



While we are often fascinated with complexity, for the most part we love simplicity.

Most of us will admit that Scripture is wonderfully (and sometimes agonizingly) complex. It is a beautiful story with a rich cast of characters and some unbelievable twists in its plot, but we often get lost in the details. If we really knew how to read Scripture, we would find it to be the most riveting page-turner of all time.

It would be wrong to see the Bible as a book of rules, but it does contain some rules—a lot of them, in fact. The Torah contains 613 commands—248 positive injunctions and 365 restrictions. It's a bit hard to put 613 commands on a refrigerator magnet and check your progress at the end of the day, so most of us either write the rules off altogether or look for an easy button.

Once we place ourselves inside of the biblical story, however, we find that it is simply an invitation to love our creator with our entire being and to love those around us with the same love we have received in him.

In a famous conversation with a teacher of the Law, Jesus helps us find the easy button, and points us to the gospel that allows us to realize it's depth and beauty in our lives.

AN ALL IMPORTANT QUESTION (v. 28-31)

1. As we mentioned in our introduction, it is easy to lose sight of the story the gospel invites us to be a part of, and find ourselves hopelessly lost in the “thou shalt” and the “thou shalt not.” Why do we find the rules in Scripture overwhelming?
2. How does Jesus' answer help us make sense of all the other rules?
3. How does it help us make sense of the larger story of Scripture (the gospel)?
4. What does the fact that Jesus tells us to “Love the Lord ...with all of our heart, and all of our soul, and all of our mind, and all of our strength” tell us about what it means to love God?
5. What happens when we focus on our love for God but never extend that love to our neighbor?
6. What happens when we actively love our neighbor but fail to cultivate a life of worship and devotion to God?

7. Paul tells us that our love for our neighbor is the best indicator for how well we are loving God. Why do you think this is true?

THE TEACHER OF THE LAW CONGRATULATES JESUS (vv. 32-33)

1. At first blush we are a bit put off by the fact that the teacher of the law would offer his judgment on Jesus' statement. What might have made this man feel he was qualified to congratulate Jesus for a good answer?
2. How do you think he might of felt if he knew who he was coaching in the matter of the law?
3. What does this man's summary of the Law add to our understanding of what it means to love God and love our neighbor?

JESUS CONGRATULATES THE TEACHER OF THE LAW (vv. 8-10)

1. While the teacher of the law felt he was qualified to offer his judgment on the accuracy of Jesus' teaching, Jesus' response shows that he is qualified to offer his judgment on matters of the heart (who is near and far from the kingdom). How does Jesus' authority differ from that of the teacher of the law?
2. What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “You are not far from the kingdom of God?”
3. What are some ways we can find ourselves “not far from the kingdom of God,” yet not quite there?
4. How does one take the final step from being “not far from the kingdom” to being “in the kingdom?”