



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.

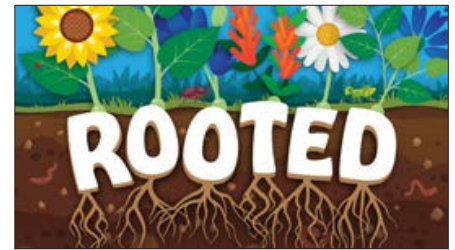
**WORD OF WONDER:** Love God with all your heart and soul and mind. —from Matthew 22:37

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Play Stations:
  - Flower Bouquets
  - Match It!
  - The Greatest Commandment Coloring Sheet
- Word of Wonder: From Matthew 22:37
- God's Big Story / Snack
- Circle Time: Envelope Game
- LARGE GROUP
- Game: Helpers



Rooted Helper Preschool Spotify playlist



## LESSON 1 FOR LEADERS

### INVITATION

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

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

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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

## LESSON 1 **FOR LEADERS**

### **THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT**

#### **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.



Curiosity

Belief

Faith

Identity

## LESSON 1 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

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

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

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

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 22; 25

**WORD OF WONDER:** Matthew 22:37

### Play Stations

**SUPPLIES:** variety of fake flowers, medium-sized buckets (4), disposable forks and spoons, toy fruit (at least 2 pieces), toy vehicles (at least 2), various kinds of athletic balls (at least 2), winter hat, winter gloves, shoe, clean sock, toy sand shovel, toy sand bucket, large bin, coloring utensils, tissue paper (optional), ribbon (optional), kid-safe scissors (optional)

**RESOURCES:** [The Greatest Commandment Coloring Sheet](#) (1 per kid)

Greet kids warmly as they arrive and briefly explain the play stations. Invite them to play at any of the play stations.

**Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas of what we'll be learning about today?**

#### Play Station: Flower Bouquets

**Set-up:** Sort flowers by type and/or color. Place sorted flowers inside buckets on a table. If you want, set out tissue paper, ribbon, and kid-safe scissors.

**Play:** Invite kids to make a flower bouquet for someone they love. You can also have kids cut a piece of ribbon to tie the flower bouquet together and invite the kids to wrap flowers in a piece of tissue paper.

#### Play Station: Match It!

**Set-up:** Place disposable eating utensils, toy fruit, toy vehicles, athletic balls, winter hat, winter gloves, shoe, clean sock, toy sand shovel, and toy sand bucket inside a large bin. Put the bin on the ground.

**Play:** Encourage kids to decide which items go together. Ask kids why certain items go together. Tell them they'll learn about two things that Jesus says go together.

#### Play Station: The Greatest Commandment Coloring Sheet

**Set-up:** Print one copy per kid of coloring sheet and set out the coloring utensils.

**Play:** Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw a picture of someone they love.

## Word of Wonder

**SUPPLIES:** Bible; Word of Wonder Poster (1/SG)

### WORD OF WONDER

Love God with all your heart and soul and mind.

—from Matthew 22:37

The Word of Wonder for the Rooted series is Matthew 22:37. Let's practice saying the Word of Wonder together.

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **LOVE GOD**—Point up.
- **WITH ALL YOUR HEART**—Place right hand over your heart.
- **AND SOUL**—Cross your hands over your chest.
- **AND MIND**—Point to your forehead.
- **FROM MATTHEW 22:37**—Hold your hands together in front, palms together, as if opening a book.

Let's play Word of Wonder Bridge! Word of Wonder Bridge is like "London Bridge Is Falling Down." You'll sing a song while walking in a circle. Let's practice the song first.

(To the tune of "London Bridge Is Falling Down")

Can you say our Word of Wonder, Word of Wonder, Word of Wonder?

Can you say our Word of Wonder?

It's your turn!

Now that we've got the song down, let's play Word of Wonder Bridge!

Have kids make a circle. Choose two kids to face each other and hold up arms to form a "bridge." **These two people are the bridge.** Point to the kids forming the bridge. **You'll walk underneath the bridge one at a time and sing our song together. On the last word ("turn"), the bridge will lower its arms to capture the person passing under it. The person in the bridge will say the Word of Wonder and then take a turn being part of the bridge.** Play a few rounds and encourage the kids to say the verse.

After a few rounds of Word of Wonder Bridge, gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **How do you think we can love God with all our hearts? With all our souls? With all our minds?** (If the kids need help, offer ideas such as telling God we love Him, worshiping Him, reading the Bible, memorizing Bible verses, and serving God.)
- **What might stop us from loving God with all our hearts and souls and minds?** (If the kids need help, offer ideas such as being too busy, doing wrong things or sinning, and not paying attention during worship time.)

## God's Big Story / Snack

Hold up a Bible and show the kids. Tell them that today's story comes from the book of Matthew in the Bible. Open a Bible and show them where the story is found.

### Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

**I open my Bible and what do I see?** (*Hold your hands together, then open your palms, as if opening a book.*)

**God's big story, waiting for me!** (*Point to yourself.*)

**Let's hear a part of God's big story that comes from the book of Matthew in the Bible. That's the first book of the New Testament.**

Read Matthew 22:34–40 and Matthew 25:31–46 from an NIV Bible.

## Circle Time: Envelope Game

**SUPPLIES:** marker, envelopes (10), index cards (6), tape, stickers (at least 4), posterboard

Ahead of time, create a "game board" with the marker, envelopes, index cards, and posterboard. Tape 10 envelopes to the posterboard so that they can still open. Number the index cards 1–6. Tape the envelopes in numerical order to a posterboard. Randomly slide index cards inside envelopes and place stickers inside the remaining empty envelopes so each envelope has an item. Close the envelopes.

**Leader Tip:** You may want to have enough stickers for each kid in your room to get one.

Gather kids in front of the game board. **Today we're playing the Envelope Game! I'll choose someone to walk up and see what's inside one of these envelopes. If you find a number inside, we'll all do an action together, and you can answer a discussion question. If you find a surprise instead, you can keep it!**

Numbers on the index cards correspond to question numbers below. The actions are listed with the questions.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Have kids touch their toes. **According to Jesus' words in our Word of Wonder, what three things are we to love God with?** (*heart, soul, mind*) **How did Jesus say we should love our neighbors?** (*as ourselves*)
- 2) Encourage kids to jump three times. **Jesus wants us to show love to people who are considered "the least important of these brothers and sisters of mine"** (Matthew 25:40). **Who is Jesus talking about?** (*people in need, such as people who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, in need of clothes, sick, in prison*)
- 3) Tell kids to spin around in a circle two times. **When we do something for someone in need, who does Jesus say we are also showing love to?** (*Jesus*)

- 4) Have kids crawl. **Have you ever cared for someone in need? Share about it.**
- 5) Encourage kids to quack like a duck four times. **Why do you think loving God and loving others go together?**
- 6) Invite the kids to march in place. **How can you show love to God this week? How can you show love to other people this week?**

**Loving God and loving others is a big deal. They go together—you can't have one without the other. Loving God and loving others can be hard to do as we follow Jesus. Let's talk to God now in prayer and ask for His help!**

### **PRAYER TIME**

Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and to thank God for helping them find ways to love Him and love others this week.

## **Head to Large Group!**

**Return and finish the rest of this guide before parents arrive.**

## **Responding in Worship: Loving God and Others?**

**SUPPLIES:** paper (2 sheets), marker, tape

Ahead of time, use the marker to write "GOD" on one sheet of paper and "OTHERS" on the other. Tape the sheets of paper to opposite walls in your room.

**God wants us to love Him and love others. Let's think through ways that we can show love to God and others. And then we will pray, asking God to help us.**

**If you think what I say is a way to love God, go to that side of the room.** Point to "God" sign. **If you think what I say is a way to love others, go to the other side of the room.** Point to the "Others" sign.

Read the following examples and encourage kids to determine whether each example is a way they can love God or others (or both!). And take a moment after each example to pray and ask God to help them love Him and others.

- Reading your Bible (God)
- Sharing a snack (Others)
- Hugging a friend who is sad (Others)
- Memorizing a Bible verse (God)
- Taking a walk and thanking God for all the beautiful things He created (God)
- Setting the table for your family (Others)
- Asking a new kid at school to play (Others)

Keep in mind that there may not be a right or wrong answer for some of these statements. In some of them, loving others is the same as loving God, and loving God leads us to love others.

## Game: Helpers

**SUPPLIES:** dolls (1 per every 2 kids, plus 1 extra)

Today we're learning that when we love others, we are also loving God. Let's play a game called **Helpers**.

Divide kids into pairs. Hand out dolls. Set doll next to you. **Let's pretend that this doll is our friend. I'll call out a situation. Then you'll say or act out how you can show love to your friend in that situation.**

Call out situations and have kids use the dolls to demonstrate or say how they can show love to someone in that situation. Here's a list of situations and ideas for how kids could help:

- **Your friend is thirsty.** (Show her where the water fountain is.)
- **Your friend fell down.** (Help her up. Get her a bandage.)
- **Your friend is sad.** (Give him a hug. Draw him a picture.)
- **Your friend spilled cereal on the floor.** (Help her pick it up.)
- **Your friend is hungry.** (Share your snack with her.)
- **Your friend is happy.** (Give him a high five. Give him a hug.)
- **Your friend is sick.** (Pray for him. Make a card for him.)