

**I. THE FIRST COMMANDMENT DEFINES GOD’S MAIN PRIORITY**

*Mat 22:37-40 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.' 40 "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

- A. ‘First’ means this is the first consideration in the heart of God. Jesus did not call this the first option, but a commandment. Loving God is the *end in itself*; however, it never ends with loving God, but always overflows with loving ourselves and others (believers and unbelievers).
- B. What does He want most and first? 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 what we are looking for.*
- C. We plan what we do at HOPS with this as the first goal. Numerical growth is good, but is not the gauge of God’s pleasure. We seek this as our number-one priority in our ministry action plan or mission statement. We teach the first commandment because we have to continually realign our life and ministry to make the first commandment our first priority.
- D. Our intense dedication to make radical choices for righteousness will not keep us steady unless we encounter love. It is not enough to be a part of a vision to change a city or nation. Without a consistent stirring of love in our emotions, the work of the vision will make us emotionally tired.
- E. God’s first desire is to love. The unspoken truth in *1 Jn 4:19* is God inviting us to be loved by Him. It takes the love of God to love God back and He gives us the Holy Spirit to help us.  
*1 Jn 4:19 “We love Him because He first loved us.”*
- F. 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 knows how to motivate us to obedience by engaging the human heart. He created the human heart to obey and love Him voluntarily. *Ps 110:3*
- B. Jesus’ last public message to Israel defined the kingdom as a call to His wedding. He called Israel to the first commandment in context to calling them to a wedding. The Father “arranged a marriage” for His Son. His eternal purpose for creation includes providing a family for Himself and a companion for His Son.

***Mt 22:2 ,37 “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain King [Father] who arranged a marriage for His son, ...<sup>37</sup>You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”***

- C. 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.”***
- D. 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.  
***Jn 15:9 ...in the same way the Father loves Me, that is how I love you.***
- E. Jesus defined loving God as being deeply rooted in a spirit of obedience (***Jn. 14:21; Deut. 6:1-9***). 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.”  
***Jn 14:15-23 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.***
- F. We must love God on His terms (not on our terms). A core issue at the end of the age will be to either define love on God’s terms or by the humanistic culture that wants to love without obedience to God’s Word. There are many definitions of love, liberty, and freedom in the culture of the Church.

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

- A. 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 by every movement of our heart to love Him through obedience. What God wants most is love from the human heart. He wants our time, money, and talents, because in giving them, we express love for Him.
- B. 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 because of love for Him (***Mt. 10:42***). Impacting people is very important, but it is not our greatest call.
- C. 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 will not be the most famous but can be one of the greatest.
- D. 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. A person in love will not quit. When we are tempted to quit, our love for God keeps us from quitting.
- E. 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.