

Loving Jesus: The First Commandment Established in First Place

I. THE CALL TO BE EQUALLY YOKED TO JESUS IN LOVE

- A. The Holy Spirit's first agenda is to establish the first commandment in *first place* in the Church. The first commandment does not start with us, but with *God's love for His people*. He loves us with all His heart and with the intensity that He loves in the fellowship of the Trinity (Jn. 15:9).
³⁷***"You shall love the Lord...with all your heart..."***³⁸***This is the first and great commandment."***
(Mt. 22:37-38)
- ⁹***"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.*"** (Jn. 15:9)
- B. The Father's eternal purpose for creation included providing a loving family for Himself that includes an eternal companion for His Son—an *equally yoked Bride*. It "takes God to love God." The anointing to receive God's love and to love Him back is the greatest gift the Spirit imparts.
- C. We must love God on His terms. A core issue today in the Church is how we define love. We must define it by God's terms, not by our culture that seeks love without obedience to God's Word. There are many definitions of love, liberty, and freedom in our culture that are not biblical. Jesus defined loving God as being rooted in a spirit of obedience (Jn. 14:21).
¹⁵***If you love Me, keep My commandments...***²¹***He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...***²³***If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.*** (Jn. 14:15-23)

II. THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT

- A. ***First***: Jesus did not call this the first *option*, but the first *command*. God's first priority and the Spirit's first emphasis for His people corporately and individually is to cultivate love for God.
- B. ***Great***: Cultivating love for Jesus has the *greatest impact* on God's heart and our heart. It is the *greatest calling* that requires the *greatest grace*, which is to feel God's love and to express it. This brings the *greatest freedom* and has the *greatest reward* in this age and the age to come.

III. SPHERE #1: LOVE WITH ALL OUR HEART

- A. ***Sphere #1: Love with all our heart***: We are to engage our emotions in our love for God instead of being content with dutiful service while living disengaged from our relationship with Him. We have a significant role in determining how our emotions develop over time.
- B. We can "set" our love or affections on anything that we choose. Our emotions eventually follow whatever we set ourselves to pursue. This involves determining that *the primary dream of your heart is to walk in the first commandment*. As we change our mind, the Spirit changes our heart (emotions), so that we set our heart first on loving Jesus and causing others to love Jesus.
¹⁴***Because he has set his love [heart] upon Me, therefore I will deliver him...*** (Ps. 91:14)
- C. David made a choice to set his heart to love God. He determined to love God.
¹***I will love You, O LORD, my strength.*** (Ps. 18:1)

IV. SPHERE #2: LOVE WITH ALL OUR MIND

- A. **Sphere #2: Love with all our mind:** We fill our mind with that which inspires love for God instead of that which diminishes it. What we do with our mind greatly affects our capacity to receive love and to express love. If we fill our mind with the right things, our capacity to love Jesus increases; if we fill our mind with wrong things, our capacity to love Jesus diminishes.
- B. We love God with our mind by taking the time to fill our mind with the Word so that we come into *agreement with the truth* about Him. This involves refusing lies about His *heart* as a tender Father and passionate Bridegroom King, as we take time to meditate on God's Word.

V. SPHERE #3: LOVE WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH

- A. **Sphere #3: Love with all our strength:** We are to love God with our natural resources (time, money, energy, talents, words, and influence). We express our love for God in the way we use our resources, whereas the usual way to use them is to increase our personal comfort and honor.
- B. God cares about the love we show Him when we invest our strength into our relationship with Him and in helping others to love Him. We love God with our strength as we walk out the activities set forth by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6)—we **serve and give** (6:1-4, 19-21), **pray** (6:5-13), **bless adversaries and forgive** (6:14-15; 5:44), and **fast food** (6:16-18).

VI. SPHERE #4: LOVE WITH ALL OUR SOUL

- A. **Sphere #4: Love with all our soul:** We realign our identity to be based on our relationship with God instead of on our accomplishments and the recognition we receive. Our identity is determined by the way we define our success and value and, thus, by how we see ourselves.
- B. When we get our identity from our accomplishments and recognition, we end up in an emotional storm of preoccupation with vanity; we most naturally see our accomplishments as very small and unimportant, causing us to feel rejected and neglected by people.
- C. We are to define our *primary success in life* as being ones who are loved by God and who love God. This is what determines our personal worth. We are to be anchored in this truth as the basis of our success and worth, rather than in our accomplishments, recognition, or possessions.
- D. Our identity must be established upon being loved by God and in loving Him in response. Our confession is **"I am loved [by God] and I am a lover [of God], therefore I am successful."**
- E. The reach of our heart to love Him moves Him. **If we do not quit, then we win.** We come to the place where we no longer find our identity in our failure, but in the fact that God loves us, in the gift of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:17), and in the cry of our spirit to love God.

For **FREE resources** on the first commandment, see mikebickle.org for a 12-part teaching series with notes entitled *The First Commandment* (<http://mikebickle.org/resources/series/the-first-commandment>) and free ebooks such as *Seven Longings of the Human Heart*.