

**JANUARY THEME**



**BIBLE STORY**

**Matthew 22:36-40**

The Greatest | Greatest Commandment  
**Spark Story Bible, pg. 308-309**  
The Greatest Commandment, part 1

**BOTTOM LINE**

Love God. Love others.

**MEMORY VERSE**

“Whoever can be trusted with very little  
can also be trusted with much.”  
Luke 16:10a (NIV)

**LIFE APP**

**Responsibility** | Showing you can be  
trusted with what is expected of you

**BASIC TRUTH**

I should treat others the way I want to be  
treated...and with Jesus' help, I can!

**●● THEME OVERVIEW**

**Key Question: What are things you're expected to do?** We all have responsibilities. As we start to name them, we realize that expectations aren't there to frustrate us. Each of us has things we need to do—including our responsibility to love. We pray that we will take Jesus' words to heart as we discover how to show God's love to others.

We kick off the New Year in **Matthew 22:36-40**. The religious leaders were always trying to trap Jesus with his own words. This moment was no different. They asked Jesus, out of hundreds of laws they were to follow, which were the most important. Jesus simplified everything, and made love the top priority. The most important responsibility is to love God, and love your neighbor as you love yourself.

**Bottom Line: Love God. Love others.** These are four simple words, but they are not always simple to put into practice. We hope that, as we discover more about responsibility, we start to understand the ways we can love God and love the people God has put in our lives.

**●● WOW @home**

**What You Do:** Watch this week's WOW @home in the comfort of your family's @home prayer + worship spot. The video can be found on [popmn.org/youtube](http://popmn.org/youtube) or [facebook.com/popchildrens](https://facebook.com/popchildrens). Then use this Family Guide, GodTime & ParentCue cards, and FAITH5 daily devos as personal devotionals and to keep the conversation going...

**●● GREATEST COMMANDMENT** [Talk about God | Bible Story Review]

**Made to Move | An activity that increases the oxygen in the brain and taps into the energy in the body**

**What You Need:** Bible or Spark Story Bible

**What You Do:**

- Direct your family to mingle around your playing area.
- Randomly call out pairs of items. If the items go together, your family should quickly gather together and link arms.
- If the items DON'T go together, they should keep mingling.

**Possible pairs:**

- |                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| —Milk and cookies          | —Soap and water          |
| —Socks and shoes           | —Sharks and socks        |
| —Pancakes and broccoli     | —Spaghetti and meatballs |
| —Peanut butter and jelly   | —Cake and ice cream      |
| —Toothbrush and toothpaste | —Teeth and toes          |
| —Macaroni and cheese       | —Dinosaurs and doughnuts |
| —Soap and ice cream        | —Pancakes and syrup      |
| —Chips and Salsa           | —Hugs and kisses         |

- Tell your family that you are going to read a Bible story about what Jesus said are the two most important things that go together.
- Read Matthew 22:37-39 or The Greatest Commandment, part 1 (p. 308-309) from the Spark Story Bible.
- Ask a few guiding questions to encourage involvement such as: What did Jesus say is the most important commandment? (*to love God; to love God with all your heart; etc.*) What did he say is like it? (*love your neighbor as you love yourself*)
- Unpack that loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind means to love God with EVERYTHING we have (*all that we have and all that we are*).
- Emphasize that Jesus said loving others is just as important as loving God, and that when we love others, we ALSO show that we love God!
- Call out scenarios (*see below*) that are examples of showing love to God or NOT showing love.
- Also add scenarios that are relevant for your family.
- If the scenario shows love, instruct family members to stand and make a “heart” with their hands by touching their fingernails together and their thumbs together.
- If the scenario DOESN'T show love, instruct your family to give a thumbs down.
  - You share your cookie with your friend.
  - You make your bed even before being asked.
  - You sing songs to God.
  - When your dad says that it's time to come inside, you complain and whine.
  - You take time to play with your younger sibling.
  - You pray and ask God to help you make the wise choice.
  - You keep playing your video game after your mom says it's time to stop.
  - You let someone else go first.
  - You yell at someone and call them names.
  - You say, “I'm sorry.”
  - You read your Bible.
  - You say, “I love you!”

**What You Say:** “If we want to follow Jesus, we have a responsibility to love God and love others. And do you know what? When we love others, we also show that we love God! We can say it this way: **[Bottom Line] Love God. Love others.**”

“Think of it this way: when you play a board game, there are rules. Sometimes you have to roll the dice before you can make a move, other times you have to wait until the other players go...but there are rules to every game. Our **[Bottom Line] Love God. Love others** are our “rules” for life. Jesus teaches us that they are the most important “rules” for us to follow. So how can YOU love God and love others this week? (*If your family is stuck for ideas, ask prompting questions such as: How could you love your friends? Could you share with them? Could you let them choose first? How could you love your mom and dad? Could you do your chores the first time they ask? Could you give them a hug? How could you love your brother or sister? Could you let them play with you?*) Great ideas! So, remember: **[Bottom Line] Love God. Love others.**”

•• **LOVE OTHERS** [Live for God | Application Activity]

**Made to Imagine | An activity that promotes empathy and facilitates concrete application through role-play and reenactment**

**What You Need:** Pillow case or bag, and a variety of items that can be used to love others (*see ideas below*)

**What You Do:**

- Before gathering your family together, find some items you have at home that could be used to show love to somebody. Put them in a large bag or pillow case. For example:
  - A water bottle: giving water to someone who's thirsty.

—A marker or notecard: writing a note or drawing a picture for a friend or someone who’s sad.

—Candy: sharing with a friend.

—Book: reading to a younger sibling.

- Then, gather your family together and teach them the (ASL) sign for “love” and two unofficial signs for “love” and “I love you.”

—Make your hands into fists and cross your arms over your chest for “love.” (ASL)

—Unofficial “I love you” – Start with a fist then, keeping the middle and ring fingers down, extend the pinky, index finger, and thumb.

—Unofficial “love” – Curl the fingers on both hands and point your thumbs down, touch them together and touch your fingernails together to make a heart shape (*hand heart*).

- Invite family members to share any ways they say “love” or “I love you,” (*for example, hand signs, gestures, hugs, inside jokes with family, in a different language, through acts of kindness, etc.*).

- Next, invite family members to take turns reaching into the bag you prepared, choosing an item, guessing what it is (*no peeking!*), and then pulling it out.

- For each object, lead your family to think of ways they could use that item to show love to others. HINT: If they are stuck for ideas, ask prompting questions to spark their creativity. Encourage as many ideas as possible by saying things like: Great answer! Good thinking! Oh, I hadn’t thought of that! What else?

- Add challenge by pairing two items and guiding kids to think of ways they could use both items to show love.

- When the bag is empty, encourage your family to name ways they could show love with nothing (*giving a hug, a smile, a kind word, etc.*).

**What You Say:** “God wants us to use what we have to show love to others. Sometimes we have (*hold up each item as you name it*) markers, a bottle of water, candy, or a book. Other times, we don’t have anything at all. But no matter what we have or don’t have, we can always show love.

**[Make It Personal]** (*Tell about a time when you were young and used what you had to show love. It may have been sharing your snack with someone at school, letting someone else choose first, or taking time to play with a sibling when you wanted to do something else.*)

“You can show love to others, too. You don’t have to wait for someone else to go first. You can love God by loving others with WHATEVER you have! What are some ways that you can love others this week? (*If for family is stuck for ideas, ask prompting questions to activate their creativity: How could you show love to your mom? your pet? someone at school?*) Great ideas! So remember: **[Bottom Line] Love God. Love others.**”

●● **NEVER-ENDING LOVE** [Hear from God | Memory Verse Activity]

**Made to Create | An activity that explores ideas through the process of drawing, building, designing, and problem-solving**

**What You Need:** Bible, scissors, paper, markers or crayons

**What You Do:**

- Look up and read this month’s Memory Verse (Luke 16:10a) together.

- Cut a sheet of paper into thirds, cutting across the width when holding the paper in landscape orientation. Repeat with more paper until you have enough paper strips for everybody in your family to have one.

- Provide each family member with a strip of paper.

- Place some markers/crayons and scissors out where they can be shared.

- Show your family how to fold and cut their paper to make accordion hearts as follows

—Fold the paper strip accordion style (*three folds that divide the strip into four equal sections*).

—With the strip still folded accordion style, draw the shape of a heart, as big as it can be on the paper, allowing the heart edges to go over the side a little bit.

—Cut around the heart shape, making sure that you leave the edges intact and connected.

—Unfold the paper. You should have four connected hearts!

- Encourage everybody to write the memory verse across their accordion hearts.
- Review the Memory Verse together again.

**What You Say:** “Do you see how one heart leads to the next then the next? When we show God we can be trusted with a small thing, like loving one person (*fold your paper back into one heart*), God will trust us with more (*unfold paper back to many hearts*). When you love God, it will spread into more and more opportunities to **[Bottom Line] Love God. Love others**. In every small thing you choose to show responsibility with each and every day, you make a very big impact in the world around you! How cool is that?”

#### •• PRAY [Pray to God | Prayer Activity]

**Made to Reflect | An activity that creates space for personal processing and application**

**What You Need:** No supplies needed

#### What You Do:

- Review the signs and hand gestures you learned in the “Love Others” activity.
- Use the conversation below as a guide to lead your family in a responsive prayer.
- As you pray, your family should to keep their eyes open and make a “love” sign (*whichever one they choose*) whenever you say, “Love.”

**What You Say:** “The important thing to remember today is **[Bottom Line] Love (pause) God. Love (pause) others**. What are some ways that you can **[Bottom Line] Love (pause) God and love (pause) others?** (*I can follow directions the first time I’m asked; I can send a card to my grandma; I can pray; I can spend time with my little sister; I can sing songs to God.*) Great ideas!

“Let’s pray. Dear God, thank you so much for love (*pause*) -ing us. Thank you for teaching us that the two most important things are to **[Bottom Line] Love (pause) God. Love (pause) others**. Help us to **[Bottom Line] Love (pause) God. Love (pause) others**, because you love (*pause*) -ed us first. We love (*pause*) you, Lord. Amen.”

#### •• ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Looking for a devo for your kids? Looking for a personal devotional? Want to keep the conversation going? Check out the following resources at [popmn.org/cm](http://popmn.org/cm). Use them this week to continue the conversation around our **[Bottom Line]: Love God. Love others**.

**GodTime Card** | A 4-day devotional for elementary-aged kids based on the weekly theme kicked off on WOW @home

**ParentCue** | A tool for parents based on the weekly theme. Also available as an app, it sends alerts and encouragement specific to the age of your children ([parentcue.org](http://parentcue.org))

**FAITH5** | A 6-day family devotional based on Faith Inkubators’ FAITH5

#### •• WHAT’S NEXT

Set a reminder to join us for WOW @home on Wednesday 01/13 at 6:00 pm live at [facebook.com/popchildrens](https://facebook.com/popchildrens) or anytime after that at [popmn.org/youtube](http://popmn.org/youtube) for a time of worship centered around the **[Bottom Line]: Share what you have.**”