Loving Jesus: The First Commandment Established in First Place

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

A. Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:37-38 is one of the most significant statements in Scripture. It has 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)

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). To "abide in God's love" is to live in it—to continually study and refocus our heart on it.

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. God first *exhorted* Israel, through Moses, to love Him with all their heart (Deut. 6:5), and later Moses *prophesied* Israel would love God with all their heart in the end times (Deut. 30:1-6). In Matthew 22:37, Jesus' statement was both an *exhortation* and a *prophecy,*

5You shall love the LORD…with all your heart…and with all your strength. (Deut. 6:5)

6The Lord…will circumcise your heart…to love the Lord…with all your heart. (Deut. 30:6)

E. Jesus defined loving God as being rooted in a spirit of obedience (Jn. 14:15-21). We are to love God on God's terms. To "keep His commands" includes setting our heart diligently to obey and pursue Jesus and not to quit in our divine assignments, even in times of delay and difficulty.

15"If you love Me, keep My commandments." (Jn. 14:15)

F. One battlefront in our culture concerns how we define love. We must define it on God's terms.

G. In Matthew 22:38, Jesus elaborated on Moses' exhortation, adding two words—*first* and *great*. Here, He defined loving God as being "the primary" response that God wants from His people. The only thing He does not have is something He will not take by force—your voluntary love.

H. ***First***: The Spirit's first priority and emphasis in the Church is for God's people to grow in their love for God. However, our natural tendency is to focus first on gaining more blessing on our circumstances—more money, honor, comfort, influence, etc. Without understanding that God is first committed to helping us grow in love, we can be confused about His leadership in our life.

I. ***Great***: It has the *greatest impact* on God's heart and our heart, and it is the *greatest calling.*

19…whoever does and teaches them** [commands]**, he shall be called great in the kingdom… (Mt. 5:19)

II. LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART

A. We are to engage our heart with Jesus and be enthusiastic about pursuing and obeying Him. Some search for Bible verses or definitions of grace to validate giving less of themselves and their lives to Jesus. Others are dutiful in serving Him without engaging their heart with Him.

B. We can "set our love" on anything we choose. Our emotions will eventually follow whatever we set ourselves to pursue wholeheartedly. We "set our love" on God by determining that the *primary dream* (purpose) of our life is to pursue walking out the first commandment by grace. Other biblical purposes and blessings—family, vocation, ministry, etc.—flow from loving God.

[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 life is when we intentionally determine that our *primary dream* is to walk out the first commandment.

[1]I will love You, O LORD, my strength. (Ps. 18:1)

III. LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR MIND

A. We express love for God with our mind by putting things in our mind that inspire love for God instead of things that diminish our capacity to love Him.

B. What we do with our mind affects our ability to receive and express love. We show love for God by taking time to fill our mind with His Word and refusing to feed our mind on lust (Job 31:1).

[1]"I have made a covenant with my eyes; why should I look upon a young woman?" (Job 31:1)

IV. LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH (MK. 12:30)

A. We 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 first to increase our honor, comfort, influence, etc. God takes pleasure in the small things that His people do when they 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 do the things that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7): *serving, giving* (6:1-4, 19-21), *praying* (6:5-13), *blessing, forgiving* (5:44; 6:14), etc.

V. LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR SOUL

A. We express love for God with our soul when we exert the emotional energy to realign our heart to base our identity on our relationship with God instead of on our accomplishments, recognition, etc. We must often realign our thinking to agree with His love, truth, and investment in our lives.

B. Our identity is determined by the way that we define our success and value and by how we see ourselves. When our identity is rooted in what we achieve and who applauds us, then we are more likely to burn out or to live in an "emotional storm" (by being too preoccupied with self).

C. Our *primary success* and *identity* 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."***

For ***FREE resources*** on the first commandment, see ***mikebickle.org*** for a 12-part teaching series with notes entitled *The First Commandment* (https://mikebickle.org/resources/series/the-first-commandment)