

Session 2 God Loves God: Practical Applications for Our Life

I. REVIEW: THE ULTIMATE REALITY

- A. The Holy Spirit's first agenda is to establish the first commandment in first place in the Church. Jesus referred to Deuteronomy 6:5 and then defined loving God as the first commandment, thus identifying it as the highest priority to God and the first calling in our life and for every ministry.
³⁷*Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."* ³⁸*This is the first and great commandment."* (Mt. 22:37-38)
- B. The command to love God with all our heart does not begin with our response to God. It is an expression of the ultimate reality of the kingdom that existed before the creation of the world—namely, God's heart that burned with perfect love within the fellowship of the Trinity. From eternity past, God has loved God with all of His heart, mind, and strength. God the Father loved the Son. God the Son loved the Spirit. God the Spirit loved the Father and the Son, etc.
- C. God is love—wholehearted love (1 Jn. 4:16). The very being of God is wholehearted love. It is of first importance in God's personality and in the relationships of the Father, Son, and Spirit.
- D. There is nothing more important than God's desires. His infinite power and great wisdom are employed to carry out His desires—they are used to establish His plan to fill the earth with love. The living creatures declare that God is holy (Rev. 4:8). Holiness, as it relates to God's person, speaks of His transcendence (infinite greatness), absolute purity, and affectionate love shining forth together as one reality. His love and transcendence (holiness) speak of the same reality.
- E. We best understand the first commandment in its eternal context of the fellowship in the Godhead, instead of it seeing it as merely one aspect of kingdom ethics. He wants us to respond in wholehearted love because it is *who He is* and *who He created us to be* in His image.
- F. Jesus revealed that the essence of salvation is to know God—with experiential knowledge. Salvation (eternal life) is an invitation to participate in deep fellowship with the Godhead. It is the *why* behind the *what* of creation and redemption. Salvation is much more than escaping hell. The very fact that Almighty God is deeply moved by our weak love is a most amazing reality.
³*"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ."* (Jn. 17:3)
- G. The love burning in God's heart has at least five distinct expressions that are deeply interrelated.
1. ***God's love for God***: Each person in the Trinity intensely loves the others with all their heart.
2. ***God's love for His people***: He loves His people with all of His heart, mind, and strength. He loves the redeemed with the same intensity that He loves within the fellowship of the Trinity.
3. ***Our love for God***: God's very own love is imparted to His people by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5).
4. ***Our love for ourselves***: We love ourselves in God's love and for God's sake.
5. ***Our love for others***: We love others in the overflow of experiencing God's love (1 Jn. 4:19).
- H. These five expressions of love constitute what I refer to as the ***fellowship of the burning heart***. Our greatest destiny is to participate in the burning love within the fellowship of the Trinity.

- I. ***Abide in love***: One foundational premise in this teaching series is that God loves us with the same intensity that God loves God and that we must stay focused on this (Jn. 15:9; 17:23). To abide in love means to continually live in it. This requires that we *stay focused* on living in God's love in its various expressions. We are to set our heart to go deep in our understanding of this.

⁹***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)***

- J. The first commandment will forever be the first priority in the kingdom. Wholehearted love is of first importance in God's relationship to God, to us, and in our relationship to Him and to others.
- K. We are to behold the manner, or the ***quality***, of the love that the Father has for us. We are to make this the preoccupation of our life before, during, and after revival.

¹***Behold [focus on] what manner [quality] of love the Father has bestowed on us... (1 Jn. 3:1)***

II. THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION TO OUR LIVES

- A. God's greatness includes His burning love, infinite power, great wisdom, and majestic splendor. Insight into God's greatness first includes seeing the quality of His love and the relationships within the Godhead. This gives us insight into Jesus' beauty, supremacy, and worth. By seeing the union in the Trinity, we gain insight into the glory of their love and how they relate.
- B. ***Extravagant worship***: Gazing on God and declaring His glory is a most important activity in heaven. Those nearest God's throne declare His worth and agree with His plans in 24/7 worship and intercession (Rev. 4:8). At the center of His plans is an eternal worship sanctuary (Rev. 4-5).
1. *His greatness is seen most in His burning love*. The Lord's infinite majesty and beauty warrants extravagant and continual worship. Worship is a response to the revelation of the greatness of who God is. Worship is the ultimate goal of the Church. *Missions exists because worship doesn't* (Piper). Worship is primary because Jesus is preeminent. By a lifestyle of extravagant worship, we give a witness on earth of Jesus' great worth.
 2. Since worship is a response to the revelation of God, as we see more of His greatness, we will respond more in love. Our love and worship will never surpass our knowledge of His greatness. The main cause in half-hearted love is in not understanding His greatness.
- C. ***Spirit of prayer***: Intercessory worship is the primary means by which He releases His power. Worship is an end in itself as well as a means to an end. The more we see, the more we pray.
- D. ***Empowered to love***: By seeing the union in the Trinity, we gain insight into the nature, quality, and intensity of their love and how they relate. Their relationship is the ***model*** and ***source*** whereby we relate to God and others. They give us a picture of what perfect love is, of how God relates to God, and, therefore, of how He relates to us and how we relate to Him and others.
- E. God wants even more than people just gazing on and declaring His greatness. He wants deep relationship with them! The angels stand in awestruck admiration of His greatness and declare it continually, but do not actually participate in His burning love.

III. GOD’S LOVE FOR GOD

- A. The first expression of *perfect love* is found in the relationships within the Trinity. The Son loves the Father (Jn. 14:31) and the Father loves the Son (Jn. 3:35; 5:20; 15:9; 17:23). Their love is the foundation of all the love in His kingdom. God cannot love in part.
- B. We best understand God’s love as we consider the glorious truth of the Trinity. This is practical because it equips us to understand what God-centered love looks like. Our love is diminished by all the negative emotional traffic (inner turmoil) in us, which results from our fallenness and wrong perspective about God’s love.
- C. The way that God loves within the Trinity is the way He loves us—it is the very same love. He never suspends one attribute for even one moment. He always loves in fullness. He will never diminish or grow in love, because His love is infinite in measure and eternal in duration; He does not love us with just a part of His love, because that would be to deny His own character.
- D. ***The Holy Trinity***: There is one God, who forever dwells in three distinct persons, who are coequal as divine persons. Each person is distinctly different from the others in their function. Each person’s work is unified, fully engaged with joy, and interdependent on the others’ work.
- E. In John 13-17, Jesus taught on the union of the three persons in the Trinity—the Father lives in the Son, and the Son in the Father (13:32, 34; 14:10-12, 20; 17:11, 21-23). The Father dwelt in Jesus as a Man while He was on earth, even before His resurrection. (Note three foundational statements about the being of God—*He is spirit, consuming fire, and light*). Thus, the three persons are one in heart, thought, and action, so that the one God acts as one and as three.
¹⁰***“Believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me...The Father who dwells in Me does the works. ¹¹Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me...” (Jn. 14:10-11)***
- F. The union in the Trinity reveals the nature, quality, and intensity of their love and relationships. Our ability to receive the love of God and to love God and others is anchored in the reality of how the Trinity relates. Thus it is practical to grow in understanding of the Trinity—it is the ***model*** of how God’s love functions, and is the ***source*** that inspires and tenderizes us to love.
- G. Each person in the Godhead enjoys and fully engages in the relationship with the others. Jesus has joy and enthusiasm in His love for the Father. He is moved in loving the Father and in being loved by the Father. His love is never mechanical. He is not disinterested or bored in His relationship with the Father. This is a picture of how Jesus loves us. He is never bored with us.
- H. The three persons are each fully involved with every work of God— in creation, the incarnation, healing miracles, the atonement, the resurrection (Jn. 10:18), etc.
¹⁸***I lay it [physical life] down of Myself...and I have power to take it again. (Jn. 10:18)***
- I. Each functions in a diverse way in participating in each work of God. Every miracle that Jesus did—the Father and the Spirit were fully engaged with joy and were involved with Him in it. Therefore, we know that the Father is deeply involved in our works because He loves us in a way that is similar to how He loves Jesus.

- J. Jesus put several significant truths together in His prayer (Jn. 17:21-26). Jesus connected the way we relate to God and each other to the way God relates to God.
- ²¹“...***they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they may be one in Us...*** ²²***The glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one as We are one:*** ²³***I in them and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You...have loved them as You have loved Me.***” (Jn. 17:21-23)
- K. Our ability to receive love and to love in return is anchored in these truths. Understanding the union in the Trinity is the basis of how we relate to God and each other. We lose much by neglecting to understand even a portion of how the Godhead relates to one another.
- L. The Spirit desires to teach us the glorious truths of how to love (v. 15) related to seeing the Father’s relationship to Jesus and their relationship to us (v. 20). As we study the way that God loves God, we are empowered to love with obedience. The Spirit is the Helper, who teaches us to the degree that we ask Him. He usually waits until we begin the conversation with Him.
- ¹⁵“***If you love Me, keep My commandments.*** ¹⁶***And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper...*** ¹⁷***the Spirit of truth...*** ¹⁸***I will not leave you orphans [helpless]...*** ²⁰***At that day you will know [understand] that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.***” (Jn. 14:15–20)
- M. The Spirit dwells in us, but many rarely interact with Him in the way described in John 13-17.
- ¹³“***When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth...*** ¹⁴***He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.***” (Jn. 16:13–14)
- N. We can gain insight into this grand reality by meditating on the details in the Scripture of how each person in the Godhead relates to the others. When reading the Gospels, think on how the Father and the Spirit were deeply involved, with joy, in each of the works that Jesus did.
- O. As we read each episode in the Gospels, we should pause to ***thank God*** for the details of how the Trinity worked together and to ***ask for more insight***. We ask the Spirit to show us what each divine person ***did*** and ***felt*** and how ***we are to respond***. Reading the Scripture in this way can be like a treasure hunt into the beauty of God, which fascinates and exhilarates our heart.
- P. The impartation of the very substance of God’s love comes to our heart by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5).
- ⁵***The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit...*** (Rom. 5:5)
- Q. To grow in love we need three things—resolve, understanding, and impartation of the Spirit. We will not be able to love well by only having a strong resolve to grow in love. We also need understanding and impartation of God’s love by the ministry of the Holy Spirit in us.