

The Character of Jesus 73
What is the Greatest Commandment?
(Matthew 22:34 – 40, Mark 12:28 – 34, Luke 20:40)

- **Characteristic: Consistency, connecting everything to a central theme**
 - Following the Matthew account
 - (34 – 36) Various positions were held by various rabbis concerning this question. The objective of the Pharisees was to create enough discord to discredit Jesus, if only within certain groups. Some of the popular answers were sacrifices, phylacteries (Deuteronomy 6:8 – 9), purification, and festivals.
 - (37 – 38) Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:4 – 5 as the greatest commandment. The Mark account includes verse 4.
 - (39) Jesus cited as the second but equal command, Leviticus 19:18.
 - (40) Jesus' reason for putting these two as the greatest commandments was that these provide the framework or the rationale, whereas the others were details of how to act this out. The reference to "the Lord your God" established monotheism. The reference of "love" of God dictates the attitude of family (doing what is best for the other regardless of the effect on me), which would encompass sacrifice, purity, and festivals. The attitude is neither service nor authority. "Heart, soul, and mind" placed this connection to God as the foundation for all of life, not just a means to an end. The Leviticus passages, using the same "love" attitude, establishes the foundation for relationships between people and with oneself. Note the similarity to 1 John 3:23.
- **Application: Consistency, connecting everything to a central theme**
 - What would various churches put forward as the greatest commandment?
 - Worship
 - Purity
 - Obedience
 - Doctrine
 - Do church-goers today have a central theme that ties everything together?
 - Do church-goers today look for or expect a central theme?