

The Greatest Commandment Part Five Love God

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro
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We have spent several weeks looking at what has been called the Great Commandment. Turn there with me, let's read it from Matthew 22, beginning in verse 34.

[34](#) 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?" [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."

It seems rather straightforward until you start digging into it, right? So we spent two weeks exploring what does it mean to love? People have all kinds of definitions for that word. People express love and feel love in different ways. So we had to look at what the Bible says love is.

Then we spent two weeks trying to understand the heart, soul, mind, and strength and we saw that although God commands us to love Him with each of these components of our lives, He also gives us incredible promises that cover each of them as well.

What we have been discovering is that God is the Great Initiator – He makes demands of us, but they are to be responses to what He has done, is doing, and promises to do in our lives. It boils down to this: "we love **because** He first loved us." (1John 4:19)

That's a vital understanding. If you miss that, you miss everything. What God really wants is for us to *respond* to what He is doing, and that is very unique in the realm of "religion."

Have you ever stopped to consider: if we are commanded to love Him, that means He *wants* our love. It means that He, the almighty God of the universe, the one who is absolutely Holy *wants* us to approach Him.

There are plenty of false religions out there where people hope to be able to get the attention of their god or gods. They *hope* he, she, or it will care about them if only for minute to help out with their current need. Not so with the God of the Bible, He tells you, "Come, love Me." And not only that, He says, "Come, love me, BECAUSE I have loved you." Once again, It's a radically different relationship than is found in any other "religion."

The Great Problem in life is that we rebel against God. So the Great Commandment is that we would return to Him, and then reflect what we have experienced with Him to others.

So keep this in mind as we start to look this morning at the next part of the command – the command to “love God.” As we start to look at what we should DO remember that this should always be a response to our understanding of who He is and what He has already DONE.

We’re going to look at three things this morning. We’ll look at how we are to love God by demonstrating allegiance, adoration, and action.

Allegiance

I was reading something this week by DA Carson, the Christian theologian and professor, and he wrote, “The essence of pleasing God, is being devoted to Him.”

If you’ve been here for some of the other sermons in this series, this sounds familiar, right? This is how I summed up what it means to love – we said Biblical love means to show allegiance, to be dedicated or committed to someone – to give even when it hurts.

Because remember what happened in the Garden – Adam and Eve walked away from God and did what they wanted to do instead of what they were told to do. Every time that plays out in our lives – EVERY time you do what you want to do instead of what God wants done, you’re demonstrating your allegiance to your self and your rebellion against God and the process is called sin.

So, we express our love for God through submitting our will to His. It’s not how you feel about or toward God, it’s not about the readout on your emotional meter, it’s how are you responding to Him? Do you persist in rebellion or do you submit?

Here is why you can have amazing experiences in worship or at a camp or retreat, or in a sermon – you can feel like you really connected in an extraordinary way with the Living God, but then if you go back out into your life and you don’t implement the changes He spoke to you about, or if you keep insisting to do things your way and not the way that is pleasing to this awesome, amazing, overpowering God, you will fade right back to that place you were before.

You will have this amazing encounter with God and yet be completely unchanged. And sooner or later, He just isn’t going to reveal Himself to you in that same amazing way anymore. If all you want is the spiritual tickle of His presence but you don’t really want to change, He’s not going to be your servant when you’re supposed to be His.

Jesus said in Luke 16:13 “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.”

Mammon was the god of money, but the point is, you can’t serve two masters regardless of who they are – you either serve God or you don’t. You either give Him your allegiance or you don’t. It isn’t comfortable church, but it’s true.

So here's what the process should look like – it should be revelation, response, repeat. God reveals Himself to you, communicates something that needs to change, and then you respond. Then He shows you the next thing and you keep moving forward.

It begins with Him revealing Himself to you and your need for salvation. If you don't respond to that, you're not going to advance any farther in your knowledge of Him. But if you do respond, He will come into your life and begin showing you all the ways in which you serve yourself instead of Him.

Sometimes it's easy to change, and sometimes it's excruciatingly difficult. But, and you have to believe this, He is showing you things in His timing – He controls the syllabus, and He promises not to test you before He has trained you. So if He's telling you it's time to change, it's time. And the first question on the test is – are you willing yes or no? In this area of your life, at this moment, who has your allegiance? Do you love God or do you love yourself?

If you love God, you will submit and begin the process of changing through His grace and with His strength. But if you refuse to change or ignore the call to change, He will graciously remind you for a while, you'll know what you're supposed to do or not supposed to do, and you'll have to keep rebelling for a while, and then, it will go silent. And you'll be left there – there's no going any farther forward in your relationship with God.

I'm sharing from observation and personal experience – people go as far in their walk with God as they are willing to go. As soon as you go from saying “yes God” to “no God” or “not now God” or “what was that? I'm not sure I heard you right” when you know you have, you're going to stall out.

I'll tell you another thing - we have to choose our allegiance constantly. It's almost like there is a deadman's switch in our lives. If you take your hand off the allegiance button it stops the flow. You can't just set it and walk away, there's no permanent repair – nothing will hold, the loyalty of your heart requires constant attention.

But all relationships are like this – you don't just pre-program your marriage for love and walk away. Moment by moment, setting by setting, choice by choice, you must be constantly expressing your allegiance to God. You'll get to the place where some choices will be covered by SOPs, default decisions to please God, but you'll always be confronted, probably daily and multiple times daily – “are you sure you really want to.....?” It's worse than Windows, every action requires a validation.

Adoration

Allegiance has a few sisters, and they all have to be present in your life. They all go together. So the next way we express love to God is through Adoration.

The word adore actually comes to us from Latin via French and Old English. It means, 'to worship.'

So how do we worship God? The first requirement is to spend time with Him, and not just on Sunday morning. If He's going to be the God of your whole life – if you are going to submit to Him, then there should be no boundaries to His presence or your relationship. It's hard to love someone you hardly know.

Think about it like this – you don't get married and then only come and see your spouse for 90 minutes once a week. Life as a married man or married woman looks different than life as a single. You go places together, you do things with each other and for each other, you talk about things. You don't make decisions without discussing it. *Life looks different in a healthy, committed marriage.*

There's a spiritual equivalent to that truth. If you are going to have a healthy, vital, growing relationship with God, your life is going to look different than the life of others, and *not just because you do something different before lunch on Sundays some weeks.*

If your relationship with your spouse is going to be healthy you're going to need to carve out some amount of time each day to communicate with each other. The same thing is true with God – you've heard it called devotions. Figure out what works well for you – before you go to work, or maybe while you drive in to work, or before you go to bed, whatever, but if you want a good relationship, you need to spend some time together in prayer and in the Word.

Now hopefully your relationship with your spouse looks, or will look, different than your relationship with anyone else of the opposite sex. That's good. They are the only man or woman on the planet that you do or say certain things to.

If that is true in the exclusive relationship of marriage, why should the same concept seem strange in your relationship with God? Here we have another exclusive relationship, a relationship with no other full equivalent – isn't it reasonable that this relationship would have some unique expressions associated with it?

One of the most obviously unique expressions of our adoration of God is what we typically call worship – the music we experience here at church. Now I would argue that calling the songs we sing worship is serious misnomer, because worship is much more than the words we sing, but for the sake of this point, I'll use the term as it's commonly accepted.

Turn with me to Colossians Chapter Three and look at what Paul has to say about grown men singing songs.

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Singing songs of praise and worship to God is a practice that is thousands of years old. You find it from the beginnings of Biblical history all the way up through the book of Revelation. It is something we do here on earth and something we will do before the throne of God. And I dare say, if you're not into worship, you've really got to look at your heart and ask, why?

Worship is a contraction of the Old English Worth-Ship. To ascribe worth to God – which continues to reinforce our idea of allegiance right? You're saying God is worthy of your allegiance, of your submission and obedience. So we say we worship God.

And if we're doing it right, it's because we want God to know that we find Him worthy. So worship isn't really about us. *It's not about how well you can sing. It's not about how you feel. It's about God.* And yeah, that might seem a little weird – there might not be anyone or anything else you sing about – but your relationship with God is unique – so, you express your love for Him, and your belief in His worthiness in unique ways. “Worship” isn't just for musicians and girls.

It's one of those milestones you pass in your relationship with God when you finally start to sing worship songs and don't care so much what the people around you think because you decide, I'm doing this for Him, and not for them and I believe what these songs say.

It's pride that typically keeps us from worshipping God through song, and pride is just another form of rebellion. You're telling God, “I'm not willing to give you this, because it's going to make me look stupid. Ask me for something else.”

Well then, who's calling the shots? Who is serving who?

I'll also tell you something I've noticed. There is a correlation between the presence of worship music in my life and my own experience of the nearness of God. When I don't have much exposure to worship, I'll notice it in my walk.

It's kind of like hearing a love song around your wife – you start singing it to her. It becomes a catalyst for an expression of love. And you know how goofy some of you are when it's just the two of you. The same thing is true with worship. You find that sometimes the words express exactly what you want to express or what you are experiencing and you wind up appropriating them for yourself and saying “yeah God, that's me!”

So find yourself some good worship and integrate it into your life – put it on your iPod, on your computer at work, set up a Pandora station in the kitchen while you're cooking, surround yourself with it. There are all kinds of styles, everything from Hymns to Hip-hop – find what you like, and start listening more often. I'm telling you, it WILL have an effect on your life. If you want some recommendations, ask me or Jordan, or Mady or Hannah – ask somebody, but do it.

Action

So we move along next to Action. You are giving your allegiance to God because you adore Him, you find Him worthy, now what? Because love is more than emotions, our heart for God must affect our lives outside the sanctuary; you must demonstrate it with practical activities in your day-to-day life. One of the points we have made so many times already is that love is a verb. It's an action, not just a sentiment. *God's love for us moved Him to act for us*, is the reverse true? Does our love move us to act for Him?

One theologian (Miroslav Volf) wrote "Without action in the world, the adoration of God is empty and hypocritical, and degenerates into irresponsible and godless quietism."

James, the brother of Jesus put it even more bluntly when he wrote: "Do you not know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:20)

Love for God cannot consist solely of your professions of allegiance and the things you say in here. You have to take it out there – you have to integrate what you say and hear in here to the rest of your life. This is where you learn about God, this is like practice, it's a time to be equipped and encouraged – but the game is played and the battles are fought out there.

Look at the next verse back in Colossians:

[3:17](#) And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

As people see us working for, living for, arranging our lives, choices and convictions around the love of God, it serves as a testimony to them that they need to do the same.

If the essence of loving God is giving our allegiance to Him, then there isn't just "*one thing*" we should be doing for Him, or a specific list of things, our *whole lives* should be one continuous action for Him. *Everything we do* should be permeated with the desire to please God

And that's the attitude we see expressed throughout Scripture:

Prov [3:5](#) Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
[6](#) In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.

Matt [6:33](#) But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Rom 12: [1](#) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service.

It's not a simple do *this* for God, it's do EVERYTHING for God, hold NOTHING back. Remember, He's not just offering to be your lifeguard when you go swimming in deep water, or to be your comfort when you're lonely or hurt. He's the God who made you and He wants all of you to be serving Him.

So you can love God by the way you work, the degree you pursue, your recreation, etc. But are you? Ask yourself – does the fact that I am a Christian make ANY difference in the way I live or work? Could a non-Christian do this exactly the same way? Where is the evidence of your relationship with God?

I have one last verse for us to look at:

[1Jo 5:3](#) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

God is commanding you to love Him, to give Him your allegiance and to work that out in every aspect of your life. But here's the deal – if you have the right perspective, if you understand all that He has done for you, all that He is willing to forgive you of, and all that He promises to you as you live for Him, you realize – this isn't such a bad deal. It's not a heavy burden to serve Him, it's a joy and a pleasure. I'm just responding to all that I now understand He has done for me.

So, God commands you to give all of yourself to Him, but did you know He is also giving you all of Himself? Did you know that the Bible speaks to us about the love we experience from each member of the Trinity? I'll give you a few verses:

Rom 15:30 - The Spirit loves us – Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me,

1 John 3:1 and others - The Father loves us – Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

Gal 2:20 and others - Jesus loves us – I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Remember, God is love (1 John 4:8). And He demonstrates that love for you by acting on your behalf at a time when you least deserve it.

How are you responding to this? Examine your lives, examine your goals, your choices, your allegiances. Examine your worship. Examine your actions and let God speak to you about who you are really loving and serving today.