

Possible Title: Love Works

If you've ever seen a massive suspension bridge, you know it's an incredible feat of engineering.

- Think of something like the Golden Gate Bridge or the Brooklyn Bridge. From a distance, it looks like a delicate ribbon stretching across a vast expanse, yet up close, you see the intricate network of steel, the thousands of rivets, the massive towers, the complex roadbed, and all the smaller cables crisscrossing everywhere. It's an overwhelming display of planning and construction.
- You could study all the schematics, the material science, the architectural drawings, and the labor required to build such a bridge for years. There are countless details, rules, and specifications that govern its existence and function.
- But for all its complexity, for all its thousands upon thousands of parts and meticulous engineering, the entire structural integrity, the very existence and function of that bridge, ultimately 'hangs' on just a few monumental cables. If those main cables were to fail, the entire intricate structure – the roadbed, the smaller cables, the supporting beams, everything – would collapse into the water below. All of it, everything, depends on those few central, foundational supports.

In Matthew 22, Jesus, the Master Builder of our faith, cuts through all the complexity of religious law and tradition.

- When asked about the greatest commandment, He points to two central truths, declaring, 'On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.' He's telling us that all the vast and intricate commands God has given throughout Scripture, all the wisdom of the prophets, all the requirements for righteousness, 'all boils down to this': our relationship with God and our relationships with people. This morning, we will explore these two foundational commands that hold up the entire structure of God's revealed will for our lives."

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In Matthew 22 we see the conflict between Jesus and the Religious Leaders is at a boiling point. They ask a series of questions designed to trap Jesus

- Is it lawful to pay taxes – **Matthew 22:21** " ...Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."
- What about the Resurrection? **Matthew 22:29** - Jesus says "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

Matthew 22:34-40 - But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying, ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

Matthew 22:34-40 - ³⁷ 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."

In Luke's Gospel this man is identified as a Scribe...

- In Jesus' day, a **scribe** was a highly educated and respected individual, often referred to as a "teacher of the law." Their primary role was to meticulously copy and preserve the sacred Scriptures, but they also dedicated their lives to studying, interpreting, and applying God's Law (the Old Testament) to everyday life.
- They were considered experts in Jewish law and tradition, holding significant influence over the people's religious understanding and practice (Luke 10:25; Matthew 23:2). When a scribe approached Jesus, it was often with a deep-seated knowledge of the Law and a desire to test or engage with His teachings.
- Luke also indicates that this man asks, "What Shall I do to inherit Eternal Life?"

The Question: What is the Greatest Commandment? 613 Commands – 248 Positive – 365

Negative – There are three main types of laws in Old Testament

- There was the **Ceremonial Law**, with its sacrifices and rituals, which pointed forward to Jesus and was completely fulfilled by His perfect sacrifice on the cross.
- Then there was the **Civil Law**, which governed the nation of Israel as a unique people in a specific land, much like a national constitution.
- But at the heart of it all is the **Moral Law**, the unchanging standard of right and wrong, found most clearly in the Ten Commandments, which reflects God's eternal character and applies to all people, in all places, for all time.

Which of these is the Greatest? How Can I be assured of Heaven?

Love God with everything you've got & Love People as yourself – all the Time – Every Time

I don't know about you, but I fall short of loving God and loving people – all the time – every time

That's why we need the Gospel of Jesus – Good News

- He lived the life we could not live – When we repent and believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, all his righteous acts are placed to our account
- He died the death you are and deserve to die
 - All have sinned – **Rom. 3:23**, None Righteous no, not one – **Romans 3:10**
 - All our good deeds are like filthy rags, the Prophet Isaiah said.
 - **Romans 5:8** - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
 - **Romans 5:18-19** - Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment came* to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift*

came to all men, resulting in justification of life. ¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

- **Romans 10:9-13** - that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

- To inherit eternal life, we must love God and people all the time; every time!

Repent of sin – Believe in what Jesus did for you – Call upon His name for Salvation

John 1:12 - But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

When we do that, we are Born into God's Family – I love this illustration – Joby Martin

- You a Trillion dollars in debt, when to the bank said I'm sorry I can't pay, and you were forgiven of that debt. You would walk out of the bank, very grateful but broke, and you would need to get to work to earn a living for the rest of your life
- Gospel is ... You go to the bank, you're broke, they forgive you. Then the bank president comes down adopts you as his own son; gives you his bank card, and says, "all that I have is yours."
- Joby said, "Anybody with a normal brain would get to work, because you are part of the family. That is the right reaction to receiving the Gospel

Loving God – Mt. 22:37

Matthew 22:37 - ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

This command is directly quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5, known as the Shema, which was a central declaration of faith for ancient Israel.

"You shall love the Lord your God":

- The Greek word for "love" here is *agapao*, which refers to a volitional, self-sacrificial, and unconditional love. It's not primarily an emotional feeling, though emotions may be present, but a determined act of the will. This is a commitment of devotion and loyalty. It means valuing God above all else, choosing to obey Him, and seeking His glory (John 14:15, 1 John 5:3).
- "The Lord your God" emphasizes His sovereignty, His covenant relationship with His people, and His singular status as the one true God (Deuteronomy 6:4). Our love is directed exclusively towards Him because He alone is worthy.

"with all your heart":

- In biblical understanding, the "heart" is the core of a person's being – the seat of intellect, emotion, and will (Proverbs 4:23). To love God with all your heart means that your innermost being, your affections, desires, and motivations, are fully directed towards Him. It implies an undivided loyalty where God is the supreme object of your affection and desire (Psalm 73:25-26).
- This isn't a partial love, but a complete devotion that subordinates all other loves to Him (Luke 14:26).

"and with all your soul":

- The "soul" refers to the life force, the animating principle of existence, one's very being (Genesis 2:7). To love God with all your soul means to dedicate your entire life, your vitality, your very existence to Him. It encompasses your living, breathing, waking moments, and everything that constitutes your life (Philippians 1:20-21).
- It speaks to the energetic commitment of one's entire self to God's purpose and glory, engaging every faculty of life in His service (Romans 12:1-2).

"and with all your mind":

- The "mind" (Greek: *dianoia*) refers to one's thoughts, understanding, intellect, and reasoning. To love God with all your mind means to engage your intellectual capacities in knowing Him, understanding His Word, and meditating on His truths. It involves thoughtful study of Scripture, prayerful reflection, and seeking wisdom from Him (Romans 12:2, 2 Timothy 2:15).
- It means aligning your thoughts with His truth, allowing His truth to shape your worldview, and actively seeking to understand His will for your life, rejecting worldly philosophies that contradict His wisdom (2 Corinthians 10:5).

This first command calls for total, unwavering, and exclusive devotion to God, permeating every aspect of who we are – our deepest desires, our very existence, and our intellect.

Loving Your Neighbor - Mt 22:39

Matthew 22:39 - ³⁹ And *the second is* like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (Lev. 19:18)

"You shall love your neighbor":

- Again, the love here is *agape* – a self-sacrificial, benevolent love that seeks the good of the other, regardless of whether they "deserve" it or are likable.
- The concept of "neighbor" in biblical teaching is expansive. It extends beyond immediate friends or family to include anyone we encounter, even those who might be considered enemies or strangers (Luke 10:29-37, the Parable of the Good Samaritan). Our love for God is demonstrated in our love for others (1 John 4:20).

"as yourself":

- This phrase does not imply a narcissistic self-love but rather assumes a natural and appropriate self-care and self-preservation that is inherent to humanity (Ephesians 5:29). Just as we naturally desire good for ourselves, care for our own well-being, and treat ourselves with a

certain level of respect, we are to extend that same consideration and desire for good to others.

- It means putting ourselves in our neighbor's shoes, empathizing with their needs, and actively working for their spiritual and physical welfare (Philippians 2:3-4). It requires us to treat others with the same dignity and respect that we would expect for ourselves, recognizing that all people are created in God's image (James 2:8).

This second command demonstrates that true love for God cannot exist in isolation. It must spill over into our relationships with others, manifesting in practical acts of kindness, compassion, justice, and evangelism, reflecting God's own love for humanity.

Matthew 22:40 - ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

- This verse means that **all of God's Old Testament revelation finds its purpose and meaning in loving God and loving people**. The word "depend" suggests that the entire framework of God's commands and teachings hinges on these two principles. Jesus is providing the ultimate interpretive key, showing that every law, every prophecy, and every story ultimately points to and is fulfilled by these two great loves. It reveals that at the heart of God's will is a relational love for Him that overflows into active love for others, unifying all of Scripture under one clear, foundational purpose.

Love Works – From Early on, we wanted to be the Place Where Love Works!

- We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19), and genuine faith, born of grace, inevitably manifests itself in "works" of love and obedience.
- We are Saved by Grace through Faith – Eph. 2:8-9
- We are Saved for Work that God has prepared for us before hand! Ephesians 2:10;
- These are not works *for* salvation, but works *from* salvation – the natural outflow of a regenerated heart.

Love Works is not just a slogan it's who we strive to be!

- It is the DNA of our church family.
- It isn't just something we do—it's woven into the fabric of our church.
- Love Works is at the heart of our church's identity and mission.

TFBC's Vision: To Bring Hope and Renewal to Every Person & Every Place in Thorsby and Beyond

- God Told the Prophet Jeremiah to instruct Israelites taken captive Jeremiah 29:7 - "And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace."
- When you love God with everything and Love People as yourself, that brings the light of the presence of Christ to all have heard!

This is where our Mission Comes in

TFBC's Mission: To Equip people to relentlessly pursue God's design for their lives (Love God/People)

5G Life!

What is your Next Step?

Identify your shortcomings

- to prayerfully and honestly examine your life in light of Jesus' command to love God and love your neighbor, seeking out areas where your thoughts, words, and actions fall short of God's perfect standard.
- This helps us recognize where we need to grow to live more fully in His will (Psalm 139:23-24).

Sanctify Your Life:

- To love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself, requires a continuous process of sanctification. This means actively allowing the Holy Spirit to set us apart for God's purposes and purify our thoughts, motives, and actions.
- Practically, this involves identifying areas in our lives—whether it's an ungodly attitude, a lingering resentment, a neglected spiritual discipline, or a failure to love our neighbor—that need to be brought into alignment with God's perfect will.
- It's a daily commitment to grow in holiness, becoming more like Christ, so that our love for God and others is truly genuine and undefiled (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Hebrews 12:14).

Edify Your Community:

- Loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind naturally leads to loving your neighbor, especially those within the family of God. A practical application is to **edify** your community, particularly your local church.
- To edify means to build up, strengthen, and encourage others in their faith (Ephesians 4:29). This looks like actively participating in fellowship, using your spiritual gifts to serve others, offering words of encouragement and truth, praying for one another, and bearing one another's burdens (Romans 15:2; Galatians 6:2).
- When we intentionally seek to build up our brothers and sisters in Christ, we demonstrate the genuine, self-sacrificial love that Jesus commanded, strengthening the body and glorifying God.

Here are some practical applications for evangelical Christians:

Loving God with All Your Heart, Soul, and Mind:

1. **Prioritize God in Your Schedule (Heart):** Practically, this means setting aside dedicated time for prayer, worship, and Bible reading before other demands of the day (Psalm 5:3). It's about intentionally making space for God in the midst of a busy life, reflecting that He holds the highest place in your affections (Matthew 6:33).
2. **Live a Life of Obedience (Soul):** This translates into consciously choosing to follow God's commands in all circumstances, even when it's difficult or unpopular. It means surrendering your will to His, allowing His Spirit to guide your decisions, your words, and your actions throughout the day (John 14:15). Your work, your leisure, and your relationships become opportunities to honor Him (Colossians 3:17).
3. **Cultivate a Christ-Centered Mindset (Mind):** Practically, this involves regular meditation on Scripture, allowing God's truth to shape your thoughts and perspectives. It means actively challenging worldly thinking and choosing to dwell on "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable" (Philippians 4:8 ESV). It's engaging your intellect to understand His Word and apply it wisely to your daily choices (Romans 12:2).

Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself:

1. **Practice Intentional Kindness and Service:** This looks like actively seeking opportunities to serve those around you, whether it's your family, church members, colleagues, or strangers (Galatians 6:10). It could be listening patiently, offering practical help, sharing resources, or simply extending grace and understanding (Proverbs 3:27).
2. **Extend Forgiveness and Reconciliation:** Just as Christ forgave us, we are called to forgive those who wrong us (Ephesians 4:32). This is a daily application of love, choosing to release bitterness and seek reconciliation when possible, reflecting God's heart (Matthew 6:14-15).
3. **Share the Hope of the Gospel:** The greatest act of love we can extend to our neighbor is to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Understanding that "lostness" is humanity's greatest problem, truly loving our neighbor means desiring their eternal salvation (Romans 10:14-15). This involves building relationships, living a consistent Christian life, and being prepared to speak about the hope we have in Christ (1 Peter 3:15).
4. **Treat All People with Dignity and Respect:** Recognizing that every person is created in the image of God, regardless of their background, beliefs, or lifestyle, calls us to treat them with inherent value (Genesis 1:27). This means speaking respectfully, defending the vulnerable, and standing against injustice (James 2:8-9). While we do not affirm sinful lifestyles, we love the individual and seek their repentance and restoration.

Ultimately, these two commands are inseparable. Our love for God fuels our love for others, and our love for others demonstrates the genuineness of our love for God (1 John 4:20-21). They are not separate tasks but two sides of the same glorious coin, reflecting the character of our God.