

LOVING GOD, LOVING PEOPLE: "LOVING GOD GREATLY"

THESIS: Love God Great

TEXT: Matthew 22:34-40

OPEN: Is it Biblical to say that before you can truly love others you must learn to love yourself first? Also, what does the Lord regard as proof of our love for Him? In **Matthew 22:34-40** let's discover how to greatly love God which enhances our love for others.

Matthew 22:34 "Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together."

Historical: The Pharisees and Sadducees were religious parties within Judaism. The Sadducees were mostly a priestly class and encouraged collaboration with political ruling powers. They accepted only the first five books of the OT. They did not believe in the resurrection or angels. Jesus said the Sadducees were in error because they did not know the Scriptures nor the power of God (*Mtt 22:29*). The Pharisees were the dominant party of Judaism. They acknowledged the entire OT and believed in resurrection and angels. Initially, the Pharisees preserved Jewish culture amidst pagan influence, but became hypocritical and self-righteous. Jesus rebuked them for breaking the commands of God for the sake of their tradition (*Mtt 15:1-3*). The Pharisees and Sadducees opposed Jesus and plotted His death.

Matthew 22:35-36 "One of them, an expert in the law, tested Him with this question: ³⁶'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?'"

Tested (Greek: *peirazo*) means to try to trap or tempt.

Historical: The rabbis supposedly determined there were 613 laws in the Law of Moses. They had divided those 613 laws into affirmative and negative groups. The laws were also divided into heavy and light, the heavy ones absolutely binding and the light ones less binding. The rabbis spent hours proudly debating the merits of their divisions and the ranking of laws within the divisions. Because Jesus' teaching of Scripture was so utterly contrary to theirs, the Pharisees were convinced He was contradicting the Law of Moses and thus God. They were attempting to brand Him a heretic and thereby turn the people against Him (*MacArthur NT Commentary, Matthew 16-23, p. 337-338*).

Matthew 22:37-38 "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment."

1. LOVE GOD GREAT AND FIRST.

A. *Love God great and first with all your heart.*

1. **Heart** (Greek: *kardia*) came to stand for man's entire mental and moral activities—rationally and emotionally. The core of one's being.

a. **Acts 13:22** "(God) made David (Israel's) king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after My own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'"

B. *Love God great and first with all your soul.*

1. **Soul** (Greek: *psyche*) means breath of life, desire, passion, or person/self—one's distinct identity.

a. **Psalm 119:20** "My soul is consumed with longing for Your laws at all times." I

C. *Love God great and first with all your mind.*

1. **Mind** (Greek: *dianoia*) means intelligence, thinking through, or understanding. "The Hebrew meaning carried the idea of moving ahead with the mental endeavor of energy and strength, willful vigor and determination" (*MacArthur NT Commentary, Matthew 16-23, p. 339*).

a. **Isaiah 26:3-4** "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal."

- D. **Insight** from John MacArthur, Jr: “The person who truly loves the Lord with all his heart and soul and mind demonstrates his love by meditating on God’s glory (Ps 18:1-3), trusting in God’s power (Ps 31:23), seeking fellowship with God (Ps 63:1-8), loving God’s Word (Ps 119:165), being sensitive to how God feels (Ps 69:9), loving what God loves (Ps 119:72), loving whom God loves (1 Jhn 5:1), hating what God hates (Ps 97:10), grieving over sin (Mtt 26:75), rejecting the world (1 Jhn 2:15), longing to be with Christ (2 Tim 4:8) and obeying God wholeheartedly (*The MacArthur NT Commentary, Matthew 16-23*, p. 340).

Matthew 22:39-40 “And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

2. LOVE GOD GREAT AND FIRST BY LOVING OTHERS.

A. *Love others (neighbor) as yourself.*

1. **Neighbor** (Greek: *plesion*) means one who is near or close-by.

a. **Romans 13:8-10** “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

B. **Insight** from J.W. McGarvey: “(To love God with all your heart, soul, and mind) is the first commandment because it’s the foundation of God’s entire law. It is greatest because it includes all the other laws. All sins against God are forbidden by it. Likewise, all sins against mankind are prohibited by it; for sin against man is sin against God’s image, and against the objects of God’s love” (*The Fourfold Gospel*, p. 603-604).

CONCLUSION: What does the Lord regard as proof of our love for Him?

John 14:23-24 “Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love Him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me will not obey My teaching. These words you hear are not My own; they belong to the Father who sent Me.’”

Illustration: Author Michael Savage on America’s Crisis of Faith: “God Is Not Dead, Man Is Dead Towards God” (By John Hayward, *breitbart.com* 11/24/17)

Radio host and author Michael Savage joined SiriusXM host Alex Marlow to discuss his new book *God, Faith, and Reason* on an edition of Breitbart News Daily. “I just want to emphasize this: you hear ‘God’ in a title, right away you walk by and say, ‘ah, who wants to hear that preachy, sanctimonious stuff?’ That’s the immediate reaction in a nation as devoid of any faith as you could ever imagine. That’s where we’re at today. And yet, there’s a hard core of people who have never forgotten that this whole thing didn’t begin on its own out of nowhere, that there must be more to it all,” Savage noted. He said that Albert Einstein was used as an icon of supreme atheist reason by the Sixties counterculture, but Einstein himself said that “as he got older, the more that he probed the perimeters of the universe, the more he was sure there was a Creator, a grand Creator – it could not happen by accident.” “That seems to be left out of every discussion of one of the greatest minds of all time,” he observed. “Now, having said that, I’m just one of the many billions who has arrived on this planet and have asked the universal questions. My odyssey God, Faith, and Reason goes back to me as a little boy in the streets of the Bronx, all the way up to now.” Savage said his book is filled with stories, anecdotes, and observations of varying length, such as the tale of a hard-edged Jewish gangster who survived eight gunshot wounds, went to prison a broken man and picked himself up by realizing that God had saved his life. He drew inspiration from this story to declare that everyone comes to a moment in their lives when they “realize they need something more than themselves.”

Is it Biblical to say that before you can truly love others you must learn to love yourself first?

Matthew 16:24-27 “Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father’s glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what he has done.’”

John 12:25-26 “Jesus replied, ‘The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am, My servant also will be.’”

Philippians 2:3-4 “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Galatians 2:20 (Apostle Paul) “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Ephesians 5:28-29 “Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church...”

CLOSE: Is it Biblical to say that before you can truly love others you must learn to love yourself first? Or, in contrast, is it Scriptural to declare love God with all your heart, soul, mind and your neighbor as yourself greatly?