

# The Greatest Commandments

## Introduction

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself.

All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:36-40

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First, note that Jesus is asked here for one thing, and he provides two. Or seems to. That is something *extra*. Next, note that he is asked to identify a *commandment*. Did he?

The first part of the answer he gives is arguably a paraphrase of the first of the ten commandments:

“You shall have no other gods before me.”

Exodus 20:3

This observation might well prompt a thoughtful reader to ask why he chose to *paraphrase*, to re-word that commandment, rather than quoting it directly. Let's keep that in mind as we proceed.

Aside from that, there is the matter of the second part of his response, which, while it does not map directly to an individual commandment in the list of ten, could be construed as something of a generalized synopsis of the ninth and tenth, which both involve one's behavior toward neighbors.

“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”

Exodus 20: 16

“You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, or his Ox or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

Exodus 20:17

Again, an attentive audience member could reasonably wonder why he chose to summarize, generalizing the instructions Moses received, and in this case combining them together, if this is the correct interpretation.

And if so, that's *three* commandments in total he has now referenced. Which is of some additional interest because he also lists *three* things to love: God, neighbor, and self. And he lists *three* aspects of a human that should be loving God: heart, mind and soul. Three threes. Hmm.

Christ consistently teaches in parables. Parables require the drawing of analogies by the reader or listener, comparing different things and seeing how they are similar (and how they differ). The Greek word 'parabole' means 'comparison between one thing and another'. Christ even uses a simile, a form of analogy, in the response we are examining. 'The second one is *like* it'. That's basically the definition of 'parabole'. Does he want us to draw some kind of analogy?

Here's one.

Consider that the ten commandments is an ordered collection of things that God said. If one believes in the doctrine of divine inspiration, the list of biblical *books* is also an ordered collection of things that God said. It is just that the "things" are longer in the case of books than they are in the case of the ten commandments.

So...

1. books are “like” commandments
2. Jesus has paraphrased, changed the wording of something  
not said by him
3. he appears to have provided extra items, three instead of one
4. and there is a clear three pattern in his response

If we pursue this line of thinking diligently, and follow the breadcrumbs Jesus provides in this answer and elsewhere in the Gospels, what we will find is that what Jesus has done is to provide clues that point to three biblical books which are *neighbors* to one another in the sense that they appear side-by-side in the canonical order of biblical books and also “*like*” one another in that their authorship is all attributed to the same person.

The book in the middle is a lens that enables one to correctly understand the books to its left and its right, in the same way that Christ’s life and teaching enables one to correctly understand the Old Testament, and this text you are now reading enables one to correctly understand some of Christ's life and teaching.

The books are designed and written to work like this. They are Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, in that order.

These are the three books in the Bible supposedly written by Solomon, a king of Israel about whom it is said, “God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt.”

1 King's 4:30-31

All the law and the prophets hang on Proverbs and Song of Songs, and the middle book, Ecclesiastes, provides important context on the meaning of those two books.

Behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

Matthew 12:42



“Look! There he stands behind **our wall**, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattice.”

Song of Songs 2:9

“You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride. You are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.”

Song of Songs 4:12

20 Proverbs

21 **Ecclesiastes**

22 Song of Songs

“[God] placed on the **East**\* side of the garden of Eden a **flaming sword** *flashing back and forth* to guard the way to the tree of life.”

Genesis 3:24

“Wisdom is a tree of life to those who embrace her;  
happy are those who hold her tightly.”

Proverbs 3:18

\***EcclesiASTes**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> clearly, the ‘East’ clue given in ancient Hebrew in Genesis relies on the translation of the Hebrew word transliterated as ‘koheleth’ into the English word, ‘Ecclesiastes’ and ‘miqqedem’ to be translated as ‘to the East’. Since English would not exist for centuries, this establishes the existence of divine foreknowledge and therefore proves the existence of God.

Behold, the sand on the seashore.

“Love your neighbor as yourself,  
yet don't pull down your hedges.”

Benjamin Franklin  
“Poor Richard's Almanac”



Sing  
Sing a song of songs  
Sing it out  
Sing it strong  
Yeah  
Yeah  
“Holly Holy”  
Neil Diamond



This brief intro, which will be followed by much more content, is provided by Charles Tuomi.

Also known as Chase Turmoil.

Or, if you prefer<sup>2</sup>, Trulie Mochas.



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<sup>2</sup> I do.