

Session 1 Loving God: the First and Great Commandment

I. THE CALL TO WHOLEHEARTED LOVE FOR GOD

- A. The Shema Israel: Shema is the Hebrew word for ‘hear’. God called Israel to hear His heart. Jesus’ most repeated exhortation in the NT was, "He that has an ear, let him hear" (Mt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mk. 4:9, 23; 7:16; Lk. 8:8; 14:35; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9).
- ⁴ ***Hear (Shema), O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. (Deut. 6:4-5)***
- B. The Shema reveals the “why” behind the “what” of creation and redemption.
- C. Jesus interpreted what they were meant to hear. Namely, that loving God is His first priority and what He considers the greatest way to live. Mark and Luke add the phrase “all of your strength”. We are on a journey to walk out what Jesus meant when saying, “first” and “great”. These words represent the deepest desires of His heart. Do not apologize for your intensity in seeking God.
- ³⁷ ***You shall love the Lord...with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. (Mt. 22:37-38)***
- ³⁰ ***With all your heart...all your soul ...all your mind, and with all your strength. (Mk. 12:30)***
- D. God's ultimate purpose for creation is to provide a family for Himself and an eternal companion for Jesus who would be equally yoked to Him in love.
- ⁸ ***I (the Father) will give You (Jesus) the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. (Ps. 2:8)***
1. Mandatory obedience: God will cause all creation to obey Jesus (Phil. 2:9-11). A king’s inheritance is to rule over obedient subjects.
 2. Voluntary love: God will raise up a people who voluntarily choose to love Jesus. A bridegroom’s inheritance is to intimate partnership with a loving bride.
- E. Jesus’ inheritance as King is the obedience of all nations, as a Bridegroom it is the voluntary love of the people in the nations. As a King, He is obeyed but as a Bridegroom, He is loved.
- F. The Bridegroom’s inheritance is to possess the heart of the people of the nations that He rules. His commands are related to love and being near Him is to enjoy His liberating holiness.
- ³ ***This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. (1 Jn. 5:3)***

- G. Jesus calls us to be equally yoked to Him in love. He wants us to love Him with all of our heart and mind because He loves us with all of His heart and mind. Jesus delights in such love from His people. He will supernaturally empower us to love Him this way. It takes “God to love God”.
⁵ *The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit... (Rom. 5:5)*
- H. Jesus prayed for His people to be supernaturally empowered to love Him with God’s love.
²⁶ *I declared...Your name...that the love with which You loved Me may be in them. (Jn. 17:26)*
- I. God’s purpose is to select and train a Bride who would be prepared by voluntary love to reign with Jesus. The First Commandment will be in first place in the Church when Jesus returns.
⁷ *For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7)*
- J. The power of the end-time Church is found in walking in the anointing to love God. The Holy Spirit is raising up lovesick messengers who know Jesus in a way that will change the expression of Christianity to prepare the Bride to be strong in love in the end-time pressures (Rev. 15:2-4).
- K. Jesus defined loving God as being deeply rooted in a spirit of obedience (Deut. 6:1-9; Jn. 14:21). There is no such thing as loving God without seeking to obey His Word. Loving God requires more than singing to Him or having sentimental feelings about a “god we make in our image”.
¹⁵ *If you love Me, keep My commandments....²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...²³ If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word... (Jn. 14:15-23)*
- L. By the definition of love, we must invite Him. He will not force us into a relationship of voluntary love. He waits until we invite Him in the matters of our heart. Our greatest attainment is to have a burning and shining heart for God (Lk. 11:36).
- M. Our spiritual identity as individuals is, “*I’m loved (by God) and I am a lover (of God), therefore I am successful*”. This is what we look like to God. We are not defined by our accomplishments. This includes the supernatural ability to feel God’s love and then to feel love back to God. Receiving the anointing to love God is the most powerful dimension of any ministry.

II. LOVING GOD IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT: IT IS WHAT GOD WANTS FIRST

- A. Loving God is the first priority to God. Jesus did not call it the first option, but a commandment. Jesus makes it clear that cultivating love for Him is the first emphasis of the Holy Spirit. Loving God is a glorious end in itself, however, it always overflows with loving ourselves and others. We realign our life and ministry to make the first commandment our first priority.
- B. Since loving God is His first priority, we must plan our ministries with this as our first goal and measurement of success. Numerical growth is good but that is not the litmus test of God’s grace or favor. I ask the Holy Spirit to mark you in this session, so that you always have this as your number one priority in your mission statement, standard of evaluation, and practical action plan.

- C. God has everything, yet He is searching for something that He still wants first. What does God search for? What does He want most and first? It is love that He is after. He is after our heart and He wants our voluntary love. One of the most important questions to ask God is, “What are You looking for before anything else?” When we find what God is looking for, then we will find the answer to what we are looking for.
- D. Many people are searching to know the will of God. What is the first issue in the will of God? First, God’s will is to strengthen the response of our heart to Him in love. This is more important to Him than our ministry assignment.
- E. The mystery of our life is found in the truth that He desires us. Lord, what are You doing in my life? Why are You allowing certain things to continue? Jesus is after our heart. He wants to wake us up to reveal and impart His love to us. Everything that God does He does first for love.
- F. Christianity is an on-going encounter of love with a Person. Possessing fierce dedication, making radical choices for righteousness, and a strong commitment to a noble cause with a deep sense of mission to change a city or nation will not keep us steady, unless we encounter love. The labor of ministry makes us emotionally weary without the small, but consistent stirring of love in our emotions by the Spirit. Stirred emotions in love are the most powerful force in the universe!

III. LOVING GOD IS THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT, CALLING AND LIFESTYLE

- A. Loving God is the greatest thing we can do. Loving God is also a *means to an end*. It has the greatest impact on God’s heart, our heart and on others we touch.
- B. The greatest calling for an individual’s heart is to move or impact God’s heart and to be moved by God’s heart. We move His heart by every movement of our heart to show love to Him by obedience. It is the most extreme lifestyle. Every movement of our heart in loving obedience to Jesus is seen and thus is not in vain. What is your greatest dream for your life? Is it to be empowered to live out complete obedience?
- C. Do you know the way that you move Him? Each time we repent of compromise it moves Him. We move His heart by sitting before Him (Lk. 10:38-42) and by doing small acts of service for others because of love for Him (Mt. 10:42; Heb. 6:10). Impacting people is very important, but it is not our greatest call. Our greatest impact cannot be measured by the size of our ministry.
- D. Some people are captivated mostly by getting more people to receive their ministry and to listen to them. With better networking, marketing and lighting, we can often get a bigger crowd.
- E. It is good to use creative wisdom to more effectively communicate through our ministry assignment. However, our greatest satisfaction is to know and feel His love, to love Him, and to overflow in love for others. This will have the greatest impact on our heart as our spirit is exhilarated in God’s love.

- F. It is our debt and gift to love God. His requirement is to our great benefit.
- G. The greatest grace we can receive is the anointing to feel God's love and to express it. It is the greatest call in life because the fruit lasts forever. It is the greatest and highest way to live.
- H. Loving Jesus has the greatest reward in the age-to-come and thus, it is the only way to enter our greatest destiny. You can be one of the greatest people in history simply by living in deep love for God. You may not be the most famous, but you can be one of the greatest.

¹⁹ Whoever...breaks...these commandments...shall be called least in the Kingdom; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 5:19)

- I. Our greatest strengthening is found in affection-based obedience that flows from experiencing Jesus' affection, and responding with love. It is the most consistent obedience because a lovesick person will endure anything for love. People in love are untouchable. We set our heart to live as extravagant lovers of God without getting trapped into bitterness toward those who mistreat us.
- J. The greatest work in the Kingdom is not to raise a dead body, but to raise a dead heart.

¹² Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (Jn. 14:12)

⁸ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. (Mt. 10:8)

- K. The anointing to love God is our greatest possession. The reward of love is found in possessing the power to love. No sacrifice is comparable to what He gives us in His love. Anyone can quit but a person in love. When we are tempted to quit, the obstacle in our path is that we love God.

IV. REVELATION OF THE SUPREMACY OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

- A. We need revelation of the supremacy of the first commandment. It is the standard of evaluation at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God measures life differently than man because He has all the money, wisdom, fame, influence and time. What will matter is whether we grew in love for God.
- B. We are not left guessing as to what God considers greatest. In seeking to stay up with popular ministry trends, some regularly change directions in their ministry. We must not get our ministry focus from the latest trend, but from God's Word. God is raising up forerunners who call others to define love as God's highest purpose, and who make the first commandment their main focus.
- C. The church of Ephesus was a great revival center in the early Church (Acts 19-20). Yet, they did not sustain the freshness of their love for Jesus. They became workers for God more than lovers of God. Lovers will always out work the workers. When we work without intimacy, we work as a slave. A heart of a bride is refreshed as she labors. Service without the foundation of devotion leads to burn out, disappointment, and wounding. Thus, the service is not sustained over decades.

⁴ I have this against you, that you have left your first love... (Rev. 2:4)