

# CLOSE TO CORRECT

*Deuteronomy 6:1-25; Mark 12:28-34 / Proverbs 21:1-31*

## *I. What Matters in Life?*

A. An intellectual asked Jesus to identify the foundation of Christianity; where does the religious journey begin? “And *one of the scribes* came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, *Which is the first commandment of all?*” (MARK 12:28)

B. The question reminds a thinker of the Shorter Catechism--WHAT IS THE CHIEF END OF MAN? “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, *do all to the glory of God.*” (1 CORINTHIANS 10:31)

## *II. The Answer Begins with God*

A. The priority of God is the starting point for life; this insight is a pervasive feature of the Old Testament. “And Jesus answered him, *The first* of all the commandments *is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.*” (MARK 12:29) “*Search the scriptures;* for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and *they are they which testify of me.*” (JOHN 5:39) *The Shema is recited twice daily.*

B. Genuine love of God will fill every realm of life; heart refers to the center of all intellectual activity. “And thou shalt *love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,* and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.” (MARK 12:30)

C. Just as the cross has both vertical and horizontal dimensions, the love of God has two dimensions. “And *the second is* like, *namely* this, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* There is none other commandment greater than these.” (MARK 12:31)

D. Disrespect for the image of God, man, is inherently disrespect for God; a believer who loves God must consequently love the image of God. “Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. *Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*” (JAMES 3:9-10)

## *III. The Intellectual Was Pleased with Jesus*

A. The intellectual approved of monotheism; Jesus had the right answers. “And the scribe said unto him, Well, *Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he.*” (MARK 12:32)

B. Being right from the start is far better than repairing what has failed. “And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength,

and *to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.*" (MARK 12:33)

C. God demands comprehensive devotion at every level; everything in life flows from how a person interprets reality. "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*" (PROVERBS 4:23)

#### ***IV. Close Is Not Enough***

A. While the man had the right idea, something was missing. "And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.*" (MARK 12:34)

B. The exchange demonstrated that right answers are not enough; only God can give new life to the dead. "Therefore *by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified* in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin." (ROMANS 3:20) "As it is written, *There is none righteous, no, not one:*" (ROMANS 3:10)

C. Jesus was about to demonstrate on the cross exactly what these two commandments meant. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: *he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter*, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for *he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.* And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth. Yet *it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin*, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:* by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and *he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*" (ISAIAH 53:7-12)

D. Fulfill these two commandments in your own life by seeking and nurturing the signs of a transformed life in yourself and others. "And this is his commandment, That we should *believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And *he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*" (1 JOHN 3:23-24)