

Pursuing Love & The Great Commandment – Pt. 2

Becoming a Great Lover of God

I. Introductory Remarks.

In this series of messages we are looking at what it really means to pursue love in the various relationships God has established in our lives. It is something God wants us to pursue with all of our hearts.

1 Corinthians 14:1 *Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.*

1 Corinthians 12:31 *But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.*

In the previous message we saw that love is the primary or preeminent quality or fruit that God is desiring from our lives. We looked at three different Greek words that express what it really means to pursue love.

We saw the Christian love or Agape love expresses the deep and constant love of a perfect being towards entirely unworthy objects, producing and fostering a reverential love in them toward the giver, and a practical love towards those who are partakers of the same, and desire to help others to seek the Giver. It is an unselfish love, ready to serve.

We saw the philadelphia or brotherly love is simply a love for the brethren and that phileo or affectionate love is an affection that is expressed between friends and individuals such as Jesus had for John.

In this message I want to talk about what it really means to love God or How to become a great lover of God. This is the first and foremost commandment that God has given to us as Christians to obey. Since this is so important, we ought to know how we should go about fulfilling this great commandment.

The Bible says we are to love Him, because He first loved us.

1 John 4:19 *We love Him because He first loved us.*

II. The Great Commandment to Love God.

Matthew 22:36-38 *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus*

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said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "This is the first and great commandment.

Luke 10:27 So he answered and said, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.' "

Four areas are given here as to how we are to show our love to God:

You shall love the Lord your God:

1. with all your heart – the emotional nature
2. with all your soul – the willing nature
3. with all your strength – the physical nature
4. with all your mind – the intellectual nature

The total person is to love God – mind, emotion, will and strength.

If we fail to love God in each of these areas we become unbalanced in our love towards God and it shows in our relationships with the people God has put in our lives.

For example if you love God with a strength of mind and the weakness of emotion you will become an intellectualist and a legalist in your approach to God and others.

If you love Him with a strength of emotion and weakness of mind you will be a sentimentalist in religion, governed by your feelings which will be expressed in an excess of affection or sentiment.

If you love Him with a strength of will and a weakness of emotion you will be a man of iron who is not very approachable.

When we love God with all of our strength of emotion, strength of will, physical strength, and strength of mind, we will be Christians, who have a balanced strength of character, who are truly loving God as He has commanded us to.

Therefore let's look at each of these areas and see how God wants us to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

III. Fulfilling the Command to Love God.

1. Loving The Lord With All of Our Heart.

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For some people the emotional side of love comes very easy. Their personality is such that it comes very natural, but for some of us this is not so easy.

How is it that we love God emotionally? I believe that it comes through a genuine appreciation for being forgiven and then as we grow in the Lord it comes through worship and praise that we continually adore God.

To adore means to worship or honor as deity, or as divine, to regard with reverent admiration and devotion: to be extremely fond of.

The example of the sinful woman - Luke 7:36-48.

Luke 7:37-38 *And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.*

Vs 38 shows a real remorse and godly sorrow for her sins. It also shows a deep humility and contrition of heart which results in humble service towards Christ.

This woman's emotions were very much involved in her love and devotion towards Christ. She simply threw herself at Christ's feet. She wasn't afraid to lose her dignity in Christ's presence.

How many of us often find ourselves like the Pharisees in Christ's presence, aloof and disengaged while playing intellectual games with Him? As we seek to spend time in personal worship to Him our hardness of heart will melt away.

Psalms 95:6-7 *Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice...*

Psalms 92:1-4 *It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your loving-kindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night on an instrument of ten strings, On the lute, And on the harp, With harmonious sound. For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands.*

It is through worship and praise that we are drawn into God's loving-kindness and presence. Worship draws us close to His bosom.

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The following two scriptures illustrate to us the intimacy and warmth that Jesus desires to have with us on the emotional level.

Isaiah 40:11 *He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.*

John 13:23 *Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.*

2. Loving The Lord With All of Our Soul.

As we have already suggested, loving the Lord with all of our soul represent our willingness to obey Him and follow Him in the things that He has purposed for our lives.

Many times David cried out for His soul to submit to God. Actually, I believe the soul includes all of the areas mentioned, the will, the emotion and the intellect, but it definitely includes the aspect of our will.

Psalms 42:5 *Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.*

Jesus talked about this area of loving Him on many occasions. He said, If you love Me, keep my commandments. This is a love coming forth from our will.

John 14:15-16 *"If you love Me, keep My commandments. "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever,*

John 14:22-23 *Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.*

The example of Peter: Loving God with all our soul helps us to be committed to His cause.

John 21:15-17 *So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." He said*

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to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.

3. Loving The Lord With All of Our Mind.

As we have already seen, to love the Lord with all of our minds has to do with our intellect. I believe we must have a love for God's word, because it is through His word that our minds or our intellect is renewed.

Psalms 119:16 *I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.*

Psalms 119:140 *Your word is very pure; Therefore Your servant loves it.*

The illustration of Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Luke 10:38-42 *Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. "But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."*

Mary sought the deeper life with Christ. Her devotion and love for Christ caused her to want to sit at His feet and hear His word. Her heart was consumed with a desire to fill her mind with His word. What we see here is a picture of a Mary loving Jesus from a heart-felt warmth and a desire and love for His word as well.

To love Jesus and His word is also to hate those things that destroy His love.

Romans 12:9 *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*

We are to abhor that which is evil, because it is sin and evil that will cause our hearts to grow cold.

I wonder how many of us are not as sincere in our love and devotion to Christ, because we have allowed too many evil influences to cause our love for Him and His word to grow cold.

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4. Loving The Lord With All Our Strength.

God also wants us to love Him with our bodies. This means we dedicate the strength of our bodies to Him for His cause and purpose.

Romans 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.*

The Apostle Paul's example.

1 Corinthians 9:27 *But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

IV. Concluding Remarks.

To genuinely pursue loving God involves loving Him in all of these areas; the mind, the emotion, the will and our strength. This should be something we pursue with all of our hearts.

Psalms 84:1-2 *How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.*

When we fail to love God completely we open ourselves up to deception, imbalance, deceit and false motives. If we are to be complete and well balanced Christians, we must pursue God completely with our mind, will, emotions, and strength.

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind." "This is the first and great commandment".