Love Is the Point Q&A Guide (Catholic Edition)

Oct 27, 2026

About this guide: this is the Catholic edition of the Love Is the Point guide. Anyone is welcome to use it, including members of the Intercessor Church Community Groups. Read it before class or on your own so you come prepared and well versed in the passage. It follows the Discover section of the group outline, section by section. For each question it gathers what the Church Fathers, St. Thomas Aquinas, the popes, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church say, then adds a Summary that pulls it together and a Deep Dive with background and passages to read ahead of time.

How to read this guide: each question is labeled to match the outline, so A1 is the first question in section A, A2 is the second, and so on. The questions are written for this guide. Each one covers the same ground as the matching outline question and takes it a step further. The linked passage after each question is the one the outline points to, so you can click it and read it in class. Anything after the word "also" is a wider range or an extra passage this guide adds. Every line under Commentary and Catechism of the Catholic Church is quoted word for word from the source named in parentheses after it. The **Summary** and **Deep Dive** under each question are written for this guide, drawing on those quotes and the other sources listed at the end. Scripture quoted in the summaries and deep dives is from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE), and CCC numbers are paragraph numbers in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

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This guide follows the Intercessor Church Community Group outline "Rooted Together, Week 4: Love Is the Point."

A. More Than a Binder (Matthew 22:34-36)

A1. The Pharisees sent their scholar of the law right after Jesus silenced the Sadducees. What was he hoping to prove by asking Jesus to rank one commandment above all the others? (Matthew 22:34-36)

Commentary

- "All who thus ask questions of any teacher to try him, and not to learn of him, we must regard as brethren of this Pharisee" (Origen, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 22)
- "The Pharisees having been themselves already confuted (in the matter of the denarius), and now seeing their adversaries also overthrown, should have taken warning to attempt no further deceit against Him; but hate and jealousy are the parents of impudence." (St. Jerome, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 22)
- "It is an insidious question, because more than 600 precepts are mentioned in the Law of Moses. How should the great commandment be distinguished among these?" (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 29, 2017)
- "His questioner, in fact, tries to draw him into the dispute among the experts of the Law regarding the hierarchy of the prescriptions." (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 25, 2020)
- "For the devout Jew all the commandments were to be kept with equal care, but there is evidence of preoccupation in Jewish sources with the question put to Jesus." (NABRE note on Matthew 22:36)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The Decalogue must be interpreted in light of this twofold yet single commandment of love, the fullness of the Law" (CCC 2055)

Summary

The scholar of the law came to test Jesus, not to learn from him, and anyone who questions a teacher only to trap him follows the same pattern (Origen). The Pharisees had just watched their rivals fail, but hatred and jealousy pushed them to try again (Jerome). With more than 600 precepts in the Law of Moses, asking for the greatest one was a trap

(Pope Francis). The aim was to pull Jesus into the experts' debate over which commands outranked the others (Pope Francis). Devout Jews tried to keep every commandment with equal care, yet Jewish sources show real interest in this very question (NABRE note). Jesus answered by naming the root of them all, and the Church still reads all Ten Commandments in light of that twofold yet single commandment of love (CCC 2055).

Deep Dive

At Mass, Matthew 22:34-40 was the Gospel for the Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (October 25, 2026), with Exodus 22:20-26 and 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10 (USCCB). This was the third controversy in a row, and afterward Jesus asked his own question about the Messiah (NABRE note). Mark records that the scribe agreed, and Jesus told him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34). Luke records a scholar of the law asking a similar question, which led to the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). The Exodus reading names the people this love must reach: "You shall not oppress or afflict a resident alien," and "You shall not wrong any widow or orphan" (Exodus 22:20-21; Pope Francis). After Jesus' last question, "No one was able to answer him a word" (Matthew 22:46).

Read before class: Matthew 22:34-46; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37

A2. Where have you seen faith shrunk down to a checklist, and what does that version of faith tend to leave out? (also Matthew 23:4, 23)

Commentary

- "For many things may be done that have a good appearance, and yet proceed not from the root of charity." (St. Augustine, Homily 7 on the First Epistle of John)
- "You may do many good things, fulfil many precepts, many good things, but if you do not have love, this serves no purpose." (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 29, 2017)
- "This can occur when some groups of Christians give excessive importance to certain rules, customs or ways of acting. The Gospel then tends to be reduced and constricted, deprived of its simplicity, allure and savour." (Pope Francis, Gaudete et Exsultate 58)
- "For if a dead body is dressed in gold and precious stones, it nonetheless remains dead." (St. Thomas Aquinas, Explanation of the Ten Commandments, Prologue, on gifts without charity)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends." (CCC 25, quoting the Roman Catechism)
- "so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love." (CCC 25)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: treating Sunday Mass or daily prayers as boxes to check, long lists of things Catholics do not do, judging others by outward standards, giving out of guilt, and treating faith as a performance. What gets left out is the heart. Many things can look good and still not grow from the root of charity (Augustine). We can keep many precepts, but without love it serves no purpose (Pope Francis). When a group gives too much weight to rules, customs, or ways of acting, the Gospel shrinks and loses its simplicity and savor (Pope Francis). Gifts without charity are like a dead body dressed in gold (Aquinas). The Church's whole teaching is meant to lead to the love that never ends, so that every Christian virtue springs from love and aims at love (CCC 25).

Deep Dive

In the next chapter Jesus says the scribes and Pharisees "tie up heavy burdens" for others, "but they will not lift a finger to move them" (Matthew 23:4). They tithed mint and dill and cummin but neglected "the weightier things of the law: judgment and mercy and fidelity" (Matthew 23:23). The tithing was not wrong; the problem was leaving out the weightier things. Matthew wrote this warning for his own church too, so Christians would look at their own conduct (NABRE note). Micah put it simply long before: "Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Relying on our own effort, or giving too much weight to rules and customs, can become a subtle form of the old error called Pelagianism (Gaudete et Exsultate 48, 58).

Read before class: Matthew 23:1-12; Matthew 23:23-24; Micah 6:6-8

A3. Why does trying to keep the rules without first knowing the Father's love wear people out, and what does Jesus offer the weary instead? (also Matthew 11:28-30)

Commentary

- "The first is that moral and religious life cannot be reduced to an anxious and forced obedience." (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 25, 2020)

- "the law of fear makes slaves of its observers, whereas the law of love makes them free. For one who acts just out of fear acts as a slave, whereas one who acts out of love acts as a free person or a son." (St. Thomas Aquinas, Explanation of the Ten Commandments, Prologue)
- "to love is more than to fear; to fear belongs to slaves, to love to sons; fear is in compulsion, love in freedom." (The Opus Imperfectum on Matthew, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 22)
- "In place of the yoke of the law, complicated by scribal interpretation, Jesus invites the burdened to take the yoke of obedience to his word, under which they will find rest" (NABRE note on Matthew 11:29)
- "God commands you to do what you can and to ask for what you cannot" (Pope Francis, Gaudete et Exsultate 49, citing St. Augustine)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The New Law is called a law of love because it makes us act out of the love infused by the Holy Spirit, rather than from fear" (CCC 1972)
- "Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God" (CCC 1996)

Summary

Rules can tell us what to do, but they cannot give us the love or the strength to do it, so trying harder eventually wears people out. Faith cannot be reduced to an anxious, forced obedience (Pope Francis). Acting only out of fear makes us slaves, while acting out of love makes us free, like sons and daughters (Aquinas). Fear belongs to slaves and love to children (Opus Imperfectum, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Jesus offered the burdened his own yoke in place of the law as the scribes had complicated it, and under it they find rest (NABRE note). God asks us to do what we can and to ask him for what we cannot (Augustine, quoted by Pope Francis). The New Law is a law of love that moves us by the Holy Spirit rather than by fear (CCC 1972), and our justification is the free and undeserved gift of grace (CCC 1996).

Deep Dive

Jesus' invitation is "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The burden he meant was the law as the scribes and Pharisees explained it (NABRE note). He describes himself as "meek and humble of heart" (Matthew 11:29). At the council in Jerusalem, Peter called that burden a yoke "that neither

our ancestors nor we have been able to bear" (Acts 15:10). Paul says the same: "For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1). Grace always comes first: the Lord justifies us by his gift and not by our own efforts, and even the wish to be made clean is a gift of the Holy Spirit (Gaudete et Exsultate 52-53).

Read before class: Matthew 11:28-30; Acts 15:6-11; Galatians 5:1-6

B. Love for God Comes First (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

B1. Jesus called loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind the greatest and the first commandment. What would it look like for your affections, your choices, and your thinking to belong to him on an ordinary day? (Matthew 22:37-38)

Commentary

- "Thus He has left no part of our life which may justly be unfilled of Him" (St. Augustine, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 22)
- "He only loves God with his whole mind, whose intellect ministers to God, whose wisdom is employed about God, whose thoughts travail in the things of God, and whose memory holds the things which are good." (The Opus Imperfectum on Matthew, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 22)
- "The love of God must engage the total person (heart, soul, mind)." (NABRE note on Matthew 22:37-38)
- "Love for God is expressed above all in prayer, particularly in adoration." (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 25, 2020)
- "We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves." (Pope Francis, Gaudete et Exsultate 14)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "Faith in God's love encompasses the call and the obligation to respond with sincere love to divine charity." (CCC 2093)
- "Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God." (CCC 1822)

Summary

To love God with all your heart, soul, and mind means he gets all of you. The love of God must engage the whole person (NABRE note). He leaves no part of our life that should be empty of him (Augustine, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Loving him with the whole mind means our thoughts, our wisdom, and our memory are turned toward him (Opus Imperfectum). Love for God shows itself above all in prayer, especially adoration (Pope Francis). On an ordinary day this can look like a morning offering, a moment of prayer before work, choosing him when something else competes for first place, and doing small tasks with love. Holiness is for everyone, lived with love wherever we are (Pope Francis). Charity is loving God above all things for his own sake (CCC 1822), our sincere answer to the love he has shown us (CCC 2093).

Deep Dive

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5, and Mark adds the opening line of the Shema: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone!" (Mark 12:29). Moses says heart, being, and strength, Matthew says heart, soul, and mind, and Mark includes all four. This command echoes the solemn call of the Shema, and it rests on the fact that God has loved us first (CCC 2083). David shows what this love sounds like: "For you my body yearns; for you my soul thirsts" (Psalm 63:2). Jesus joined this command and the command to love our neighbor into a single precept (Benedict XVI). Loving God with everything does not mean loving people less; it puts every other love in its right place.

Read before class: Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Mark 12:28-34; Psalm 63:2-9

B2. The Shema was prayed morning and evening and even worn on the body. What simple daily habits keep God's word in front of us, and how do we keep those habits from turning into one more rule? (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; also verses 6-9)

Commentary

- "The pious Jew prayed daily the words of the Book of Deuteronomy which expressed the heart of his existence" (Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 1)
- "In the late postexilic period, they were taken quite literally, and devout Jews tied on their arms and foreheads 'phylacteries,' boxes containing strips of parchment on which these words were inscribed" (NABRE note on Deuteronomy 6:8)
- "He will meditate by day and by night, is to be understood either as without ceasing; or by day in joy, by night in tribulations." (St. Augustine, Exposition on Psalm 1)

- "Whoever, then, thinks that he understands the Holy Scriptures, or any part of them, but puts such an interpretation upon them as does not tend to build up this twofold love of God and our neighbor, does not yet understand them as he ought." (St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, Book 1)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The Tradition of the Church proposes to the faithful certain rhythms of praying intended to nourish continual prayer. Some are daily, such as morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals, the Liturgy of the Hours." (CCC 2698)
- "to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." (CCC 133)
- "Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in lectio divina or the rosary." (CCC 2708)

Summary

This is an application question. The pious Jew prayed the Shema every day as the heart of his life (Benedict XVI). Later, devout Jews also bound these words on their arms and foreheads in phylacteries (NABRE note). The Church has her own daily rhythms: morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals, and the Liturgy of the Hours (CCC 2698). Habits people mention: the daily Mass readings, a morning offering, the rosary or a decade on the commute, lectio divina with the Sunday Gospel, a crucifix or holy water by the door, and memorizing a weekly verse like 1 John 4:19. Meditating day and night can mean praying without ceasing, in joy by day and in trouble by night (Augustine). The danger is turning these habits into another binder, so test them by asking whether they build up love of God and neighbor (Augustine). Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ (CCC 133).

Deep Dive

The Shema continues: "Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Israel was to recite them "when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:7). Later Jewish tradition added other passages to form a prayer recited every evening and morning (NABRE note). The Church prays in the same rhythm: the Liturgy of the Hours is meant to make the whole course of the day and night holy by the praise of God (CCC 1174). Joshua was told to recite the book of the law "by day and by night" (Joshua 1:8). The goal of every habit is a heart that loves God, so a short daily habit kept with love is worth more than a long one kept for show.

Read before class: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Deuteronomy 11:18-21; Joshua 1:8-9

B3. If love is mostly a feeling, or something we get, what do we end up expecting from God, and how does Scripture describe love differently? (also 1 John 5:3; 1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

Commentary

- "love is not merely a sentiment. Sentiments come and go. A sentiment can be a marvellous first spark, but it is not the fullness of love." (Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 17)
- "God does not demand of us a feeling which we ourselves are incapable of producing." (Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 17)
- "Indeed, we were created to love and to be loved." (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 29, 2017)
- "We do this if we love him for his own sake, not because of our own interest." (St. Thomas Aquinas, Explanation of the Ten Commandments, Prologue, on loving the neighbor as oneself)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "God's very being is love." (CCC 221)
- "Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love, and raises it to the supernatural perfection of divine love." (CCC 1827)

Summary

This is an application question. If love is mostly a feeling, we may expect God always to feel close and decide something is wrong when he does not. If love is something we get, we may treat God as a provider of blessings and drift away when life is hard. Love is more than a sentiment; feelings come and go and can be a first spark, but they are not the fullness of love (Benedict XVI). God does not demand a feeling we cannot produce (Benedict XVI). We were created to love and to be loved (Pope Francis), and true love seeks the other's good, not our own interest (Aquinas). God's very being is love (CCC 221), so his love is a gift and not a trade. Charity takes our human ability to love, purifies it, and raises it to share in divine love (CCC 1827).

Deep Dive

Paul describes love mostly by what it does and refuses to do: "Love is patient, love is kind," and "it does not seek its own interests" (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). John defines love for God by action: "For the love of God is this, that we keep his commandments. And his

commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). Jesus said the same: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Charity is superior to all the virtues and is the first of the theological virtues (CCC 1826). Warm feelings are a gift, but love is proven in faithful choices.

Read before class: 1 Corinthians 13:1-7; 1 John 5:1-3; John 14:15-21

C. He First Loved Us (1 John 4:19)

C1. John says we love because he first loved us. Why does our love for people run dry when it is not first filled by God's love? (1 John 4:19; also verses 10-11)

Commentary

- "For how should we love, except He had first loved us? By loving we became friends: but He loved us as enemies, that we might be made friends. He first loved us, and gave us the gift of loving Him." (St. Augustine, Homily 9 on the First Epistle of John)
- "You cannot truly love others if you do not have this root, which is God's love, Jesus' love." (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 29, 2023)
- "Babies learn to love on their mother's and father's knees, and we do so in God's arms." (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 29, 2023)
- "Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift." (Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 7)
- "Our love is grounded in the confession of Jesus as the Son of God and the example of God's love for us." (NABRE note on 1 John 4:13-21)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part" (CCC 604)
- "God has loved us first." (CCC 2083)

Summary

Love has a source: "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). We could not love God unless he had loved us first; he loved us when we were his enemies to make us his friends, and he gave us the gift of loving him (Augustine). We cannot truly love others without the root of God's love (Pope Francis). Children learn to love on their parents' knees, and we learn it in God's arms (Pope Francis). Anyone who wants to give love must first receive it

as a gift (Benedict XVI). When we try to love people out of our own supply, it runs dry the moment someone is difficult. God's plan for us is one of love, prior to any merit on our part (CCC 604). God has loved us first (CCC 2083).

Deep Dive

1 John 4:19 is this week's memory verse. The verses before it explain how God loved first: "In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). John then draws the conclusion: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another" (1 John 4:11). Paul says God proves his love "in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). One saint said she only wanted to be "a drop of clean water, through which God's love could shine" (St. Teresa of Calcutta, quoted by Pope Francis). Loving others starts with receiving.

Read before class: 1 John 4:7-21; Romans 5:6-8; Ephesians 3:14-19

C2. What changes in our obedience when it grows out of being loved instead of trying to earn love? (also 2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

Commentary

- "Since God has first loved us (cf. 1 Jn 4:10), love is now no longer a mere 'command'; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us." (Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 1)
- "Love can be 'commanded' because it has first been given." (Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 14)
- "The love of God is never lazy. It does great things if it is there; if it refuses to work it is not love." (St. Gregory the Great, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Explanation of the Ten Commandments, Prologue)
- "So a clear sign of charity is promptness in carrying out the divine precepts. For we see lovers doing great and difficult things for the sake of their beloved" (St. Thomas Aquinas, Explanation of the Ten Commandments, Prologue)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who 'first loved us'" (CCC 1828)
- "If we turn away from evil out of fear of punishment, we are in the position of slaves." (CCC 1828, quoting St. Basil)

Summary

Because God loved us first, love is no longer a mere command but our response to his gift (Benedict XVI). Love can be commanded because it has first been given (Benedict XVI). Real love does not sit still; if it refuses to act, it is not love (Gregory the Great, quoted by Aquinas). Lovers do great and hard things for the one they love, so a clear sign of charity is readiness to keep God's commands (Aquinas). There are three ways to obey: as a slave afraid of punishment, as a hired worker looking for wages, or as a child who loves the Father (CCC 1828, quoting St. Basil). Charity lets us stand before God as sons and daughters responding to the one who first loved us (CCC 1828). Following Jesus becomes a new way of life when it grows from love received.

Deep Dive

Paul wrote, "For the love of Christ impels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). Christ's charity has a power that propels us toward loving (Pope Francis). Paul goes on: he died for all "so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Corinthians 5:15). Jesus tied love and obedience together: "If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love" (John 15:10). Paul described the change this way: "yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). The commandments did not disappear. The reason for keeping them changed, from earning love to returning it.

Read before class: 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; John 15:9-12; Galatians 2:20

C3. Where are you still trying to clean yourself up before coming to God, and what would it look like to let him love you as you are today? (also Romans 5:8; Luke 15:20)

Commentary

- "He loved us ungodly, to make us godly; loved us unrighteous, to make us righteous; loved us sick, to make us whole." (St. Augustine, Homily 9 on the First Epistle of John)
- "Who is always lovely first loved us; and what were we when He loved us but foul and unlovely? But not to leave us foul; no, but to change us, and of unlovely make us lovely." (St. Augustine, Homily 9 on the First Epistle of John)
- "His friendship infinitely transcends us; we cannot buy it with our works, it can only be a gift born of his loving initiative." (Pope Francis, Gaudete et Exsultate 54)
- "The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak." (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 47)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The process of conversion and repentance was described by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son, the center of which is the merciful father" (CCC 1439)
- "In the evening of this life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count my works." (CCC 2011, quoting St. Therese of Lisieux)

Summary

This is an application question. Many believers trust that God loves them in general but still act as if they must earn his approval each day. Letting him love you as you are might look like praying honestly instead of cleaning yourself up first, going to confession instead of carrying old sins alone, and believing his love on a bad day as much as on a good one. God loved us ungodly to make us godly and sick to make us whole (Augustine). He loved us when we were unlovely, not to leave us that way, but to change us (Augustine). We cannot buy his friendship with our works; it is a gift born of his own initiative (Pope Francis). The Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect but medicine and nourishment for the weak (Pope Francis). The parable of the prodigal son centers on the merciful father (CCC 1439), and St. Therese of Lisieux hoped to come before God with empty hands, not counting her works (CCC 2011).

Deep Dive

In the parable of the lost son, the son rehearsed a speech asking to be treated as a hired worker. But "while he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). The father cut the speech short and called for the finest robe, a ring, and sandals. The robe, the ring, and the banquet are signs of the new life of anyone who returns to God and to his family, the Church (CCC 1439). Paul says salvation "is not from works, so no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:9). In the sacrament of Penance, that same welcome is offered again and again.

Read before class: Luke 15:11-24; Romans 5:6-11; Ephesians 2:4-10

D. Love for Our Neighbor Proves It (Matthew 22:39-40; 1 John 4:20)

D1. Jesus was asked for one commandment and gave two. How are love for God and love for neighbor alike, and why does the whole law and the prophets depend on them? (Matthew 22:39-40; also Leviticus 19:18)

Commentary

- "for it is the selfsame affection by which we love God, and by which we love our neighbour, save that we love God for Himself, but ourselves and our neighbour for God's sake." (St. Augustine, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 22)
- "But who loves man is as who loves God; for man is God's image, wherein God is loved, as a King is honoured in his statue." (The Opus Imperfectum on Matthew, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 22)
- "what is not expressed in love of neighbour is not true love of God; and, likewise, what is not drawn from one's relationship with God is not true love of neighbour." (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 25, 2020)
- "amid the thicket of precepts and prescriptions, Jesus clears a way to seeing two faces, that of the Father and that of our brother. He does not give us two more formulas or two more commands." (Pope Francis, Gaudete et Exsultate 61)
- "The double commandment is the source from which the whole law and the prophets are derived." (NABRE note on Matthew 22:40)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "There is a certain resemblance between the union of the divine persons and the fraternity that men are to establish among themselves in truth and love." (CCC 1878)
- "Love of neighbor is inseparable from love for God." (CCC 1878)

Summary

The second commandment is like the first because it is the same love. We love God and our neighbor with the same affection, God for his own sake and our neighbor for God's sake (Augustine, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Whoever loves a person loves God, because each person is God's image, the way a king is honored in his statue (Opus Imperfectum). What is not expressed in love of neighbor is not true love of God, and love of neighbor not drawn from God is not true love (Pope Francis). Amid a thicket of precepts, Jesus shows us two faces, the Father's and our brother's (Pope Francis). The double commandment is the source from which the whole law and the prophets come (NABRE note). The fellowship we build among ourselves is meant to resemble the union of the Trinity, and love of neighbor is inseparable from love for God (CCC 1878).

Deep Dive

The second command comes from Leviticus 19:18: "Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your own people. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD." Jesus went beyond the question he was asked and joined a second commandment to the first, a

pairing that may already have been made in Judaism (NABRE note). Paul writes that "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10) and that "the whole law is fulfilled in one statement" (Galatians 5:14). In the Catholic numbering of the Ten Commandments, the first three concern love of God and the other seven love of neighbor (CCC 2067). Love for God comes first, and love for neighbor flows from it.

Read before class: Leviticus 19:17-18; Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:13-14

D2. John calls it a lie to claim love for God while hating a brother. Why is the way we treat people we can see the test of our love for a God we cannot see? (1 John 4:20; also verse 21)

Commentary

- "Who shall say, I love the emperor, but I hate his laws? In this the emperor understands whether you love him, that his laws be observed throughout the provinces." (St. Augustine, Homily 9 on the First Epistle of John)
- "The verification that I love God is that I love my neighbour." (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 25, 2020)
- "by loving our brothers and sisters, we reflect the Father's love like mirrors." (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 29, 2023)
- "He does not point to raising the dead or any other glaring sign, but this is the sign: 'if you have love for one another.'" (St. Thomas Aquinas, Explanation of the Ten Commandments, Prologue, on John 13:35)
- "Yet Christian love is not abstract but lived in the concrete manner of love for one another." (NABRE note on 1 John 4:13-21)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "Love, like the Body of Christ, is indivisible; we cannot love the God we cannot see if we do not love the brother or sister we do see." (CCC 2840)
- "The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our enemies, to make ourselves the neighbor of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself." (CCC 1825)

Summary

John says our love for God is tested by how we treat people. No one can say he loves the emperor but hates his laws, and Christ's law is that we love one another (Augustine). The proof that I love God is that I love my neighbor (Pope Francis). By loving our brothers and sisters, we reflect the Father's love like mirrors (Pope Francis). Jesus did not make

miracles the sign of his disciples; he made love the sign (Aquinas). Christian love is not abstract but lived in concrete love for one another (NABRE note). Love is indivisible, like the Body of Christ (CCC 2840), and the Lord asks us to love even our enemies and those farthest away (CCC 1825).

Deep Dive

John wrote, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20), and "whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:21). He had already said, "let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18). Jesus made love the sign the world would see: "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Jesus also said to leave a gift at the altar and "go first and be reconciled with your brother" (Matthew 5:24). Refusing to forgive closes the heart to the Father's mercy, but confessing our sins opens it to his grace (CCC 2840).

Read before class: 1 John 4:19-21; 1 John 3:16-18; John 13:34-35

D3. Think of someone who has hurt you or whose choices you disagree with. What does it look like to want their good without excusing the wrong or letting bitterness take root? (also Ephesians 4:31-32; Romans 12:21)

Commentary

- "In any man two things should be considered: his nature and the wrong. What is of nature in man should be loved, what is wrong should be hated." (St. Thomas Aquinas, Explanation of the Ten Commandments, Prologue)
- "It consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know." (Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 18)
- "Love, and do what you will: whether you hold your peace, through love hold your peace; whether you cry out, through love cry out; whether you correct, through love correct; whether you spare, through love do you spare" (St. Augustine, Homily 7 on the First Epistle of John)
- "As long as there is a brother or sister to whom we close our hearts, we will still be far from being disciples as Jesus asks us." (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 25, 2020)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession." (CCC 2843)
- "Deliberate hatred is contrary to charity." (CCC 2303)

Summary

This is an application question. Love seeks a person's good; it does not mean calling wrong right. In every person we should love their nature and hate the wrong (Aquinas). In God and with God, we can love even someone we do not like (Benedict XVI). Love can correct and love can spare, as long as love is the root (Augustine). Steps people often name: praying for the person by name, refusing to retell the story to others, setting healthy boundaries, doing one kind thing, and bringing the hurt to confession or to a priest when it runs deep. As long as we close our hearts to a brother or sister, we are far from being the disciples Jesus asks for (Pope Francis). We cannot always stop feeling an offense, but the Holy Spirit can turn the hurt into compassion and intercession (CCC 2843). Deliberate hatred is contrary to charity (CCC 2303).

Deep Dive

Paul lists what to put away: "All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice" (Ephesians 4:31). Then he gives the replacement: "be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ" (Ephesians 4:32). Hebrews warns that no "bitter root spring up and cause trouble" (Hebrews 12:15). Romans 12 says, "Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good" (Romans 12:21). Jesus told us to "pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). Praying for someone by name is one of the hardest and best ways to keep bitterness from taking root, because the Spirit can turn the hurt into intercession (CCC 2843).

Read before class: Ephesians 4:29-32; Romans 12:14-21; Hebrews 12:14-15

E. Sharing Our Lives (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8)

E1. Paul refused flattery, greed, and the praise of people. How do our motives help or hurt the message when we talk to others about Jesus? (1 Thessalonians 2:3-6)

Commentary

- "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." (Pope St. Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi 41)
- "Love is free; it is not practised as a way of achieving other ends." (Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 31)

- "A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and when it is better to say nothing and to let love alone speak." (Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 31)
- "we did not flatter, which is the part of deceivers, who wish to get possession and to domineer." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 2 on First Thessalonians)
- "Paul regards 'worthiness' not as grounded in one's own talent or moral self-righteousness but in God's discernment of genuinely selfless attitudes and actions" (NABRE note on 1 Thessalonians 2:4)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "In order that the message of salvation can show the power of its truth and radiance before men, it must be authenticated by the witness of the life of Christians." (CCC 2044)

Summary

People listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and they listen to teachers when those teachers are witnesses (Paul VI). Love is free and is never a tool for some other goal (Benedict XVI). A Christian knows when to speak of God and when to say nothing and let love speak (Benedict XVI). Flattery is the habit of deceivers who want to possess and control others (Chrysostom). Paul's worthiness rested not on talent or self-righteousness but on God's view of genuinely selfless actions (NABRE note). Motives matter because people can tell when they are a project, a number, or a means to an end. The message of salvation has to be backed by the witness of Christian lives (CCC 2044).

Deep Dive

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8 is the outline's epistle reading; at Mass that Sunday the second reading was 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10 (USCCB). Paul says his exhortation "was not from delusion or impure motives, nor did it work through deception" (1 Thessalonians 2:3), and that he spoke "not as trying to please human beings, but rather God, who judges our hearts" (1 Thessalonians 2:4). Paul asked the Galatians, "Or am I seeking to please people?" (Galatians 1:10). The Church's first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life (Paul VI). People can tell whether we are seeking them or something from them.

Read before class: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6; Galatians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

E2. Paul says his team was gentle among them, as a nursing mother cares for her children. What would that kind of patient, tender care look like toward the people God has put near us? (1 Thessalonians 2:7)

Commentary

- "As when a nurse cherishes her own children. So ought the teacher to be. Does the nurse flatter that she may obtain glory? Does she ask money of her little children? Is she offensive or burdensome to them?" (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 2 on First Thessalonians)
- "And the expression in the midst of you, is as if one should say, we were as one of you, not taking the higher lot." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 2 on First Thessalonians)
- "An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance." (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 24)
- "Later, at home, one of her children wants to talk to her about his hopes and dreams, and even though she is tired, she sits down and listens with patience and love." (Pope Francis, Gaudete et Exsultate 16)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory." (CCC 1832, which lists gentleness and patience among them)

Summary

A nurse does not flatter to get glory, ask money of her children, or burden them, and that is how a teacher should be (Chrysostom). Paul lived among them as one of them, not above them (Chrysostom). A community that shares the Gospel stands by people at every step, however long it takes, with patient expectation (Pope Francis). Holiness can look like a tired mother who still sits down and listens to her child with patience and love (Pope Francis). For us that can mean patience with people who grow slowly, meeting needs before giving advice, listening more than talking, and making people feel safe. Gentleness and patience are among the fruits the Holy Spirit forms in us (CCC 1832).

Deep Dive

Many excellent manuscripts read "infants" in verse 7, but "gentle" better suits the context (NABRE note). Either way, Paul's point is that he came without force or pressure. At the sight of the crowds, Jesus' "heart was moved with pity for them" (Matthew 9:36), and Isaiah pictures God as a shepherd who gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in

his bosom (Isaiah 40:11). A few verses later Paul switches to a father's care: "we treated each one of you as a father treats his children" (1 Thessalonians 2:11). Love needs both tenderness and steady guidance.

Read before class: 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Matthew 9:35-38; Isaiah 40:11

E3. Paul shared with the Thessalonians not only the gospel but his very self. What changes when we share our lives with people and not just information? (1 Thessalonians 2:8)

Commentary

- "For merely to preach is not the same thing as to give the soul." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 2 on First Thessalonians)
- "An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the 'smell of the sheep' and the sheep are willing to hear their voice." (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 24)
- "the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction." (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 88)
- "Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this?" (Pope St. Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi 21)
- "Whoso then rightly loves his neighbour, ought to endeavour with him that he also with his whole heart love God." (St. Augustine, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 22)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, 'that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life.'" (CCC 905)
- "This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds." (CCC 2472)

Summary

This is an application question. Handing someone a message can take a minute and cost nothing. Sharing your life takes time, presence, meals, listening, and letting yourself be known. Preaching is not the same as giving your very soul (Chrysostom). A community

that shares the Gospel gets involved in people's daily lives and takes on the "smell of the sheep," and then the sheep are willing to hear its voice (Pope Francis). The Gospel asks us to risk face-to-face encounters with real people, their pain and their joy (Pope Francis). A life lived this way makes people ask, "Why are they like this?" (Paul VI). Loving a neighbor rightly includes wanting them to love God with their whole heart (Augustine). Lay people share Christ by word and by the testimony of life (CCC 905).

Deep Dive

Paul writes, "we were determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our very selves as well, so dearly beloved had you become to us" (1 Thessalonians 2:8). He worked "night and day in order not to burden any of you" (1 Thessalonians 2:9). He later reminded the Ephesian elders of Jesus' words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). John adds, "The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16). Sharing your life usually starts with something as small as a meal or a phone call, which is just what this week's Practice asks.

Read before class: 1 Thessalonians 2:8-12; Acts 20:31-35; 1 John 3:16-18

F. Building a Culture of Love (Psalm 1:1-3)

F1. Psalm 1 shows two paths: drifting toward the scoffers, or finding joy in the law of the Lord. How does what we enjoy most shape who we turn into over time? (Psalm 1:1-3)

Commentary

- "You move us to delight in praising You; for You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You." (St. Augustine, Confessions, Book 1)
- "It is also the nature of love that it transforms the lover into what is loved" (St. Thomas Aquinas, Explanation of the Ten Commandments, Prologue)
- "The order too of the words must be considered: went away, stood, sat. For he went away, when he drew back from God. He stood, when he took pleasure in sin." (St. Augustine, Exposition on Psalm 1)
- "The Psalm views life as activity, as choosing either the good or the bad. Each 'way' brings its inevitable consequences." (NABRE note on Psalm 1)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it" (CCC 1718)
- "The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives." (CCC 2563)

Summary

What we enjoy most becomes what we think about, and what we think about shapes who we become. Love changes the lover into what is loved (Aquinas). Psalm 1 describes a slide: walking, then standing, then sitting. A person first drifts from God, then takes pleasure in sin, then settles in pride (Augustine). The psalm treats life as a choice between two ways, each with its consequences (NABRE note). We were made for God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in him (Augustine). The desire for happiness is itself God's gift, meant to draw us to the only one who can fill it (CCC 1718). The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our impulses (CCC 2563).

Deep Dive

Psalm 1 is the outline's psalm and serves as a preface to the whole Book of Psalms (NABRE note). In the NABRE, "the law of the LORD is his joy; and on his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2). The law here most likely means divine teaching or instruction, not only rules (NABRE note). Such a person "is like a tree planted near streams of water, that yields its fruit in season" (Psalm 1:3). Jeremiah uses the same picture for "those who trust in the LORD" (Jeremiah 17:7-8). Psalm 119 shows the same joy: "How I love your law, Lord! I study it all day long" (Psalm 119:97).

Read before class: Psalm 1; Jeremiah 17:7-8; Psalm 119:97-104

F2. Picture two groups, one built on rules and one built on the Father's love. What would a newcomer notice in each, and which one would make them want to stay? (also Galatians 5:13-14)

Commentary

- "But it is one thing to be in the law, another under the law. Whoever is in the law, acts according to the law; whoever is under the law, is acted upon according to the law: the one therefore is free, the other a slave." (St. Augustine, Exposition on Psalm 1)
- "ultimately trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style" (Pope Francis, Gaudete et Exsultate 49)
- "But we always find the time to gossip, always! We do not have time to console the afflicted, but so much time to gossip." (Pope Francis, Angelus, October 25, 2020)

- "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction." (Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 1)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The fruits of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion" (CCC 1829)

Summary

This is an application question. A group built on rules tends to grow comparison, performance, gossip, guilt, and people who hide their struggles. A group built on the Father's love tends to grow honesty, welcome, patience, service, and people who stay. Being in the law is different from being under the law: one is free and the other a slave (Augustine). Some trust their own efforts and feel superior because they keep certain rules or a certain Catholic style (Pope Francis). We find time to gossip but not to console the afflicted (Pope Francis). Being Christian starts with an encounter with a person, not an ethical choice or a lofty idea (Benedict XVI). Charity bears fruit in joy, peace, mercy, friendship, and communion (CCC 1829).

Deep Dive

Paul writes, "For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love" (Galatians 5:13). He follows it with a warning: "But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another" (Galatians 5:15). A culture of rules tends to bite, and a culture of love tends to serve. The fruit of the Spirit he lists next begins with love (Galatians 5:22). Colossians adds, "And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:14). The first believers "devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Read before class: Galatians 5:13-26; Colossians 3:12-17; Acts 2:42-47

F3. The outline names four values: simple, adaptable, welcoming, and excellence. Which one could most help our group love people where they are and point them to Jesus, and what is one step we could take? (also Romans 15:7)

Commentary

- "Let all guests who arrive be received as Christ, because He will say: 'I was a stranger and you took Me in'" (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 53)
- "Let the greatest care be taken, especially in the reception of the poor and travelers, because Christ is received more specially in them" (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 53)
- "The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open." (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 47)
- "At times we have to be like the father of the prodigal son, who always keeps his door open so that when the son returns, he can readily pass through it." (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 46)
- "Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters." (Pope Francis, Gaudete et Exsultate 14)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities." (CCC 2447)
- "everyone should look upon his neighbor (without any exception) as 'another self,'" (CCC 1931)

Summary

This is an application question. Simple can mean keeping the focus on loving God and loving people instead of adding rules. Adaptable can mean meeting people where they are without changing the message. Welcoming means receiving every guest as Christ, with special care for the poor and travelers (Rule of St. Benedict). The Church is meant to be the Father's house with doors always wide open, like the father of the prodigal son who kept his door open (Pope Francis). Excellence can mean working with integrity and skill in the service of others (Pope Francis). One step might be inviting someone new, following up with someone who has missed a few weeks, or keeping the meeting simple enough that a newcomer feels at home. The works of mercy help our neighbor in body and spirit (CCC 2447), and every neighbor is another self (CCC 1931).

Deep Dive

Paul's version of adaptable was "I have become all things to all, to save at least some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Welcoming is Romans 15:7: "Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God." Hebrews adds, "Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:2). The first believers broke bread in their homes and "ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart,"

and the Lord added to their number every day (Acts 2:46-47). In a monastery, the abbot and the whole community were to wash the feet of every guest (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 53). Love is easiest to see when it is simple, close, and shared.

Read before class: Romans 15:5-7; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Acts 2:42-47

Sources

Source	Where to find it
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St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 22 (quotes Origen, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and the Opus Imperfectum on Matthew)	CCEL
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St. Augustine, Homilies 7 and 9 on the First Epistle of John	Homily 7, Homily 9
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Source	Where to find it
USCCB Mass readings, Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, October 25, 2026	USCCB