

Lesson 3

The Fuel for Faith

Following the example of the first Christians

Think On It

1. What is the primary motivator in your pursuit of God?

2. What are your *real* desires? i.e., what do you think on, how are your emotions, and what do you do when you are alone?

What the Savior Said

Matthew 22:34–40 (CSB)

THE PRIMARY COMMANDS

³⁴When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. ³⁵And one of them, an expert in the law, asked a question to test him: ³⁶“Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?”

³⁷He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” ³⁸This is the greatest and most important command. ³⁹The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.”

When Jesus answered the question, he quotes from Deuteronomy 6.5. The “love” found in that Old Testament passage refers primarily to the love of will, the love of the mind, or the love of action rather than the love of feeling or emotion. This is the highest kind of love. In Matthew’s rendering, the love references is the *agape* love, i.e., the love of intelligence, purpose, or will. It, like its Hebrew counterpart, denotes the purest kind of self-sacrificing love.

The command is with our whole being we are to love God. We are to love Him from *the heart*. This is referring to our intellect. We are to love Him *with all our soul*. This covers our emotions. We are to love Him *with all our mind*. This has to do with our intention and will. So, all our parts must come together to love God with our whole being.

3. How did God demonstrate what it means to love with one’s whole being?

4. Since God loved in the way He did, what is the expectation for us?

5. How do we express our love for God?

6. How is obeying God inseparably tied to Matthew 22.39?

A Passage to Explore

1 John 4:7–12 (CSB)

KNOWING GOD THROUGH LOVE

⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and his love is made complete in us.

The theme of this section is *how to love completely*. See 4.12. Also read 4.18, which says, *there is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears is not complete in love*. When we speak of a “complete” love, we are referring to carrying it out to the farthest extent. When we love in this way, there will be no more to give. There will be no more to be improved upon. This is the kind of love that can come only from God. *Perfect love is the legacy that God has left to His children*. See Romans 5.5. He has given it to us lavishly.

7. Read 4.7 again. What is the evidence of *true* salvation?

8. What would the verb tense suggest in 4.8? How can we love others habitually?

9. What does it mean to you that *God is love*?

10. How is love our testimony? (See v. 12)

11. What are some things you can do to more completely carry out 4.11-12?

Life Application

This week, make some time each day to spend a few moments alone with God. Every day, we will consider the need for us to put the *love* we have been given into practice. Take your time with each passage(s) so you can concentrate on what is being said. Use the questions as a springboard for your positive thoughts throughout your day.

Monday

12. Read Ephesians 5.1-2. What is the model of love? Who demonstrated it perfectly?

13. What are some things you can do today to demonstrate sacrificial love? How will you *walk in love* this week?

Tuesday

14. Read 2 Corinthians 5.12-15. Read 5.14 carefully. What was the primary motivator for Paul?

15. Do you think it is more important to focus on God's perfect love for us, or our own performance in response to His will? Which is the higher and more lasting motivation?

Wednesday

16. Read 1 John 5.1-4. What happens when we love the Father?

17. What do these verses teach about the motivator for our obedience?

18. What connection between love and faith do you see in this passage?

Thursday

1. Read Galatians 5.6, 13-15. What does this passage teach us regarding the fuel for faith?

2. What virtue does Paul indicate as being the motivator for genuine service?

Friday

1. Read Ephesians 4.1-3. For the Christian, what is to be the driving force behind all interpersonal relationships?

2. How will you apply this passage to your life today?