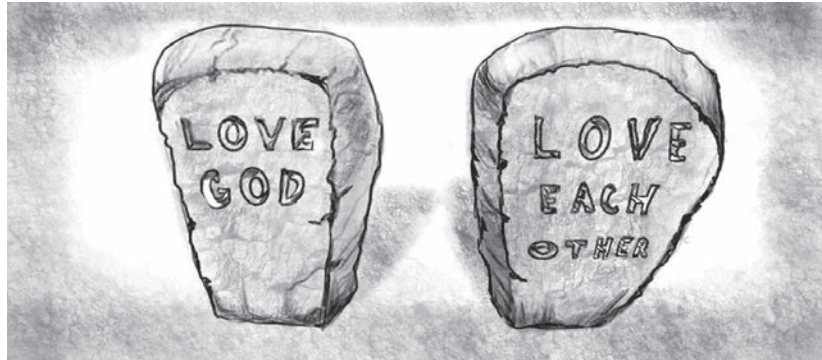


## The Two Most Important Commandments



### SABBATH—MARCH 15

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Matthew 22:34–40; Psalm 135:13–19; Psalm 82; Matthew 23:23–30; Luke 10:25–37.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “If we say we love God but hate any of our brothers or sisters in his family, we are liars. If we don’t love someone we have seen, how can we love God? We have never even seen him” (1 John 4:20, ERV).

**WE BELIEVE** that God will make everything right in the end. While we wait for Jesus to come back, what we do as Christians, here and now, does matter. Yes, there are many evils that God won’t stop because of the limits on His power in the worldwide war between good and evil. But we must try to end any suffering and evil we find. Our helping people is part of our job as Christians.

As we saw already, being fair and loving can’t be separated. God loves when we are fair. If we love God, we will love to be fair, too.

Also, if we love God, we will love other people. When we love other people, we show them that we care about them and want what is best for them. When other people are suffering, hurting, hungry, or poor, we must care about their needs. We should ask ourselves what we can do, on our own and as a church, to show God’s love to other people.



**We should ask ourselves what we can do, on our own and as a church, to show God’s love to other people.**

## THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT COMMANDMENTS (Matthew 22:34–40)

If we want to show God’s love to people, we first must start with doing the things God commanded us to do.

**Read Matthew 22:34–40. How did Jesus answer the lawyer’s question?**

Jesus said, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul [spirit], and all your mind.’ This [command] is the first and most important command. And the second command is like [the same as] the first: ‘Love your neighbor the same as you love yourself.’ All of the law and the writings of the prophets [God’s special messengers] take their meaning from these two commands” (Matthew 22:37–40, ERV). Do you see that the commandments Jesus says in these verses are quotes from the Old Testament?

**Read Matthew 19:16–23. How are Jesus’ answers to the rich young man’s questions much the same as His answers to the lawyer’s question in Matthew 22?**

What is going on in this story? Why did Jesus answer this young man in this way? What should we all, rich or poor, learn from this meeting?

“Jesus gave the rich young man a command that would help him become a true Christian. We may think that Jesus’ words were too strict. But Jesus’ words were really wise. Jesus showed the rich young man what he must do to be saved. Following and obeying these rules were the young man’s only hope. His riches and power started to change his heart for the worse. If the young man continued to love his riches more and more, he would love God less and less. But what if the young man loved his riches only a little? Would he lose strength to be a good person? Yes. If we love our things more than we love God, these things will fill our hearts so fully until there’s no more room for God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 520, adapted.

**God may not ask us to sell everything we own. But what are you holding on to that you may need to give up? How will keeping these things cause you to lose your everlasting life if you don’t let go of them?**



**“If we love our things more than we love God, these things will fill our hearts so fully until there’s no more room for God.”**

## THE TWO BIGGEST SINS (Psalm 135:13–19)



What is completely different from love for God? Love for false gods, whatever those “gods” may be.

Jesus said that the two most important commandments are love for God and love for other people. When we obey these commands, we must give up things so that we may show that we love other people. When we do, we show that we understand what following Jesus is really all about.

Now, if the two most important commandments are love for God and love for other people, what are our two biggest sins?

**Read Psalm 135:13–19. What do these verses teach us about a sin that we read about elsewhere in the Bible?**

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The Old Testament talks about how we must love God above everything else (read Deuteronomy 6:5). What is completely different from love for God? Love for false gods, whatever those “gods” may be.

**Read Zechariah 7:9–12. What angers God? How is this thing and the sin of worshiping false gods connected to the two most important commandments?**

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God doesn't like our worship of false gods. He also doesn't want us to hurt other people. Remember, God is love. So, He becomes angry when we hurt other people or aren't fair to them.

The two biggest sins in the Old Testament are connected with the two most important commandments: to love God and to love other people. So, the two biggest sins are really failing to love as God commands us. You can't keep the commandments if you don't love God and if you don't love other people.

In 1 John 4:20, 21, we read: “If we say we love God but hate any of our brothers or sisters in his family, we are liars. If we don't love someone we have seen, how can we love God? We have never even seen him. God gave us this command: If we love God, we must also love each other as brothers and sisters” (ERV).

**How do you explain to someone why our love for God can't be separated from our love for other people? How are these two ideas connected?**

## GOD LOVES BEING FAIR (Psalm 82)

The Bible announces that God loves being fair and hates evil (read Psalm 33:5; Isaiah 61:8). God cares deeply when we aren't fair to people. When we aren't fair and hurt other people, God gets angry. In the Old and New Testaments, God helps and defends the poor and needy. He gets angry with the people who hurt them and show them no mercy.

**Read Psalm 82. How does this poem show us that God cares about our being fair in this life? What does this poem mean for us today?**

Many Bible thinkers feel that Psalm 82 warns us about leaders who aren't fair. Psalm 82 also talks about the time when God will judge "the gods" who work with the evil leaders on this earth and give them power. (These gods, as we saw already, are really demons.) God asks the leaders, " 'How long will you stand up for those [evil people] who aren't fair to others [innocent people]? How long will you show mercy to sinful [filled with sin] people?' " (Psalm 82:2, NIV).

God commands these leaders to " 'defend the poor and orphans. Protect the rights [the needs] of the poor. Help those [people] who are poor and helpless [in need]. Save them from those [people] who are evil' " (Psalm 82:3, 4, ERV). In this poem and in many other Bible verses, the Old Testament writers command God's people to be fair. This message is very important. We see it in the writing of God's special messengers and in Jesus' teachings.

God does not keep secret the things He expects His followers to do. God tells us in Micah 6:8: "The Lord has told you what is good [holy]. He has told you what he wants from you: Do what is right [fair] to other people. Love being kind [nice] to others. And live humbly [with no pride in your heart], trusting your God" (ICB).

We read this same message all through the Bible. Jesus said, " 'All people will know that you are my followers if you love each other' " (John 13:35, ERV).

**How would our families and churches be different if we followed Micah 6:8? How can you show this important rule in your life?**



**“Defend the poor and orphans. Protect the rights [the needs] of the poor. Help those [people] who are poor and helpless [in need]. Save them from those [people] who are evil’ ” (Psalm 82:3, 4, ERV).**

## GOD WANTS US TO BE FAIR (Matthew 23:23–30)

The prophets in the Bible were God’s special messengers. The prophets told the leaders of Israel to be fair. Again and again, the Bible warns us not to hurt people and to be fair. When the prophets asked God to punish evil, they were really asking God to fill the land with leaders who were fair and showed mercy to the people.

The prophet Isaiah talks about the evil happening in Israel in his day. His message to the people was about being fair in everything they did. This message is important for us today. “Learn to do good. Look for what is right [correct] and fair. Speak strong words to those who make it hard for people. Stand up for the rights [needs] of those [people] who have no parents. Help the woman whose husband has died” (Isaiah 1:17, NLV). Isaiah also warns the leaders “who write evil laws and make life hard for the people. They are not fair to the poor” (Isaiah 10:1, 2, ERV). Then Isaiah asks these leaders, “What will you do on the day when the LORD punishes you? On that day trouble will come from far away. Who will you run to for help? Who will you trust your riches with?” (Isaiah 10:3, NIV).

In the same way, the prophet Jeremiah announces God’s message. He warns that God will judge the king “who builds his palace by [with] doing evil. He cheats people so he can build its upper rooms. He is making his own people work for nothing. He is not paying them for their work. . . . Your father was satisfied [happy] to have food and drink. He did what was right [holy] and fair. So everything went well for him. He helped those who were poor and needy. So everything went well for him. That’s what it means to know God,” says the Lord” (Jeremiah 22:13, 15, 16, ICB).

**Read Matthew 23:23–30. What are “the really important teachings of [in] the law” (verse 23, ERV) that Jesus talks about?**

Jesus cared about being fair. He said, “You who pretend to be someone you are not! You give one-tenth part of your spices, and have not done the most important things of the Law, such as [like or as in the following examples] thinking what is right and wrong, and having pity and faith. These you should have done and still [continue to] have done the other things also” (Matthew 23:23, NLV).



“‘Help the woman whose husband has died’” (Isaiah 1:17, NLV).

**WHAT DOES THE LORD REALLY WANT? (Luke 10:25–37).**

In Luke’s story about Jesus, Jesus announces to a lawyer that the two most important commandments are love for God and love for our neighbor. Then the lawyer “wanted to make himself look good [holy]. So he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ ” (Luke 10:29, NIV). Jesus answers the man’s question with the surprising picture story about the good Samaritan.

**Read the picture story about the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37. What are these verses saying about being fair and showing mercy?**

Jesus did more than talk about being fair. Jesus lived the sermon He preached about being fair. Jesus was, and will be, the answer to His people’s prayer for fair leaders (read Luke 4:16–21, along with Isaiah 61:1, 2). Jesus is the Savior that all people need.

Satan is completely different from Jesus. Satan wanted to steal God’s power and His throne. But Jesus became a human so that He could help sinners who are hurting and suffering. Jesus won the fight against the enemy when He gave up His life to save us. Can we really say we are Christians if we don’t care about being fair and showing mercy?

Psalm 9:8, 9 announces, “The Lord will judge the world by [with] what is right [holy and fair]. He will decide what is fair for the nations [people groups]. The Lord defends those [people] who suffer. He protects them in times of trouble” (ICB). The writer of Psalm 146:7–9 adds, “He does what is right [holy; good] for those who have been hurt. He gives food to the hungry. The LORD frees people locked up in prison. The LORD makes the blind see again. The LORD helps those [people] who are in trouble. The LORD loves those who do right [are fair]. The LORD protects strangers in our country. He cares for widows and orphans, but he destroys the wicked” (ERV).

As we see, the Bible plainly tells us that we should help people all around us who are in need and hurting.

**What can we learn from Jesus’ life and work about helping people in need? Maybe we can’t do miracles the way Jesus did. But how can the help that we do give be a “miracle,” too?**



**But Jesus became a human so that He could help sinners who are hurting and suffering.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “The Sabbath,” pages 281–289, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“Jesus asked the Jewish spiritual leaders a question. Was it against the law on the Sabbath day to save or to kill? When Jesus asked this question, He showed the leaders the evil plan that was in their hearts. The leaders hated Jesus. Their hate made them very angry. The leaders wanted to kill Him. While the leaders wanted to kill Jesus, Jesus was saving lives and making many people happy. Was it better to kill on the Sabbath, as they wanted to, than to heal the sick, as Jesus did? Was it more holy on the Sabbath day to have a heart filled with hate and with a wish to kill than to love all people? When we love people, we will show them mercy.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 287, adapted.



**“While the leaders wanted to kill Jesus, Jesus was saving lives and making many people happy.”**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① “Every false religion teaches its followers not to care about human needs.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 287, adapted. Why and how is this quote correct? What can we decide to do to show that we care about people’s needs in our church and in our community?
- ② Who is my neighbor? Who is your neighbor? How should following Jesus make us more loving and caring, the same as the Samaritan? Remember, the Samaritan went out of his way to show love.
- ③ God loves being fair and showing mercy. How should we live so that our lives show what matters most to God? What things can we do personally to pay more attention to “the really important teachings of [in] the law” (Matthew 23:23) that Jesus talked about?
- ④ When Jesus talked about God’s work as judge, He often talked about it along with the topic of love. When God does His work as Judge, He will ask how much did we show that we really love other people? How much do we stand up for people who have been hurt or punished for no reason? Read Matthew 25:31–46 as you seek to answer these questions.

## STUCK IN THE MIDDLE EAST

**K**i-nam left South Korea to work as a student Bible worker in the Middle East. Ki-nam came to the Middle East with a travel license or passport that allowed her to stay only for a short time. She needed another special license to stay for a full year. The manager of the apartment building where she stayed agreed to sign papers to help Ki-nam stay in the Middle East. Ki-nam needed this proof to get the new license. But then the manager refused to sign the papers. He told Ki-nam she needed to give him a lot of money first.

Ki-nam didn't have the money. She couldn't move to another apartment because it was hard to find apartment-building managers who would rent to foreigners.

So, Ki-nam prayed. "Lord, You sent me here. I have faith that You can solve my problem." Ki-nam prayed every day for two months. Her parents in South Korea prayed. The leader for the student Bible workers put Ki-nam's name on the house church's prayer list, and the members prayed, too.

Then the day arrived when Ki-nam needed to go to the passport center to get her new travel license to stay in the Middle East for a whole year. But she didn't have the signed papers that she needed to get the license.

Just before Ki-nam went to the passport office, the leader for the student Bible workers called her. The leader said, "I may have an answer to your problem. Let's go."

The leader explained that a church member knew a business owner who sold houses for a living. The church member went to talk to the business owner and asked, "Can you help my friend?"

The business owner said, "Bring her passport. I'll give her the proof she needs."

Ki-nam was surprised when she heard the good news. She said, "Thank You, God."

The business owner signed the papers, and Ki-nam got her special license. After that, Ki-nam didn't doubt that God would bless her year in the Middle East. And He did. Seven people were baptized because of her work. Ki-nam said, "God used me to save people. God never makes mistakes when He asks you to do something. He helped me every step of the way. I thank Him!"

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Korea sends Bible workers worldwide to help people learn about Jesus. Thank you for your 13th Sabbath Offering on March 29. Your offering will help South Korean Adventists share the Good News about Jesus at home. The student Bible worker's name was changed in the story.

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**"Lord, You sent me here. I have faith that you can solve my problem."**