

## ***Session 1 Loving God: The First and Great Commandment***

### **I. THE CALL TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL OF OUR HEART**

- 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, thus, the most reliable measurement of success at the judgment seat of Christ. It has many implications—it reveals God's personality, our value, how we function, our destiny, and how we should view and value others (since God loves them deeply).
- <sup>37</sup>“***You shall love the Lord...with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.***”  
<sup>38</sup>***This is the first and great commandment.***” (Mt. 22:37-38)
- B. The first commandment does not start with us, but with God who loves us with all His heart and in the same intensity that He loves inside the fellowship of the Trinity. This is a most dynamic truth for which we say, “Thank You,” and ask the Spirit to reveal more of ***God's love for us*** and to impart more ***love for God in us***. To “abide in love” is to continually realign our heart to His love.
- <sup>9</sup>“***As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.***” (Jn. 15:9)
- C. Jesus prayed that the Father's love would be imparted to us (Jn. 17:26). The grace to receive God's love and love Him in response is the greatest gift that the Spirit imparts (Rom. 5:5).
- <sup>26</sup>“***...that the love with which You [the Father] loved Me may be in them...***” (Jn. 17:26)
- D. 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). In Matthew 22:37, Jesus' statement about loving God was both an *exhortation* and a *prophecy*.
- <sup>5</sup>***You shall love the LORD...with all your heart...and with all your strength.*** (Deut. 6:5)  
<sup>6</sup>***The Lord...will circumcise your heart...to love the Lord...with all your heart.*** (Deut. 30:6)
- E. Jesus defined loving God as being rooted in a spirit of obedience (Jn. 14:15-21). We are to love God on God's terms. To “keep His commands” includes setting our heart to obey and pursue Jesus.
- <sup>15</sup>“***If you love Me, keep My commandments.***” (Jn. 14:15)
- F. In Matthew 22:38, Jesus elaborated on Moses' exhortation, adding two words—***first*** and ***great***. Here, He defined loving God as being “the primary” response that God wants *from* His people. The only thing He does not have is our voluntary love, something He will not take by force.
- G. ***First***: The Spirit's first priority and emphasis in the Church is for God's people to grow in their love for God. However, our natural tendency is to focus first on gaining more blessing on our circumstances—more money, honor, comfort, influence, etc. If we do not understand that God is committed first to helping us grow in love, we can be confused about His leadership in our life.
- H. ***Great***: It has the *greatest impact* on God's heart and our heart, and it is the *greatest calling*.
- <sup>19</sup>“***...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 called to engage our heart with Jesus with enthusiasm in pursuing and obeying Him. Some search for Bible verses or definitions of grace to validate giving less of themselves to love Jesus.
- B. We set our love on God by determining that the *primary dream* (goal and definition of success) of our life is to walk out the first commandment by grace. Our *secondary dreams* and definitions of success are related to our family, friends, vocation, ministry etc.—they flow from loving God.  
*<sup>14</sup>“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 (Ps. 18:1). 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.  
*<sup>1</sup>I will love You, O LORD, my strength. (Ps. 18:1)*

## III. LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR MIND

- A. We express love for God with our mind by putting things in our mind that inspire love for God instead things that diminish our capacity to love Him.
- B. What we do with our mind affects our ability to receive and express love. We show love for God by taking time to fill our mind with His Word and refusing to feed our mind on lust (Job 31:1).  
*<sup>1</sup>“I have made a covenant with my eyes; why should I look upon a young woman?” (Job 31:1)*

## IV. LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH (MK. 12:30)

- A. We express love for God in the way we use our strength and natural resources (time, money, energy, talents, words, influence). We tend to use our strength first to increase our honor, comfort, influence, etc. God takes pleasure in the small things that His people do when they invest their strength in ways that express love for Him and help others to love Him (Heb. 6:10).
- B. We love God with our strength as we do the things that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7): *servicing, giving* (6:1-4, 19-21), *praying* (6:5-13), *blessing, forgiving* (5:44; 6:14), etc.

## V. LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR SOUL

- A. We express loving God *with our soul* when we exert the emotional energy to realign our heart to base our identity on our relationship with God instead of on accomplishments, recognition, etc.
- B. Our identity is determined by how we define our success and value and how we see ourselves.
- C. Our *primary success* and *identity* are found in being ones whom God loves and who love God, confessing, **“I am loved by God, and I am a lover of God; therefore, I am successful.”**
- D. When our identity is rooted in what we achieve and who applauds us, then we are more likely to burn out and to live in an “emotional storm” (by being too preoccupied with self). Therefore, we must often realign our thinking to agree with His love, truth, and investment in our lives.