

## ***Loving Jesus: The First Commandment Established in First Place***

### **I. THE CALL TO BE EQUALLY YOKED TO JESUS IN LOVE**

- A. The Holy Spirit's first agenda is to establish the first commandment in *first place* in the Church. The first commandment does not start with us but with *God's love for His people*. He loves us with all His heart and with the intensity that He loves in the fellowship of the Trinity (Jn. 15:9).  
<sup>37</sup>*"You shall love the Lord...with all your heart..."*<sup>38</sup>*This is the first and great commandment."* (Mt. 22:37-38)
- <sup>9</sup>*"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love."* (Jn. 15:9)
- B. God's ultimate eternal purpose for creation is to provide a family for Himself that includes an *equally yoked Bride* for Jesus. The Father promised Jesus an inheritance. His inheritance is an eternal companion who is *equally yoked in love*—they will love Jesus with all of their heart.  
<sup>9</sup>*Ask of Me [Father], and I will give You [Jesus] the nations for Your inheritance...* (Ps. 2:8)
1. **Mandatory obedience**: God will cause all creation to obey Jesus (Phil. 2:9-11).
  2. **Voluntary love**: The definition of love requires that we choose to love Him. The Father will impart the very love that He has for Jesus into the hearts of those who long for it. The Father will successfully raise up a prepared Bride for His worthy Son (Rev. 19:7).  
<sup>26</sup>*That the love with which You [the Father] loved Me may be in them...* (Jn. 17:26)
- C. It "takes God to love God." The anointing to receive God's love and to love Him back is the greatest gift the Spirit imparts. We must live in agreement with the Spirit to best receive this. Our desire for God is God's gift to us. Our desire for God is an expression of His desire for us.  
<sup>5</sup>*The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.* (Rom. 5:5)
- D. We must love God on His terms. A core issue today is how we define love. We must define it on God's terms, not by our humanistic culture that seeks love without obedience to God's Word. There are many definitions of love, liberty, and freedom in our culture that are not biblical.
- E. Jesus defined loving God as being deeply rooted in a spirit of obedience (Jn. 14:21). There is no such thing as loving God without seeking to obey His Word.  
<sup>15</sup>*If you love Me, keep My commandments...*<sup>21</sup>*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...*<sup>23</sup>*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.* (Jn. 14:15-23)
- F. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7) defines love on God's terms. It calls us to live out the 8 beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12) by **resisting the 6 negative influences** (Mt. 5:21-48) and by **pursuing the 5 positive nutrients** (Mt. 6:1-18) that position us to receive the Spirit's impartation of grace.

For **FREE resources** on the first commandment, see [mikebickle.org](http://mikebickle.org) for a 12-part teaching series with notes entitled *The First Commandment* and free ebooks such as *Seven Longings of the Human Heart*.

## II. THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT

- A. God's first priority and the Spirit's first emphasis is that we would cultivate love for God.  
*<sup>37</sup>You shall love the LORD...<sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment. (Mt. 22:37-38)*
- B. Jesus did not call it the first option, but the first command. Jesus makes it clear that cultivating love for Him is the first emphasis of the Holy Spirit. 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. The mystery of our life is found in this truth.
- C. Cultivating love for God has the greatest impact on God's heart and our heart. Anyone who loves Jesus will love others much more. It 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.

## III. SPHERE #1: LOVE WITH ALL OUR HEART

- A. ***Sphere #1: Love with all our heart***: We are to engage our emotions in our love for God. God wants more than dutiful service. Our love for God touches our emotions without succumbing to emotionalism. We have a significant role in determining how our emotions develop over time. We can cultivate greater affections for God by setting our heart to grow in this sphere.
- B. We can "set" our love or affections on anything that we choose. Our emotions eventually follow whatever we set ourselves to pursue. This involves determining that the ***primary dream of your heart is to walk in the first commandment***. As we change our mind, the Spirit changes our heart (emotions), so that we set our heart first on loving Jesus and causing others to love Jesus.  
*<sup>14</sup>Because he has set his love [heart] upon Me, therefore I will deliver him... (Ps. 91:14)*
- C. David made a choice to set his heart to love God. He determined to love God.  
*<sup>1</sup>I will love You, O LORD, my strength. (Ps. 18:1)*
- D. Our emotions are a very important and powerful part of our life, and God wants to be loved from this part of our life. We must diligently keep our heart focused and clean. We keep our heart by refusing to allow our emotions to be inappropriately connected to money, positions of honor, wrong relationships, sinful addictions, bitterness, offenses, etc.  
*<sup>23</sup>Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. (Prov. 4:23)*
- E. Christianity is an ongoing encounter of love with a person. Possessing fierce dedication and making radical choices for righteousness will not keep us steady unless we encounter love.
- F. We resist being entrenched in vain imaginations that cause our emotions to be progressively stirred by various lusts. We express our love to God by resisting emotions contrary to His will.

#### IV. SPHERE #2: LOVE WITH ALL OUR MIND

- A. *Sphere #2: Love with all our mind*: We fill our mind with that which inspires love for God instead of that which diminishes it. What we do with our mind greatly affects our capacity to love. If we fill our mind with the right things, our capacity to love Jesus increases; if we fill our mind with wrong things, our capacity to love Jesus diminishes.
- B. Our mind is the doorway to our inner man and greatly affects our capacity to love. Much of our life occurs in our mind. The language of the human spirit is images or pictures.
- C. Our mind is an “internal movie screen” that continually shows us pictures. It is like a camera that stores our memories. We are the producer, leading actor, and consumer in our internal movies. We produce it, act in it, and watch it. We are both the hero and the villain.
- D. Our mind is a vast universe within us that will never, ever be turned off. We cannot shut down the images in our mind, but we can redirect them. We can replace dark thoughts with new ones. Thus, we can rewrite the script of the movie that we continually watch within, by reading and meditating on, or praying over, God’s Word on a regular basis.
- E. Our mind has such glorious potential and vast power, yet many believers are so casual about what they do with their mind. They fill their mind with entertainment or daydreaming about vanity when they have the Holy Spirit and the Bible.
- F. We love God with our mind by taking the time to fill our mind with the Word, so that we come into *agreement with the truth* about Him. This involves refusing lies about His heart as a tender Father and passionate Bridegroom King, as we take time to meditate on God’s Word.
- G. Jesus exposed how the spirit of immorality operates. It is rooted first in the mind (sexual imaginations) and is fueled by sight or “looking with lust” (actual person or digital images).  
<sup>28</sup>*Whoever looks at a woman to lust...has already committed adultery...in his heart (Mt. 5:28)*
- H. The progression of adultery: eye adultery leads to heart adultery, which leads to circumstances that lead to physical adultery.
- I. *Principle*: sexual purity is established first in the area of the eyes. Jesus wants us to understand the role of the “eye gate” as the primary battlefield for stopping the operation of the spirit of immorality. It is easier to close the “eye gate” than to put out the fires of immoral passions.
- J. Job understood the importance and power of eye adultery in his determination to love God.  
<sup>1</sup>*I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?...<sup>9</sup>If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor’s door... (Job 31:1, 9)*

V. SPHERE #3: LOVE WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH

- A. **Sphere #3: Love with all our strength:** We are 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, whereas the usual way to use them is to increase our personal comfort and honor.
- B. God cares about the love we show Him when we invest our strength into our relationship with Him and in helping others to love Him. We show our strength 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 and forgive** (6:14-15; 5:44), and **fast food** (6:16-18).
- C. God multiplies and then returns our strengths back to us. However, He does it in His own timing and way. This takes faith that God is watching and that He esteems this as an expression of love.

VI. SPHERE #4: LOVE WITH ALL OUR SOUL

- A. **Sphere #4: Love with all our soul:** We realign our identity to be based on our relationship with God instead of on our accomplishments and the recognition we receive from people. Our identity is determined by the way we define our success and value and, thus, by how we see ourselves.
- B. When we get our identity from our accomplishments and recognition we end up in an emotional storm of preoccupation with vanity; we most naturally see our accomplishments as very small and unimportant, causing us to feel rejected and neglected by people.
- C. We are to define our **primary success in life** as being ones who are loved by God and who love God. This is what determines our personal worth. We are to be anchored in this truth as the basis of our success and worth, rather than in our accomplishments, recognition, or possessions.
- D. Our identity must be established on being loved by God and in loving Him in response. Our confession is ***“I am loved [by God] and I am a lover [of God], therefore I am successful.”***
- E. Burnout 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 (Col. 1:10). We will love Jesus much better with less “emotional traffic” inside our heart and mind.
- F. He wants to be loved in the way He loves us, with His “all.” We are equally yoked to Jesus, not by the size of our love, but by the “all” of our love. Though our “all” is small, is it still our “all.”
- G. A sustained “reach” for 100 percent obedience is different from “attaining” to it in our life. When we sin, we repent and renew our resolve to “reach” to fully obey God, with the confidence that He enjoys us. The Lord values our commitment to continually grow in love.
- H. The reach of our heart to love Him moves Him. ***If we do not quit, then we win.*** We come to the place where we no longer find our identity in our failure, but in the fact that God loves us, in the gift of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:17), and in the cry of our spirit to love God.