

Session 2 Loving God with All of Our Heart

I. CULTIVATING A FIRST COMMANDMENT LIFESTYLE

- A. Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:37-38 is one of the most significant statements in Scripture. It is God's mission statement for the human race and is the most reliable measurement of success.
*³⁷"You shall love the Lord...with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."
³⁸This is the first and great commandment." (Mt. 22:37-38)*
- B. **First:** The Spirit's first priority and emphasis is for God's people to grow in love for God.
- C. **Great:** It has the *greatest impact* on God's heart and our heart, and it is the *greatest calling*.
¹⁹...whoever does and teaches them [commands], he shall be called great in the kingdom... (Mt. 5:19)

II. LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART

- A. We are to engage our heart with Jesus—pursuing to know, love, and obey Him enthusiastically.
- B. We set ourselves to love God by determining that our *primary dream* (life vision and definition of success) of our life is to walk out the first commandment. Our *secondary dreams* and definitions of success are related to our family, friends, vocation, ministry etc.—they flow from loving God.
¹⁴"Because he has set his love [heart] upon Me, therefore I will deliver him." (Ps. 91:14)
- C. David set his heart to love God right after God delivered him from Ziklag (1 Sam. 27-31; Ps. 18:1).
¹I will love You, O LORD...¹⁹He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because He delighted in me...³⁵Your gentleness has made me great. (Ps. 18:1, 19, 35)
- D. One of the most important decisions in our life is when we intentionally determine that our *primary dream* is to walk out the first commandment. In other words, we set our heart to consistently seek to grow deep in cultivating a lifestyle of grateful, obedient love for Jesus that overflows to others.
- E. Mary chose the good part (Lk. 10:42). No one can choose this for us. We must be intentional about making a "determined" choice to love God as our *primary life goal*.
⁴²Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her. (Lk. 10:42)
- F. Our soul prospers by growing in the anointing of love. Ask the Lord, "How far will You let me go? How abandoned will You let me be?" We are not content with a superficial relationship with Jesus.
²I pray that you prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. (3 Jn. 2)

- G. The greatest reward of love is found in possessing a greater ability to receive and return love. The grace or anointing of the Spirit to love Jesus is our greatest reward. Anybody can quit except a person in love. When we are tempted to quit, our love for Him keeps us from doing so.

III. TURNING TO GOD WITH ALL OF OUR HEART

- A. The Lord wants us to respond to His love for us by turning to Him to love Him with all of our heart. When we turn to the Lord with all of our heart, we position ourselves to receive more from Him.

¹²Now...says the Lord, ***“Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning. ¹³Rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD ...”*** (Joel 2:12-13)

- B. The Lord gave Joel insight into what turning to God with wholeheartedness looks like. We are to turn our focus to Him and the superior pleasures of the Gospel (Ps. 36:8). We are to turn from sin, fleeing from all that is not in agreement with God. This involves repenting, fasting, and praying.
- C. ***Rend your heart***: The Lord desires that we “tear our heart” by dealing radically with the matters of the heart that are not in agreement with Him. To rend means to tear something forcibly or violently. Tearing our hearts in our pursuit of loving God is a non-optional part of seeking Him with all our heart. When we tear our heart away from areas of sin, we come into agreement with God’s heart.
- D. God the Father’s heart was torn when He gave Jesus’ life away, and it continues to be torn in His patient longsuffering with His people as they refuse to respond to Him with faith and repentance. Jesus tore His heart when He went to the cross, and He tears His heart in His pursuit after us.
- E. Love for Jesus includes walking in a spirit of obedience—even costly obedience (Jn. 14:21). When we neglect to thoroughly confront sin in our life, we are not loved less by God, but we do suffer loss in not being able to offer the “full gift of our love” to Jesus on the last day.
- ²¹***“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”*** (Jn. 14:21)
- F. Speaking symbolically of this radical tearing of the heart, Jesus said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out (Mt. 5:29). He was talking about a radical pursuit of obedience that painfully tears the heart in the process. In other words, forsake all compromise! The Spirit beckons us to “Spare not!” If there is an issue in the way that is quenching the Holy Spirit, get rid of it!
- ²⁹***If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out...for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Matt. 5:29)***
- G. *The tearing of the heart is often what is most overlooked in the process of seeking freedom.* The tearing of the heart gets intensely personal and can be painful. This is love that is not passive. Do not allow any substitute for the real thing. This is the way to true freedom of the heart. Some hope for a wholeheartedness that is gentle, easy, and tame. Our hearts must be torn.

- H. The Lord will help us in this. He will empower us. Yet we must cooperate with Him by tearing ourselves away from attitudes, actions, and relationships that hinder us from fully loving Him.
- I. Paul pursued Jesus in a costly way that even caused him to lay down some good opportunities.

⁸I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ...for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ... (Phil. 3:8)