wonder Truth in the story?

Allow kids to answer freely.

**God is love, and He gives of Himself for the good of others. God's love changes our hearts so we can love others the way He loves us. The Bible says Jesus will return someday, and when He does, our love for others will show that we love God and belong to Jesus.**

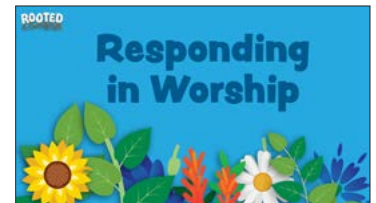


## Responding in Worship

### SLIDE: RESPONDING IN WORSHIP

Talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning with next steps such as tithing, prayer, asking questions, and worship. Encourage kids to ask their SG leaders any questions they were wondering during the lesson.

\*\*\*Introduce this next song and invite kids to respond and participate in worship. See the "Worship Posture Tutorial" on the RBKids Resource Page.



### WORSHIP VIDEO: GREAT ARE YOU LORD

## Blessing Your Kids

Speak a blessing over your kids, as a group or as individuals. Use your own words. Here is an example:

**Blessing:** May you feel the love of God so strongly this week. May you be reminded of God's immense love for you and others. And may you reflect that love to Him and those around you.

## Responding in Worship Activity

Instruct small group leaders to use the remaining time to open to the last page in their SG Guide and complete the Responding in Worship Activity.