

The Two Greatest Commandments

Matthew 22:34-40

INTRODUCTION:

The next necessary ingredient for us to consider on the Christian journey is the ingredient of love, but with love comes commandments.

John 15:15-21

¹⁵ “If you love me, obey my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. ¹⁸ No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. ¹⁹ Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. ²⁰ When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.”

A few years ago, I spent a year preaching through what is known as the love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, but today I want to consider what Jesus said are the two greatest commandments. Matter of fact, He states that all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. These two commandments are foundational.

The Most Important Commandment

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?”

³⁷ Jesus replied, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

1st Commandment: You must love God.

R.A. Torrey

If loving God with all our heart and soul and might is the greatest commandment, then it follows that not loving Him that way is the greatest sin.

A. To love God is to be obedient to His commands as earlier stated. God's commands have a purpose of not just you being surrendered to God, but also a gateway for you to discover of you are and created to be.

Jack Hyles

Love is the doorway through which the human soul passes from selfishness to service.

B. "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind."

C. **Heart** – our will must align to God's will. The heart is not referring to the emotions but the will of a person. This is why we say that we "give our heart to Jesus."

D. **Soul** – my entire existence. All of me. All of you. To love God is to love Him with our entire soul.

E. **Mind** – our mind must be focused on God and the things of God. Is your mind focused on God and the things of God?

Bernard of Clairvaux

The true measure of loving God is to love him without measure.

F. Or are you focused on your own agenda desiring God to bless you somehow?

Daniel Fuller

In biblical thinking, genuine love exists only when good works are done in a context where God rather than the doer gets the credit.

G. To not keep your mind focused on the things of God or use your mind in Kingdom work is actually a sin because we are commanded to use our minds.

H. Discipleship is like breaking a horse. The purpose of breaking a horse is to train their mind to put your task over their agenda. In other words, their agenda may be if it is a stud breeding mares, running through the field, or eating anytime they want, but your agenda may be to ride in a parade, pen cattle, rope, or barrel race. You may want to do multiple things with the horse so they need to be broke not to just a task, but to your will that can teach them any task you want them to do. In the same way, if we love God versus, simply, a task God would approve of then we can be useful in many different tasks for the Lord. This is what it means to love God and not just the things that we believe God might have us do.

I. Christianity is not a faith that asks you to check your mind in at the door but rather to engage your mind. What controls your feet, hands, and mouth, it is your mind. If you get your mind under control, just like training a horse, the rest will follow.

Francis Chan

"Do you know that nothing you do in this life will ever matter unless it is about loving God and loving the people he has made?"

CONCLUSION

- Is God your everything? Or are you working Him into your schedule whenever you believe it benefits you?
- Are all the compartments of your life focused on the Lord so that you can truly say you are loving God with everything?
- Are you soft (like a horse to the bit) in your obedience to the Lord looking to show Him your love in how you respond to what it means to love Him with all your heart, soul, and mind?
- Loving God means loving to be who He made us to be as a love response for Him not only giving us life to start with, but also giving us life eternal through what He did for us on the cross and in His resurrection.

The Two Greatest Commandments

Matthew 22:34-40

INTRODUCTION:

A few weeks ago, we studied the first commandment of “Loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.” Loving God, which means following His commands, must be seen as the gateway through which we have the ability and opportunity to see everything else.

Today, we are moving on to the second commandment that Jesus stated goes with the first. In this, we shall see how loving God first, impacts how we are to love ourselves and others.

The Most Important Commandment – Matthew 22:34-40

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The Most Important Commandment – Luke 10:25-29

²⁵ One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?”

²⁷ The man answered, “ ‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”

²⁸ “Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!”

²⁹ The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

II. 2nd Commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself.

A. The first item of business we notice and must readily see is that to love my neighbor as myself, I must love who first? Myself! Does anyone struggle with this idea?

B. Now many have interpreted this text in which the focus is on loving God and loving neighbor, but a failure to love oneself, which is a logical imperative if one is to love one's neighbor as one loves themselves, is to completely misunderstand the text.

C. Men whom I respect dearly in their theology and preaching have utterly failed the text if one fails to see the importance of loving oneself from this passage. Simply put, they lump all ideas of loving oneself into the category of sin and pride, and can't see there is a love one can obtain for one's self that actually is derived only from loving God.

D. The argument follows that if a person was to love themselves then it would be an act of pride, but this must be sorted out in regard to motive in light of first loving God.

E. If you are not loving God first, then loving oneself can lead to all sorts of debacles and is the foundation for the theology of Hell.

F. The point here is that we love ourselves only in light of who God is and His love for us as well as the love we have for Him. The love we have for Him which leads to humility because it is God Himself whom we are loving is a response to the grace which He has given us in Christ.

G. First, we must recognize that we are to love the things that God loves. Does God love you? If so, then you should love yourself and see yourself through His eyes.

Proverbs 19:8

To acquire wisdom is to love yourself; people who cherish understanding will prosper.

H. Where does wisdom come from? Wisdom comes from God.

James 3:13-18

¹³ If you are wise and understand God’s ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don’t cover up the truth with boasting and lying. ¹⁵ For jealousy and selfishness are not God’s kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. ¹⁶ For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.

¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace-loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. ¹⁸ And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

I. So the more we love God, through the first commandment which leads to obedience to all of His commandments, the more we obtain wisdom, therefore, loving ourselves.

J. But how many of us see ourselves only through our shame or sinfulness? If so, then we deny the sacrifice of Christ. We never let our sins go. The wrong deeds of our past have become our self-identifier.

K. It is a sin and an act of pride to not forgive yourself of your past if you’ve sought the forgiveness of God in Christ. If the Creator God in and through Jesus has forgiven you, then who are you not to forgive yourself?

L. The order of relationships are revealed in this text and in these two commandments:

HEALTHY/BIBLICAL	NARCISSISM	CODEPENDENCY
God	Self	Others
Self	Others	God
Neighbor	God	Self

M. It must follow to know yourself; you must first know who you are in your Creator. Then, you can have a healthy understanding of yourself in which to love others as yourself. The painting has no purpose apart from the artist everything else is a frivolous opinion, projections, conjecture, or nonsense.

Narcissism

N. If you love yourself first outside of who you are in Christ, and this can come about through a combination of the sinful nature compounded by traumatic events, then you become your own final authority. Everything depends on what you have either done or has been done to you. The narcissist often takes the conqueror position which destroys relationships.

O. If you love yourself apart from the love of God, you are destined for sinful failure, but once you accept what it means to love God and be loved by God then you can love yourself as an object of God's own affection in humility and let go of narcissistic tendencies.

Codependency

P. If you love others first because you haven't put yourself or God in their proper positions, then you lack a sense of self and now will look to others for validation. This makes one the ultimate slave to their fellowman. Every neighbor you have has the chance to become your "god" because you seek their validation. Many relationships fall apart because the codependent wife expects the husband to fulfill his role as a husband but then places divine expectations of validation on him which he will always fail to be qualified to do. The same goes the other way around with the codependent husband to his wife expecting her to fulfill her wife role, but also seeking divine validation from her which she simply can't do. Codependency weighs down relationships.

Q. The best definition of codependency is a lack of a sense of self. It is the underlying question that every human at some level wrestles with: WHO AM I?

R. If you don't know who you are then you can't be obedient to the 2nd commandment, and if obedience to Christ's commandments is showing God love (John 15), then you will be insufficient in loving God according to the 1st commandment.

S. If you don't know who you are, you will have poor or no boundaries.

T. You can't blame someone for not "getting you" if haven't taken the time to "get you."

Loving Your Neighbor

U. Love your neighbor is a forward action. It is moving the love of God that is in you into them so they may experience God through your relationship with them.

V. One of the greatest acts of loving your neighbor is the same act in which God loved you...in forgiveness.

G.K. Chesterton

The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies; probably because generally they are the same people.

W. The parable of the Good Samaritan springs forth from this commandment. To love your neighbor, one must first be a neighbor.

Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)

³⁰ Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

³¹ "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. ³² A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

³³ "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. ³⁴ Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'

³⁶ "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.

³⁷ The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

Martin Luther King Jr.

The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But... the good Samaritan reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'

X. Love, again, is a forward action allowing the love you have for God and the love He has for you to flow out of you into those around you. The Samaritan, who was the social outcast, showed mercy because he understood what it meant to love your neighbor as yourself.

John Locke

To love our neighbor as ourselves is such a truth for regulating human society, that by that alone one might determine all the cases in social morality.

Martin Luther

- God does not need your good works, but our neighbor does.
- As our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor . . . and each one should become . . . a Christ to the other.

C.S. Lewis

Do not waste time bothering whether you “love” your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love them.

CONCLUSION

- These two commandments put the proper order of the relationships we are to have in our lives.
- Narcissism and Codependency result in not living in our created identity.
- God is the gateway to everything we can know about reality. This is what it meant by “The Fear the Lord.”

Proverbs 1:7

THE FEAR OF THE LORD is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

- To get these out of order, sadly, is not only the way most people live but they cheat themselves from knowing who they are in light of who He is resulting in a life not truly lived.

