

I. THE FIRST COMMANDMENT DEFINES GOD’S MAIN PRIORITY

Mat 22:37-39 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'38" This is the first and great commandment. 39 "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

- A. Jesus did not call this the first option, but a commandment. One of the most important questions to ask God is, “What are You looking for before anything else?” He wants us to find our definition in life as being loved by Him and lovers of Him. This keeps life in proper perspective. It didn’t start with us loving God, it started with Him loving us. *When we find what God is looking for, then we will find what we are looking for.*

1 Jn 4:19 “ We love Him because He first loved us.”

- B. The main target of Satan is to attack followers of Jesus with shame and doubt that they don’t really love God. This causes us to not feel cherished in our weakness. God’s main priority is to have a people that love Him with confidence.

Eph 5:29 “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.”

II. WHY IT IS THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

- A. God first *exhorted* Israel, through Moses, to love Him with all their heart (*Deut. 6:5*), and later Moses *prophesied* Israel would love God with all their heart in the end times (*Deut. 30:1-6*). Jesus’ statement in *Mt 22:37* was both an *exhortation* and a *prophecy* of our love for God.

Deut. 30:6 “The Lord...will circumcise your heart...to love the Lord...with all your heart.”

- B. Loving God has the greatest impact on God’s heart and is the greatest calling for our heart and our ministry to others, because the fruit lasts forever. We move His heart with every movement of our heart to love Him through obedience. What God wants most is love from the human heart.

- C. Jesus defined love as loving God with a spirit of obedience (*Jn. 14:21*). We love Him on His terms, God’s definition of love does not involve accepting everyone by toleration while abandoning His Word. Loving God is not romantic notions or about laid-back love (which often means making God in our image, to fit our humanistic culture.)

Jn 14:15-23 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.

Lk 10:42 Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.

III. LOVE WITH ALL OUR HEART: AFFECTIONS

- A. *Love with all our heart:* with all our affection (emotions). This speaks of our emotions, affections, and longings, that affects every decision we make. Our heart defines our core reality and drives all that we do.

Pr 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.

- B. We can set our love, or affections, on anything that we choose. Our emotions eventually follow what we pursue. This determines the course our emotions develop over time. As we change our goals, the Spirit changes our heart (emotions).

Ps 91:14 Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him.

- C. David made a choice to set his heart to love God. We decide the things that eventually form our emotions most. Our decisions by themselves are not enough to change our emotions. Yet they are an indispensable part of the process of emotional transformation.

Ps 18:1 I will love You, O LORD, my strength.

Ps 37:4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

- D. The power to choose where we set our hearts on is the great dignity of the human spirit created in God's image. Angels do not have affections like humans that were created in God's image. No one else can give God "your love". We get one opportunity to do this in a fallen world where love for Jesus is costly and rare.

2 Thes 3:5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.

IV. LOVE WITH ALL OUR SOUL: PERSONALITY

- A. *Love with all our soul:* the soul is our personality, or how we express the uniqueness of our abilities and desires, including the way we talk, walk, and what our preferences are.

- B. Our personality is expressed most dynamically by our speech and affects our inner man. What we say enhances or quenches our ability to grow in love. When the Spirit is grieved, we do not receive from Him in the same measure. We must renounce grumbling and speaking against others, knowing it hinders our ability to love God and feel His love. *Jam 3:6-10*

Eph 4:29-30 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.³⁰ Do not grieve the Spirit of God.

V. LOVE WITH ALL OUR MIND: THOUGHTS

- A. *Love with all our mind:* To love God with all our mind involves taking time to fill our mind with God's Word and to agree with biblical paradigms of God. This involves refusing lies about Jesus as our Bridegroom, King, and Judge. We gain revelation of God's love by meditating on it from God's Word.

- B. The language of the human spirit is image. Our mind is our intellect, understanding, and the place of our imagination. It is like movie screen, giving us pictures (good or evil) and a camera that stores memory. As we renew our mind with God's Word, we repaint our internal canvas. We erase and replace wrong thoughts with godly thoughts.

- C. Much of our life occurs in our mind because we can never turn it off. God's Word equips us to think first and most naturally about God. We cannot shut down the images in our mind, but we can direct them. Jesus can become our first thought, even our daydream. As our mind is renewed, Jesus becomes the escape from lust, pride, and fear as we retreat into His love.

VI. LOVE WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH: RESOURCES

- A. ***Love with all our strength***: our resources (time, money, talents, reputation, and influence). We love God by using our resources in relationship with the Spirit in a way to grow in love.
- B. The normal use of our strengths is to increase our personal comfort, wealth, and honor. In other words, by the fasted lifestyle, we bring our natural strengths to God as we trust Him to return our strength back to us in a way that enriches us and transforms us with meekness.
- C. Jesus describes these strengths in the five activities in ***Matthew 6:1-18***. These five areas express voluntary weakness because we invest our natural strengths (time, money, energy, reputation, etc.) into the Spirit's hands. Jesus invites us to position ourselves to receive more as we *serve and give* (charitable deeds: giving service and money; ***Matt. 6:1-4, 19-21***), *pray* (***Matt. 6:5-13***), *bless adversaries* (forgive, ***Matt. 6:14-15; 5:44***), and *fast* (***Matt. 6:16-18***).
- D. These five areas position our cold heart before God's grace to receive the Holy Spirit's help. It is like we put our cold heart before the bonfire of God's presence.

VII. LOVING GOD WITH OUR ALL

- A. Our primary assignment in God's will is to grow in love. God measures life differently because He has all the money, wisdom, fame, influence, and time. He asks us if we learned to love.
- B. God's commands come with the promise of His help to obey them. Love does not automatically grow. We ask, "What is the most that God will help me to give to Him?" We can choose the good part, as Mary did. The anointing to love God is our greatest possession when we are tempted to quit or "coast our way" to the end, due to setbacks, feeling unseen, unappreciated, and disappointed.
- C. In our failure we confess, we are not defined by failure or by accomplishments. I am not despised by God, nor am I a hopeless hypocrite because of my weakness. We must live by our spiritual identity (what we look like to God) instead of our natural identity (what we look like to others).
- D. 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, the point is that it is our all. He wants to be loved in the way He loves us.