A LOVE SUPREME

God's first commandment is for us to be fully engaged in loving Him—with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

KEY POINTS

- For better or for worse, love is a great motivator.
- In our text, a scribe asks Jesus which commandment of the Mosaic Law is most important to observe.
- At that time in history, most common people didn't have ready access to scripture. So, in Mark 12, Jesus gives a simple summary of the many Mosaic laws, easy for anyone to memorize and remember:

  [29] Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. [30] And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. [31] And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.'"
- We must recognize that everything we do depends on and stems from having a supreme love for God.
- This is the first commandment. Matthew 22:31 highlights that "all the law and prophets" stem from this command.
- If we love God, we will love our neighbours, brothers and sisters. We will love the Word of God. We will love the Work of God. We will love the House of God.
- If we love God, we can truly learn to love ourselves.
- Our love for God will lead us into righteousness
- But how do we effectively love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength?
- Loving God with **all of our heart** means aligning our affections with His.
- This involves our passions, desires, and ambitions. Do they align with His will/interests? When we love God with all our heart, there is no competition for our affections (see Deuteronomy 6:13-25).
- It's no mistake that "heart" is listed first. The heart contains powerful emotions, affections and desires which steer everything else in our lives.
- Loving God with **all of our soul** includes the heart, but goes beyond it. The soul refers to the deepest parts of our being. Here, our love for Him is inextricably linked to our very purpose for being.
- The soul includes the intangible things that make up our distinct individuality—our personality, ego and ways of being.

KEY SCRIPTURE

Mark 12:28-31

- When we fully love God, we recognize that "...in Him we live, move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).
- Let's look at "with **all our mind".** The natural mind has to submit to the spiritual mind; reasoning must submit to revelation.
- We need to pray for divine revelation and transformation in our minds.
- We must also check what we use our mental energies for. What images do we put in front of our eyes? Do we use our minds to conspire or manipulate? To marinate on gossip or problems? Or are our minds focused on godly things? (See Philippians 4:8.)
- Loving the Lord our God with **all our strength** means our activities are pleasing to Him. This applies to our physical activities, relationships, entertainment, conversations, etc.
- We must consistently check ourselves: "Is God getting my best, or what's left?"
- This commandment is a tall order. We need God to help us—and He does.
- Love for the world leads to sin and spiritual death. But nurturing a love for God leads us to righteousness.

  We don't want our ways or habits to repulse God. When we lift our voices to worship Him, let it be a sweet sound; an attractive, sweet aroma to Him.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. What does it look like when we serve God with our whole i) heart; ii) soul; iii) mind; and iv) strength? Give specific examples.
2. What disciplines/practices should we add/maintain so that we, by God's grace and with His help, can develop and demonstrate our love for Him?

Prayer Time

I will serve You when I truly love You. And when I truly love You, my life will be pleasing to You. Thank you for helping me to be who You desire me to be. In Jesus' name, amen

L.G. ice-Breaker: Valentine's Day is coming soon. How do you usually celebrate? Or if you don't, why not? (What do you do instead)?

WEEK OF SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2018

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

(Reminds me/Confirms) (New idea) (Think about)

(Do this) (Speaks to my heart) (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS