

Love: The Great Commandment

Lesson #4

Memory Verse: Matthew 22:37-40

And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

In this often-quoted passage of Scripture, Jesus reiterates the commands of Deuteronomy 6:5 in response to a simple question. The Bible frequently about love, and yet, human beings rarely understand the subject. In this lesson, we will attempt to understand love toward God and others from a clear and simple Biblical perspective.

I. Loving the Lord Your God

Jesus said that the whole Christian life can be summed up by simply loving God. This love will be expressed in many ways. Here, we will examine only a few.

A. Love for God is expressed through active obedience to Him at all times.

1. Deuteronomy 11:1 lists four ways that we can love God. What are they? _____

2. In Joshua 22:5, Joshua sends the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh on their way and gives them instructions on how to love the Lord. What were those instructions? _____

3. What is equated to loving the Lord in Deuteronomy 30:20, 1 John 2:5, 5:3? _____

B. Love for God is expressed through love of good and the hatred of evil.

1. What do Psalm 97:10 and Romans 12:9 tell us about loving the Lord God? _____

2. According to 1 John 2:15, what is true about the one who loves the things of the world? _____

C. Love for God is expressed through love for others.

1. What does 1 John 3:17 tell us about loving the Lord (cf. James 2:15-16)? _____

2. According to 1 John 5:1, what is true of everyone who loves the Father? _____

3. What is true of someone who does not love people (1 John 4:20)? _____

To Love God with all our heart, we must allow our hearts to be transformed, by God, to desire the things God desires. We must reject worldly loyalties and be loyal to Christ alone. We must love the things and ideas that God loves, in the way God loves them. In short, we must become like Christ.

II. Loving the Lord Your God with All Your Heart, Soul, and Mind

The heart, in the metaphorical sense, can be defined as a representation of our desires, loyalties, attitudes, goals, and affections. The mind represents our thoughts. The soul represents the whole person as an eternal being.

A. Man is called to love God with his whole heart.

1. According to Jeremiah 17:9, is man naturally able to love God with his whole heart?

2. From where do all evil thoughts come (Mark 7:21)? _____
3. What must take place for God to fill our hearts with godly desires (Psalm 37:4)?¹

4. According to Joshua 24:23-24, how did the allegiance and loyalty of the people change when they inclined their hearts towards God? _____

¹ Note that this verse assumes that the individual is saved, since an unregenerate person cannot delight himself in the Lord. Only through the life-changing power of God can one incline his heart toward God.

5. Reread Joshua 22:5. List the four actions in the verse and explain how they correspond to desires, allegiance, and loving what God loves. _____

6. How should our love for Christ compare to our love for other people/things (Matthew 10:37-39)? _____

B. Man is called to love God with his whole mind.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 3:18-20 and answer the following questions.
 - a. What must a person with worldly wisdom do in order to obtain spiritual wisdom (v.18)? _____
 - b. How valuable is the wisdom of the world to God (v.19)? _____
 - c. How useful is human reasoning for spiritual matters (v.20)? _____
2. According to 2 Corinthians 10:5, what must a believer do in order to love God with his mind? _____
3. Per Romans 12:2, what must we do in order to love God with our minds? _____

We are in great danger of deceiving ourselves when we have too high an opinion of human wisdom and arts; plain and pure Christianity will be likely to be despised by those who can suit their doctrines to the corrupt taste of their hearers, and set them off with fine language, or support them with a show of deep and strong reasoning. But he who seems to be wise must become a fool that he may be wise. He must be sensible of his own ignorance, and lament it; he must distrust his own understanding, and not lean on it. To have a high opinion of our wisdom is but to flatter ourselves, and self-flattery is the very next step to self-deceit. The way to true wisdom is to sink our opinion of our own to a due level, and be willing to be taught of God. He must become a fool who would be truly and thoroughly wise. The person who resigns his own understanding, that he may follow the instruction of God, is in the way to true and everlasting wisdom. The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way, Ps. 25:9.²

²Matthew Henry, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians 3," Blue Letter Bible. 1 Mar 1996. 28 Feb 2009, http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=4&contentID=1737&commInfo=5&topic=1%20Corinthians.

C. Man is called to love God with his whole soul.

1. What does 1 John 5:1 tell us about loving God? _____

2. How does loving God with your soul pertain to salvation (Psalms 35:9, 62:1)? _____

3. How does loving God with your soul pertain to repentance (Psalm 41:4)? _____

4. Read Psalm 42:1-8 and answer the following questions.
 - a. How does the psalmist describe his great desire for God in vv.1-2? _____

 - b. When his soul was in despair, what three things did he do in order to actively love God with all his soul (vv.5, 6, 8)? _____

5. How does loving God with your soul pertain to seeking after God (Psalm 63:1, 8)? _____

III. Loving Your neighbor as Yourself

Jesus stated that love for one's neighbor is the second greatest commandment. In fact, love for other people is evidence of love for God.

A. Our love for others must be God-honoring.

1. What does it mean to love others as ourselves? (Matthew 7:12)? _____

2. Read John 13:34-35 and answer the following questions.
 - a. What does Christ command us to do (v.34)? _____
 - b. To what extent should we do it (v.34)? _____
 - c. What impact will it have on the world (v.35)? _____

B. Our love for others must be practical.

1. How did Jesus relate compassion to love for our neighbors (Luke 10:25-37)? _____

2. List ways that we can love our brothers and sisters in Christ according to the following passages of Scripture:
 - a. James 5:16 _____
 - b. Galatians 6:2 _____
 - c. Romans 12:10 _____
 - d. Philippians 2:3-5 _____
 - e. Romans 15:7 _____
 - f. Galatians 5:13 _____
 - g. Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13 _____
 - h. Colossians 3:16 _____
 - i. 1 Peter 3:8 _____
3. According to Matthew 5:43-47 and Romans 12:14-21, how should we act toward our enemies? _____

4. What can we do to love those who do not know Christ (Mark 16:15)? _____

IV. The Law and the Prophets

A. The Law depends on love.

1. Why do all the laws hang on these commandments (Romans 13:10)? _____

2. What does 1 Corinthians 13:3 say about giving without love? _____

The whole point of the commandments of God's Law, and the direction given through the prophets of God, is to make us into people that bear the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:22, for the glory and honor of God. God's laws and prophets, in one form or another, are directions of how to love God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind and how to love our neighbor as ourselves. It is indeed the very point of our existence.

B. The Prophets depend on love.

1. What does 1 Corinthians 13:2 say about prophecy without love? _____

2. According to Micah 6:6-8, what does God require? _____

V. Personal Application

A. The Fruit of the Spirit is found in Galatians 5:22. Compare the fruit of the spirit with 1 Corinthians 13. How are some of the various fruits related to aspects of love in 1 Corinthians 13? How can you practically exhibit this fruit in your life? _____

B. How can you do a better job of desiring what God desires? How can you increase your love for the things and ideas that God loves? _____

C. What are some God-honoring and practical ways in which you can show love for your neighbors? _____
