



Love God with *ALL YOUR HEART*

In Mark 12:28, an expert on Jewish laws asked Jesus what commandment is foremost of all – and Jesus answered saying it is to “love God” and “love others”. Jesus commands us to love God with everything we have – with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. As we love God with all our heart, our capacity to love others also increases.

We can learn important life lessons on loving God wholeheartedly from the life of King Solomon, David’s son. Solomon was one of the most blessed and privileged character in the Bible who had an amazing beginning. He had the privilege of receiving instructions and warnings from his father, David (1 Kings 2:3). He had a personal, real encounter with God (1 Kings 3:5). God blessed him with wisdom (1 Kings 4:29-31) along with many other blessings like power, riches, and honor to help him reign (2 Chronicles 1:9, 10, 12). Solomon acknowledged God. He truly loved the Lord. However, his life took a different turn towards the end of his life. 1 Kings 11:4 tells us that his heart was turned away after other gods, and he was not wholly devoted to God, unlike his father David who loved God with all his heart.

How do we guard our hearts and remain faithful to the Lord? Let’s **G.R.O.W.**

Go to God

To love God with all our hearts, we must go to God. It begins with meditating on His heart and love for us. 1 John 4:19 tells us that we love because He first loved us. In an earlier verse, John describes how God loved us by giving up His Son as “propitiation” for our sins. He loved us selflessly, unconditionally, and sacrificially! It is only when we understand and experience His love can we respond to Him in complete love. Do you recall when you first came to know Jesus and how you used to love Him so much and prioritize Him in your life? Sadly, the busyness of life has clouded some of us, and we have forgotten our first love. Revelation 2:4-5 warns us about this. More than anything else, we must make sure that our hearts are fully devoted to our one and only first love – God Himself.

Recognize Idols

The direction of our life is directed by the love of our heart. That is why we are commanded to watch over our hearts with all diligence (Proverbs 4:23). Solomon did not guard his heart. He compromised and loved many foreign women and accepted their foreign gods (1 Kings 11:1-8). His heart was divided and he did not love God with all his heart like his father did. According to Martin Luther, an idol is “whatever our heart clings on and relies upon”. It is anything or anyone that takes the place of God in our life. If we live for and depend on something other

this week’s memory verse

whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than men,
COLOSSIANS 3:23

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than God, we will surely fail because idols are counterfeit gods that don't deliver on their promises. Put these idols to the test – test of love, happiness, emotions, security, control, approval, comfort, power – if anything becomes more important than God, that thing becomes an idol for you.

Obey

To obey God, the greatest motivation is LOVE. John 14:15 reminds us to obey God's commandments because of our love for Him. Solomon's father, David, wrote in Psalm 40:8 how he delights to do God's will – and that is an attitude we must all have. In Acts 13:22, we are reminded of God's favor upon David because he is “a man after” God's “own heart”. We should ask ourselves what are we running after – are we pursuing God's delight and pleasure? Or are we going after things that we can gain or benefit from? Obedience shows our love for God, that has been very consistent in the Bible!

Worship

Love for God is best captured in our worship for Him. We may not always be perfect – but even in times of failure, we should be driven to continue loving God and worshiping Him with all our heart. David, upon receiving Nathan's rebuke regarding his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12), prayed a prayer of confession and worship, recorded in Psalm 51. Worship is the overflow of our love for God; it is responding to the goodness of God, and it shows our gratitude and thankfulness to Him. Are we truly loving God with all our hearts? May our worship reflect that love in our daily lives!

discussion questions

Assess your love for God on a scale of 1-10. Do you love God with all your heart?

How do you know you love God? What is the evidence?

What is competing with your love for God and what will you do about it?

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