A BETTER WORD

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

*A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke*

# Close to the Kingdom

◆ *Mark 12:28–34*

THE BIG IDEA

*You become what you love. The greatest commandment calls you to love God with your whole being, not just to know the right answer about him.*

## SERMON SUMMARY

A scribe asked Jesus an honest question: Which commandment is the most important? Jesus answered with the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4–5) paired with Leviticus 19:18: love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. In two lines, he summarized the Ten Commandments, the first four toward God, the last six toward our neighbors. It's the orientation of a whole person toward God and others, including the heart as desire, soul as the core of life, mind as direction, and strength as devotion.

The scribe answered wisely, agreeing that love supersedes sacrifice, and Jesus told him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God," both a compliment and a warning. Near isn't the same as in. Many things keep people close but not inside. Knowing the correct answer is not enough. Only surrender to Jesus as king and the power of the indwelling Spirit makes genuine love for God and people possible.

## DIGGING DEEPER

### OBSERVATION

1. This is the third test question posed to Jesus in this chapter (taxes, resurrection, now the greatest commandment). What's different about this scribe's question and his response to Jesus' answer, compared to the earlier questioners?

### INTERPRETATION

2. Jesus combines the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4–5) with Leviticus 19:18 to summarize the entire law. How do the first four and last six of the Ten Commandments connect to "love God" and "love neighbor"?

3. Pastor Nick broke loving God down into heart (desire), soul (core being), mind (direction), and strength (devotion). Which of these do you find easiest to give to God, and which is hardest?

### THEOLOGICAL CONNECTION

4. Jesus told the scribe he was "not far from the kingdom of God," both encouragement and warning. What did the scribe understand correctly about the law, and what was he still missing?
5. Being near isn't the same as being in: you can affirm all the right things about God and still not have surrendered to Jesus as king. Where might you be like the scribe?

## LIVING IT OUT

### HEART CHECK

You become like what you love. If your affections are scattered across many competing loves, loving God wholly will always feel out of reach, until the Spirit reorders those loves through surrender to Christ. Which of heart, soul, mind, or strength most reveals a love for something other than God right now?

### ACTION STEPS

— Choose the one area you named: heart, soul, mind, or strength.

— Then, take one concrete step to redirect it toward God, a changed habit, a redirected thought, or time spent getting to know him.

### "SO WHAT?" CHALLENGE

> ***Correct answers about God are not the same as a surrendered heart. Let the Spirit turn your nearness into belonging.***

## REFLECTION & PRAYER

### KEY VERSE — TO MEMORIZE

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength … You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

**— Mark 12:30–31**

### PRAYER PROMPT

Ask God to search your heart, soul, mind, and strength for whatever is misaligned, and thank him that through Christ, real, whole-hearted love for God is possible.

### YOUR PRAYER