

Loving Jesus: The First Commandment Established in First Place

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

- A. The Holy Spirit's first priority is to establish the first commandment in *first place* in the Church. Jesus' statement in Mt. 22 is one of the most significant statements in Scripture. It challenges me more than any other verse and has so many implications: it reveals God's personality, our value, how we function, our destiny, and how we view and value others (since God loves them deeply).
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; cf. Deut. 6:5; 30:6)
- B. The first commandment starts not with us, but with *God's love for His people*. He loves us with all His heart and with the same intensity that He loves in the fellowship of the Trinity (Jn. 15:9). “Abiding in love” means regularly realigning our hearts to focus on and live in the love of God.
⁹“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)
- C. The Father's eternal purpose for creation includes providing a loving family for Himself and an eternal companion for His Son—an *equally yoked Bride*. The grace to receive God's love and love Him in return is the greatest gift the Spirit imparts (Rom. 5:5). It “takes God to love God.”
- D. Jesus' statement was both an *exhortation* and a *prophecy* that gives insight into the Father's plan and zeal for our destiny. This is the ultimate purpose for which God created the human race. God first *exhorted* Israel to love Him with all their heart through Moses (Deut. 6:5), and years later Moses *prophesied* Israel would love God with all their heart in the end times (Deut. 30:1-6).
⁶“The Lord...will circumcise your heart...to love the Lord...with all your heart.” (Deut. 30:6)
- E. We must love God on His terms. Jesus defined loving God as being rooted in a spirit of obedience and faithfulness (Jn. 14:15-21). “Keeping” His commands and assignments for our life includes not quitting in our wholehearted pursuit of God in the face of temptation or difficulty. We express love to Jesus by refusing to quit or “coast” in our pursuit of God and His fullness.
¹⁵“If you love Me, keep My commandments.” (Jn. 14:15)
- F. One battlefield in our culture concerns how we define love. We must define it on God's terms, but the enemy promotes false definitions of love to lure the Church from walking in our glorious destiny to love God and be loved by Him. Our *primary* purpose is to abound in love (Phil. 1:9).
- G. Jesus elaborated on Moses' exhortation and prophecy by adding two words—*first* and *great*. Without understanding that God is committed to helping us walk in the first commandment, we can be confused about His leadership in our life. His first priority is that we would grow in love. Yet it is natural for our primary goals to be related to our life being easy, happy, and popular.
- H. **First:** Jesus did not call this the first *option*, but the first *command*. God's first priority and the Spirit's first emphasis in the Church is for His people to cultivate wholehearted love for God.
- I. **Great:** Cultivating love for Jesus has the *greatest impact* on God's heart and our heart. It is the *greatest calling* and requires *great grace*—it is one of the *greatest miracles* in fallen humanity.

II. LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART

- A. We are to fully engage and be enthusiastic about pursuing Jesus and obeying His Word. Some search for ways to obey and seek Jesus less, looking for ways to give less of themselves, their time, and money to Him. Some are dutiful in serving Him, but disengaged at the heart level.
- B. We can “set” our love or affections on anything we choose. Our emotions will eventually follow whatever we set ourselves to pursue wholeheartedly. We can “set” our love on God by determining that *the primary dream* (purpose) of our heart is to walk in the first commandment.
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 (Ps. 18:1). One of the most important decisions in our Christian life is when we intentionally determine that the “primary dream” of our life is to live in the first commandment. All other good and biblical desires and blessings—such as a blessed family, life, occupation, and ministry—flow from a loving relationship with God, which is to take first place in our lives. Our “primary dream” is what we easily and most often talk to God about.
¹I will love You, O LORD, my strength. (Ps. 18:1)

III. LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR MIND

- A. We can fill our mind with things that inspire love for God or that diminish our capacity to love Him. What we do with our mind greatly affects our ability to receive and express love.
- B. We show our love for God by taking time to fill our mind with His Word (so that we come into greater agreement with truth) and by refusing to feed our mind on darkness and lust (Job 31:1).

IV. LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH

- A. We can express love for God in the way we use our strengths and natural resources (time, money, energy, talents, words, influence). We tend to use our strength to increase our honor, personal comfort, etc. But God takes pleasure in the small things that His people do to 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 actively do the things that Jesus set forth in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7)—*serving, giving* (6:1-4, 19-21), *praying* (6:5-13), *forgiving* (6:14), etc.

V. LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR SOUL

- A. We realign our identity based on our relationship with God rather than on our accomplishments and the recognition we receive. Our identity is determined by the way we define our success and value and, thus, by how we see ourselves. When we get our identity from our accomplishments, recognition, or our failures, we end up in an emotional storm from being preoccupied with self.
- B. We express love for God when we consciously realign our identity to agree with His love, truth, and investment in our lives. Our *primary success* is 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.”**