

IN HIS WORDS
- The Great Commandment -
by
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Greetings.

Earlier in 2024, I developed and taught two courses about the life of Christ: ***In His Steps*** and ***On His Throne***.

One of the things we learned was that Jesus spoke approximately 2.2 million words during His three-year ministry. Amazingly, we only have a record of 31,426 of them!

As I contemplated this, one specific passage stood out. It is commonly known as “The Great Commandment.” Jesus specifically tells us that it is “the most important one.”

Meditating on this passage has been more convicting than any other passage in the Bible, and God led me to develop this brand new four-week course.

We will explore what it means to truly love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. I pray that this will be a transformational experience for all of us.

Please contact me at dave@WWJDcoaching.com if you have any questions or suggestions.

Godspeed,



P.S. One of the most helpful—and challenging—books I read to prepare this course was *The Pursuit of God*, by A.W. Tozer. Quotations cited are from this book. I especially appreciated the “31-Day Experience” edition, compiled by Edythe Draper.

IN HIS WORDS – The Great Commandment

Introduction

The Bible records two occasions where Jesus references “The Great Commandment.”

The first occurs roughly 18 months into His Earthly ministry.

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." (Luke 10:25-28)

The second occurs during Passion Week. This event is recorded in both Matthew and Mark.

An expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:35-38)

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'" (Mark 12:28-30)

These passages all refer back to The Shema.

Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. And as for you, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Deuteronomy is “the second giving of the law.” It occurs after the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and after the entire generation of “Back to Egypt” people had died off. It is used to prepare a new generation of Israelites for life in the Promised Land.

“To most people, God is an inference, not a reality. He is a deduction from evidence they consider adequate, but He remains personally unknown.”

A. W. Tozer

In His Words – The Great Commandment

God's Overwhelming and Unconditional Love for Us

The God of the Bible loves us with a love that is beyond measure, a love so deep, vast, and unconditional that nothing we do can separate us from it. His love is not dependent on our perfection or performance; it is anchored in His unchanging nature and eternal promises. From the beginning of time, He has pursued us with relentless passion, even to the point of sending His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place, bearing our sins so we could be reconciled to Him. Here are some verses that describe God's love for us:

"We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:10)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8)

"In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him." (1 John 4:9)

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved." (Ephesians 2:4-5)

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1)

"The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.'" (Jeremiah 31:3)

"But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." (Psalm 86:15)

"God's love for us is not based upon what we are but on what He is."

A.W. Tozer

IN HIS WORDS – The Great Commandment

Loving God with All Your Heart

Biblical Commands about Emotional Love

1. **Seeking** - "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13) See also Matthew 6:33.
2. **Desiring** - "As the deer pants for water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" (Psalm 42:1-2)
3. **Believing** - "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:8-9)
4. **Revering** - "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe." (Hebrews 12:28)
5. **Adoring** - "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." (Psalm 95:6)
6. **Glorifying** - "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)
7. **Honoring** - "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." (Revelation 4:11)
8. **Trusting** - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)
9. **Rejoicing** - "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4)
10. **Giving** - "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21)

Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean to love God with all your heart?
- Why is heart listed first?
- What emotions do you experience when connecting with God?
- Which of the ten "emotional love" disciplines comes easiest to you?
- What practical steps will you take to love God with all your heart this week?

"If we cooperate with Him in loving obedience, God will manifest Himself to us, and that manifestation will be the difference between a nominal Christian life and a radiant one."

A.W. Tozer

IN HIS WORDS – The Great Commandment

Loving God with All Your Soul

Biblical Commands about Spiritual Love

1. **Confessing** - "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)
2. **Worshipping** - "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)
3. **Praising** - "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name." (Hebrews 13:15)
4. **Thanking** - "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever." (Psalm 107:1)
5. **Exalting** - "Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done wonderful things, things planned long ago." (Isaiah 25:1)
6. **Listening** - "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27)
7. **Hearing** - "He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God." (John 8:47)
8. **Praying** - "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." (Philippians 4:6)
9. **Singing** - "Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise." (1 Chronicles 16:23-25)
10. **Surrendering** - "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." (Galatians 2:20) See also Romans 12:1.

Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean to love God with all your soul?
- Why is loving God a spiritual activity?
- Which of the ten “spiritual love” disciplines comes easiest to you?
- How did Jesus set the example for us?
- What practical steps will you take to love God with all your soul this week?

“Complacency is the deadly foe of all spiritual growth.”
A.W. Tozer

IN HIS WORDS – The Great Commandment Loving God with All Your Mind

Biblical Commands about Intellectual Love

1. **Reading** - "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it ... " (Revelation 1:3)
2. **Studying** - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom ..." (Colossians 3:16) See also 2 Timothy 2:15.
3. **Understanding** - "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." (Psalm 119:18) See also Proverbs 2.
4. **Memorizing** - "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11)
5. **Thinking** - "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." (Philippians 4:8)
6. **Pondering** - "But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:19)
7. **Contemplating** - "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." (Colossians 3:2)
8. **Meditating** - "Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it." (Joshua 1:8)
9. **Training** - "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
10. **Renewing** - "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2)

Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean to love God with all your mind?
- Why did Jesus add mind to the Shema?
- How did Jesus set the example for us?
- Which of the ten “intellectual love” disciplines comes easiest to you?
- What practical steps will you take to love God with all your mind this week?

“The Christian is called to love God above all things with a love grounded in God and which is a reflection of the love with which God first loved us.”

A.W. Tozer

In His Words – The Great Commandment

Loving God with All Your Strength

Biblical Commands about Physical / Volitional Love

1. **Obedying** - "In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands." (1 John 5:3)
2. **Following** - "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me." (John 12:26)
3. **Laboring** - "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:58)
4. **Serving** - "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters ... It is the Lord Christ you are serving." (Colossians 3:23-24)
5. **Pleasing** - "So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it." (2 Corinthians 5:9)
6. **Witnessing** - "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." (2 Corinthians 5:20)
7. **Persevering** - "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:9)
8. **Running** - "but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah 40:31)
9. **Straining** - "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)
10. **Conquering** - "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." (Romans 8:37)

Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean to love God with all your strength?
- Why does it take strength to love God?
- How did Jesus set the example for us?
- Which of the ten "physical/volitional love" disciplines comes easiest to you?
- What practical steps will you take to love God with all your strength this week?

"One of the greatest hindrances to internal peace which the Christian encounters is the common habit of dividing our lives into two areas — the sacred and the secular."

A.W. Tozer

In His Words – The Great Commandment Loving God when He Seems Distant

Many people have gone through periods where they felt abandoned, unheard, or distanced from God. These include many “heroes of the faith” including, Job, Moses, David, and John the Baptist. The Bible records many of their laments:

“How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” (Psalm 13:1)

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest." (Psalm 22:1-2)

"Why, Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" (Psalm 10:1)

"I cry out to you, God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me." (Job 30:20)

"Why do you always forget us? Why do you forsake us so long?" (Lamentations 5:20)

"But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.'" (Isaiah 49:14)

"How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not save?" (Habakkuk 1:2)

"Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time?" (Psalm 77:7-8)

"Why, Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me?" (Psalm 88:14)

"Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? You are to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails." (Jeremiah 15:18)

"I say to God my Rock, 'Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?'" (Psalm 42:9)

“The way to deeper knowledge of God is through the lonely valleys of soul poverty ...”
A.W. Tozer