



THE THREE LOVES

The signs of Christian maturity

Title: Love the LORD Requires

Series: The Three Loves

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The Bottom Line

Have you been in a situation after a long explanation, and all the details are laid bare, you wanted to look someone in the eye and ask, “What is the bottom line?”

Maybe you were buying a car, or a home and you're looking at the finance department / bank and you have want to ask, “What's the bottom line, how much will this cost me?”

With graduations happening recently, maybe your mind goes back to prom or a date, and you're putting your neck out there and wondering, “What's the bottom line, will you go out with me or not?”

Sometimes we can we can wonder the same thing about our faith. At the end of the day, what really counts. The details matter, we know. The whole of Scripture speaks and reveals God and his will to us. But is it not true that there are days when we want to ask, ‘what is the bottom line?’ or at the very least, ‘Where should I start?’

Series: The Three Loves

I'm really excited as we begin a 3-week series, ‘The Three Loves: The Marks of Spiritual Maturity.’ We have three candles, each representing one of the three loves that are meant to mark the life of a follower of Jesus. And as we grow as a follower of Jesus in time each candle is lit and glows brightly from our lives.

Jesus asked for the Bottom Line

The first love is revealed when Jesus is flatly asked for the bottom line.

Context: Jesus is in his final week of ministry. Has entered Jerusalem on a donkey. Things are coming to a head, he has been teaching for a few years, he is known, and now a lawyer, an expert in Jewish law comes to him with a question. In

essence, he asks Jesus in a nutshell to say what is the most important of all the commands.

Matthew 22:34–40 & Mark 12:28-31 (NRSV)

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and all your strength.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Be careful to assume we already know what the answer means

Now when I read this passage, there were some of you to whom this was something new. For others of us we have read this passage a number of times before and start to check out knowing where we think this is going.

Be careful, is the first command to simply ‘love God’ or is it more than that?

- Surfer: I’m cool with the creator. Or I like spiritual stuff and appreciate it. Is that all that Jesus says?

Love the LORD Your God

Jesus quotes the Shema (Hebrew word for Hear) which is a prayer that Jews pray daily in the morning and the evening from **Deuteronomy 6:4**.

This prayer, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

This has two big points.

The Lord our God

- If you read an Old Testament in most English translations, you will see the word Lord in ‘small caps’
 - This is because the word ‘Lord’ isn’t what is in the original text, rather the name that God used when he revealed himself to Moses, Yahweh.
 - Jews not wanting to use God’s name dishonourably developed a custom of saying the word ‘Lord’ (Adonai) whenever they saw the divine name in the text.

The Lord is one (The Lord Alone)

- There is only one God.

Watching the series: **AD: The Bible Continues** on Netflix. Only one season, never got renewed. Warning: It’s violent, mind you if you read Acts it was a violent time.

What strikes me is the devotion that the Jewish people had to honouring the name of God and his temple. They would rather have died than This is the foundation of all of our loves and actions. We see this in the stories of Daniel, Shadrach, Meeshack and Abendigo (who were willing to be martyred rather than bow to another God.

This is the central claim of the Hebrew Scriptures that got them in trouble with other kings.

Jesus then continues to say the greatest command is...

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and all your strength.’ This is the greatest and first commandment.

Heart, Mind, soul, strength (Matthew has three, Mark has strength)

- We can debate what each item means but simply put loving God requires everything, our passions, the centre of our being, our thoughts, our physicality and on and on we could go.

JESUS TEACHES:

LOVE OF THE LORD GOD IS THE FIRST AND GREATEST AIM OF LIFE

What would Loving the Lord God first look like?

Sometimes we can struggle to figure what loving God looks like. It's not like we date God, love has a lot of senses in our day and age. As I was praying and reading in preparation for today, I was drawn back to the famous 10 Commandments from Exodus 20. The first four commands were all commands that pertained specifically to Israel's relationship to the LORD God.

You shall have no other Gods before me

Exodus 20:3 (NRSV)

³ you shall have no other gods before me.

- This is the call to Exclusivity
- We are not our own God, we do not get to call our own shots, God as revealed in Scripture alone is the Lord of our lives
- We live in a world where we want to rule ourselves, but the call of Jesus is to give exclusive reign to the Lord God

You shall not make for yourself an idol

- The call to 'not accept any substitutes'
- In ancient times people would fashion an idol in the image of an animal or a celestial body.

- We can choose to bow down to our own creations of fame, appearance, prosperity.
- The command says God is jealous, he doesn't play second fiddle, but blesses
- We cannot tell God we love him while making eyes at another date across the room

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD

Deut 6:7 (NRSV)

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

- Two pronged:
 - Do not do evil and wrong or leverage the name of God for yourself
 - Do not take the name of God for granted

Remember the Sabbath

Deut 6:8-9 (ESV)

8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God.

Give God your time.

- Rest is a reminder that we are not able to provide for ourselves
- Sabbath and rest is something we give to God.

BUT CHAD IS THAT ALL VERY 'LOVING'

- I'll tell to think about this, how many marriages could benefit from these four simple thoughts

- I am exclusively committed to you
- I accept no substitutes and will not look towards another than you
- I will not misuse my relationship with you or take you for granted
- I will devote specific time to you.

“This is the greatest and first commandment.”

A wholehearted devotion to God is the foundation of everything else. Jesus comes to reveal to us who God is.

The commitment to God is the foundation of love and opens the door to knowing God well and experiencing the intimacy and life that he promises.

Question:

Where have we settled for less:

- Exclusivity
- Substitutes
- Neglect (taking for granted, use for personal gain)
- Time

Turn to God