



## Loving God with All of You<sub>(Part 7)</sub>

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"Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength" (Mark 12:30) is a lofty command of Jesus, but not one that is impossible to gradually accomplish as we grow in each area.

Remember, this is not a command to merely do good things, nor is it a command to simply have warm feelings about God. It is a complete surrender and discipline of our interior life so that it results in having a life as God intended it to be, both inside and out. God wants our natural, or "gut," response to be godly. He is re-making us.

Loving God is not only for our sakes either. It is also for our neighbors. Jesus points this out with his inclusion of the second greatest command, "Love your neighbor as yourself." This causes our love for God to overflow into our relationships with others. Loving our neighbor does not steal attention and

devotion away from God. It is actually another way to love God.

The present culture casts a negative tone over the terms "evangelizing" or "making converts." While this is what happens in the technical sense, the reality of evangelizing is that we are trying to help others see what God is like so that they too can enjoy being a whole human person. When the culture speaks of "evangelizing" in a derogatory way, they are in essence saying, "Don't get too excited about that religion stuff. We know it isn't real. And you shouldn't trick others into believing it is." Indeed, if Christ were not real, then, yes, we would agree that evangelism is immoral. But if God happens to be real and manifested in Jesus Christ, and if He is really offering an abundant complete life, then it is actually wrong not to share it. There is no better news. And our sharing must be both spoken and acted out.

Not only must we be and share Christ with non-believers, but also we must be Christ to believers. If we are not developing in Christ-likeness by disciplining our heart, soul, mind, and strength to be well-ordered and well-behaved, then we are doing our fellow Christians a disservice. If we are not growing in wholeness, we actually have very little to offer

another person. If we are not growing in wholeness, our corporate worship, in every facet, suffers, and the church is rendered ineffective.

In short, we love God through loving our neighbor; we love our neighbor by loving God.

To accomplish this, we all need each other. Spiritual formation is not an enterprise for a few "called" persons or paid staff members. It is vital that everyone is involved in what the church is supposed to be as salt and light in the world. And that salt and light begins at the house of God. We need to serve as examples, encouragers, and mentors to one another in this business of loving God. No one can do it alone.

This is why I entitled this series, "Loving God With All of You." It has a double-meaning. Not only are we to love God with our whole selves, but we are also to do it within a community. I am to love God in the midst of the assembly of God-lovers. It is when we are whole persons in the fellowship of a whole assembly that Jesus' words are realized in the church: the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Let us pick up our mats and go forth into all that God has called us to become.

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