

Loving God with All of Our Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength

I. LOVING GOD ON GOD'S TERMS: WITH OUR ALL

- A. God created us to love Him in four spheres of our life which include our heart (emotions), soul (identity), mind (thoughts) and strength (resources) because He loves us this way. These four distinct spheres of life do not automatically develop without our involvement.
- ³⁰ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. (Mk. 12:30)*
- B. Cultivating love for God is the first priority to God and the first emphasis of the Holy Spirit.
- ³⁷ You shall love the LORD...³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. (Mt. 22:37-38)*
- C. Cultivating love for God has the greatest impact on God's heart, our heart and on others.
- D. Cultivating love for God is the greatest calling. Some who seek to know God's will for their life focus on knowing what they are supposed to do instead of what they are supposed to become. When they speak of wanting the greatest calling, they refer to the size of their ministry instead of the size of their heart. The greatest grace we can receive is the anointing to feel God's love and to express it. It brings the greatest freedom and has the greatest reward in the age to come.
- E. ***Sphere #1 Love with all our heart***: We love God with our emotions (affections), which are the very impulse of desire that affects our decisions. We have a significant role in determining how our emotions develop over time. We can "set" our love or affections on anything that we choose. Our emotions eventually follow whatever we set ourselves to pursue. As we change our mind, the Spirit changes our heart (emotions).
- ¹⁴ Because he has set his love (heart) upon Me, therefore I will deliver him... (Ps. 91:14)*
- F. ***Sphere #2: Love with all our mind***: We fill our mind with that which inspires love for God instead of what diminishes it. Our mind is the doorway to our inner man that greatly affects our capacity to love. Much of our life occurs in our mind.
- G. The language of the human spirit is images or pictures. Our mind is an "internal movie screen" that continually shows us pictures. It is like a camera that stores our memories.
- H. Our mind is a vast universe within us that will never ever be turned it off. We cannot shut down the images in our mind, but we can direct them by meditating on God's Word. We can replace dark thoughts with new ones and thus we can rewrite the script of the movie that we continually watch within.
- I. We love God with our mind by taking the time and effort to come into ***agreement with the truth*** about Him and His purposes. This involves refusing lies about His ways and His heart as a tender Father and passionate Bridegroom King.

- J. **Sphere #3: Love with all our strength:** This is to love God with our natural resources (time, money, energy, talents, words and influence). We express our love for God in the way we use our resources. The normal way to use them is to increase our personal comfort and honor.
¹⁰ God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints. (Heb. 6:10)
- K. God sees us as we express our love to Him by investing our strengths into our relationship with God and His purposes. By doing this we sow our strengths into “God’s bank”. He multiplies and then returns our investment back to us. However, He does it in His own timing and way.
¹⁸ Your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Mt. 6:18)
- L. The principle of the fasted lifestyle is found in 2 Cor. 12:9. Fasting is to “voluntarily embrace weakness” so that God’s strength is made perfect in us.
⁹ My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness... (2 Cor. 12:9)
- M. We fast our strengths in the five [activities](#) in the Sermon on the Mount ([Mt. 6:1-18](#)). We *serve and give* (6:1-4, 19-21), *pray* (6:5-13), *bless adversaries* (forgive, 6:14-15; 5:44) and *fast food* (6:16-18). We embrace fasting or “voluntary weakness” in these five areas. We “fast” our time by praying, our money by giving, our words by blessing our enemies, our energy by fasting food. We fast by investing our natural strengths (time, money, energy, etc.) into the hands of the Spirit.
- N. **Sphere #4: Love with all our soul:** We establish our identity in our relationship with God instead of in our accomplishments and in the recognition we receive from people. Our identity is determined by the way we define our success and value and thus, how we see ourselves.
- O. God’s love for us is what determines our [personal worth](#). We must define our success as being ones who are loved and chosen by [God](#) and who love God in return.
- P. We are to be anchored in this truth as the [basis of](#) our success and [worth](#) rather than in our accomplishments, recognition, [possessions](#) or relationships. ***Our identity must be established on being loved by God and in loving Him*** instead of on our accomplishments or failures.
- Q. Our confession is ***“I am loved (by God) and I am a lover (of God) therefore I am successful”***. Burn-out does not come from working hard, but from working with a wrong spirit. When we work for success we get burned out. When we work from success our spirit is strengthened.
- R. As we change the way we define success, we will love God much better because we will have much less “emotional traffic” inside our heart and mind.
- S. We must refuse to live out of a false identity based on our accomplishments or failures. We are not to live a shame based life, but one based in confidence in the grace of God.
Question: Are you a sinner who struggles to love God or a lover of God who struggles with sin?

II. JESUS' IDENTITY IN LOVE, HUMILITY AND SERVANTHOOD (PHIL. 2:6-8)

- A. Jesus is the premier example of loving God with all of His soul by living with a right identity. Jesus' identity is in love and humility. His humility was expressed when He became a man and died on the cross. In Phil. 2:6-9, we gain insight into how Jesus carried His heart before people.
- ⁶ Who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery (something to be grasped, NIV) to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation (nothing NIV; emptied Himself NAS), taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death... (Phil. 2:6-8)*
- B. Jesus did not consider it robbery to be equal to God in privilege and honor. There are two ways to apply this. First, Jesus would not have “taken” anything from God by insisting on enjoying the privileges that were rightfully His by virtue of being God. Secondly, He did not “take” anything from Himself by refusing the privileges of being treated as equal to God.
- C. After the incarnation, Jesus had two natures, being fully God and fully man. *He was never less than God, but He lived on earth as though He was never more than a man.* Being in the form of God, He had the power to influence people. He only used it when He was led by the Spirit. He lived as every other godly person by praying, obeying and waiting on the Spirit's leadership. Jesus emptied Himself of the right to *take the initiative* to use the fullness of God's power.
- D. In denying Himself of His rightful privileges by being a servant, He did not deny His true identity, but was being true to Himself. He did not grasp at His unique privileges of being God. He did not insist on His rights to live free from rejection, pain, and humiliation. When One has the power to create the heavens and the earth, why should He ever be hungry or rejected?
- E. Jesus emptied Himself of His reputation in the eyes of man. He embraced a lifestyle where everyone underestimated Him and His abilities. People never knew how superior His abilities were. When they saw Him, they saw nothing to distinguish Him. He was happy to be seen as an ordinary man without any special form (status) or comeliness (attractiveness).
- ² He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. ³ He is despised and rejected by men...and we did not esteem Him. (Isa. 53:2-3)*
- F. What was most important to Him was to tell the Father's story and to enrich the lives of people by dying for them. If His core identity was in having power, then His incarnation would have been a denial of His true self. For all eternity, He delights in humility. It was not something He was only while on earth. It is something that He is. His humility did not begin at the incarnation.
- G. Jesus did not serve to prove something, but to express the truth about Himself. It is precisely because Jesus is God that He served and gave freely to ungrateful men (Lk. 6:35). There was nothing un-Godlike about washing the disciples' feet. He was at home doing this.
- H. We are to love God with all our soul by stewarding His calling and blessing on our life with a servant identity, instead of in our influence and abilities or in how big our business or ministry is.

III. WE EXPRESS LOVE TO JESUS BY ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF HONOR

- A. We love God by loving and honoring the people He called and who are dear to Him. We must not regard men after the flesh by seeing them based on what they accomplish (2 Cor. 5:16). We are to see them as God sees them, recognizing His heart for them and His plan to use them.
- B. The Holy Spirit is the guardian of the culture of the Body of Christ. He requires that we dwell together in a ***culture of honor***. God's love is experienced most as we honor each other. Part of our inheritance and what we lack is in the hands of others. We can receive this by blessing them. Blessing is not the same as unconditional tolerance of everyone's doctrines and practices.
- C. ***Blessing without criticism***: Receiving revelation of God's heart for specific people (ministries) convinces us that God greatly desires to bless them. This makes it easy for us to bless them.
- D. Blessing comes from honor. We must demonstrate a culture of honor in our personal families and in our ministry assignment (church, marketplace, school, neighborhood, etc.).
¹⁰ In honor giving preference to one another...¹⁴ Bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice...¹⁶ Do not be wise in your own opinion... (Rom. 12:10-18)
- E. ***Bless***: We bless their budding virtues that have not yet matured, regardless of their deficiencies in ministry and without needing to agree with or endorse their differences in ministry focus, style, and standards of excellence. The Spirit forbids us to verbalize such deficiencies and differences. We speak affirmations that we believe, without any flattery. ***Rejoice***: We celebrate their increase. ***Do not be wise***: We do not presume to understand all that God sees in them.
- F. ***Inclusion without elitism***: Understanding God's kindness, His value of His people and His desire to use all His people convinces us of their value to the kingdom and our need of them. However, the natural bias of the human heart is elitism that seeks to be best and speaks without a spirit of inclusion. Ask the Lord to show you ***how He sees others***. After we see their value and virtues, then we feel differently about their deficiencies.
- G. God is ravished for each of His people and has an agenda for each that is important to Him. The miracle of mercy is that God uses us, even in our weakness and sin. The reason we have future usefulness in His kingdom is because God is kind to evil men (Lk. 6:35). The confidence that we have that God will use us on the basis of kindness is the confidence we have in God using others.
- H. ***Righteous judgment without compromise***: We must uphold the primary tenets of faith and basic standards of behavior to cultivate a culture of honor within the Body of Christ. The culture of honor is based on our allegiance to Jesus and His Word. We must faithfully address significant deviations from Scripture, but in the right process and with a right spirit of kindness. There are times we must bring righteous judgment to those with destructive doctrines and behavior (Mt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 11:12-15; 1 Thes. 5:14, 21; 2 Thes. 3:6-14; Rev. 2:2, 14-15, 20).
²⁴ Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. (Jn. 7:24)