

More Like Jesus Part 8

The Great Commandment

Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34

Memory Verses: Mark 12:30

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

A proper job description is key to having success at your job. Here are some job descriptions I came across this past week that I thought you would appreciate. 1) Help people hate each other. That's for a Divorce Lawyer. 2) Talk in other people's sleep. That's for a college professor. 3) Stand on a field and get yelled at. That's for a baseball umpire. 4) Run away and call the police. That's for a security guard. And 5) Ensure that stupid people stay in the gene pool..... That's for a life guard.

When I sold phones for Verizon I knew that my primary expectation was to sell phones and accessories. The more I sold, the better I would be seen as doing my job well. I also knew that I was expected to help customers with technical issues and to treat them with respect. If, after review, it was deemed that I was not very good at selling and I was not good with customer service then I would be let go.

I think many of us have thought at one time or another, "wouldn't it be nice to have a clear and easy to understand job description for life." For example, "if I knew exactly what my purpose was here on this earth, then I could accomplish it and die happy knowing that I did what I was put here to do."

A recent study asked Americans, "where do you find meaning in your life." 69% said family. 34% said their career. 23% said money. Only 20% said faith and spirituality. Another study found that 17% of Americans didn't find meaning or purpose in this life at all. If only we knew for certain what the meaning of life was.

We are in a series called More Like Jesus where we are looking at the life of Christ and some of his more detailed teachings and we are seeing how we can emulate his life and apply these teachings to become more like Him. For the past three weeks we've been looking at some of the "I Am" statements from Jesus. He said, I Am the bread of life. I Am the light of the world, I Am the great shepherd, I Am the true vine, and I Am the Way, the truth, and the Life." In these statements Jesus is cryptically trying to make it clear to us that He is the one who gives true meaning and purpose to life. He is the only one who can satisfy and sustain us. He is the only one who can show us the path and lead us on it. He is the only one who can show us absolute truth and give us eternal life.

But this morning He is gives us an answer that is not cryptic. His command to us is clear and concise. Look with me if you would at **Matthew 22:34-40**. No analogy or symbolic language. What we see here in this passage is simple.... **The Greatest Purpose of Our Lives Is To Love God And Love People**. But that's easier said than done, isn't it. This morning I want us to look closely at these two job descriptions. How are we to love God and how are we to love people according to this Great Commandment.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we should see here is that... **To Be More Like Jesus We Must Love God With All Of Our Being**. Look with me at **Matthew 22:37-38**. So the Pharisee's get together and make a plot, which is never a good thing, and they pick one of their scribes to go and ask Jesus a question. Usually this is done to either trip him up or trick him into saying something they can use against him. So the scribe asks, what is the greatest commandment? Now, the Pharisees had over 600 different laws and they would pass their time arguing amongst themselves as to which ones were more important and which ones were not so important. They most likely wanted Jesus to pick one of these 600 and then have an argument with him concerning why he was wrong, but Jesus, as he often does, flips the script. He tells them that the first and greatest commandment is simply to Love God with one's entire being.

Now don't misunderstand what Jesus is saying here. This is not the first command in the Bible. We find that in **Genesis 2:16-17** where Jesus said, "you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Is it the first of the ten commandments? No, we find that in **Exodus 2:1-3** where it says, "you shall have no other gods before me." But isn't it interesting that to be obedient to God and to have no other gods before him are in effect prominent ways to show God that you do in fact love him with your entire being.

Mark 12:28-30 gives us more context. Here Mark adds that the word "first" said by Jesus means most important. To love God with your whole being is by far the most important command we could ever follow. Mark also adds the qualifier, "with all of our strength" to heart, soul, and mind. This in effect is a direct quote from **Deuteronomy 6:4-5** which in Jewish culture is referred to as the Shema. This passage is quoted daily by devout Jews as a reminder of who our God is and our responsibility to love him. The Shema was given to the Jews, in Moses' most lengthy and powerful sermon, as a strong reminder of Israel's mission going forward as they were about to enter into the promised land.

The most important detail here is found in **Matthew 22:40**, "all of the law and the prophets depend on this commandment." In order for us to understand why this commandment from Jesus, a quote from Moses in Deuteronomy, is the greatest commandment ever given, we must see what

it means that all of the law and prophets depend on it. When Jesus says “the law” he is talking about the first 5 books of the Old Testament which contain the primary law given to Moses on stone tablets called the 10 commandments. When Jesus says “the prophets” he is speaking about the rest of the books Old Testament books written by the prophets. In a way, Jesus is saying, that if you follow this one commandment then you will be following all of the commandments within the entire Old Testament, including the 10 most important. And this theory is easy to test. Let's look at the 10 commandments and ask the question, “what do these have to do with Loving the Lord with all my being?”

The first commandment says, “you shall have no other gods before me.” We cannot love God with all of our being if some of our love is devoted to other gods, especially ones we deem more important than God. The second commandment says, “you shall not make any image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath... you shall not bow down and worship them.” Once again, if we worship statues and idols we are not worshipping the one true God and therefore our love is not for him. The third commandment says, “you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.” Again, if we love God then we will have reverence for his name and in the way we honor it in true worship and in common conversation. And the fourth commandment says, “remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” Okay, 4 for 4. The sabbath is a day of rest and worship to show that we trust God and love him. Keeping the sabbath means to love him with the strength of our bodies, and our hearts. Each and every one of the first four commandments clearly point our attention to and show us how to love God with our whole being.

So if we are to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, in conjunction with the first four commandments, how does that look practically? How exactly do we love God with all of our heart? **We love God with all of our heart when we love him exclusively.** Him and Him alone. **Matthew 6:24** says no one can serve two masters. God calls the church his bride, he refers to Israel as his wife, and when we worship other gods we become spiritual adulterers. We are to have no other gods before us. God is the only one worthy of having our hearts. How exactly do we love God with all of our soul? **We love God with all of our soul when we find our satisfaction in Him more than any other person or thing.** Our love for God must surpass not only our love for other people, but also for the things of this world. **1 John 2:15** tells us that if we love the world the love of the father is not in us. How exactly do we love God with all of our mind? **We love God with all of our mind when we make decisions to obey His every command.** **John 14:21, 23-24** reminds us that if we keep God's commandments we love him. Obedience is evidence that we trust that God is telling us the truth. It reveals what we really believe in our mind. And, how exactly do we love God with all of

our strength? **We love God with all of our strength when we persevere in the face of every trial.** One of the greatest examples of love is commitment. The phrase goes when things get tough the tough get going. I think what most of us have experienced is that when things get tough it's hard to find someone to stick around. Yes the strength of our bodies to work and volunteer for God is part of the way we worship, but real strength is shown in the resolve of men and women to keep their faith in God when they go through hard times.

Life gives us plenty of opportunities to love God, and plenty of tests to show us and the world whether our love for him is true. How well we pass that test determines whether or not we are accomplishing the job description. Love God with our whole being; all of your heart, soul, mind and strength! This is the purpose of our lives! **The Greatest Purpose of Our Lives Is To Love God And Love People.**

The second thing to see here obviously is that... **To Be More Like Jesus We Must Love Others As We Love Ourselves**. **Matthew 22:39** tells us that if loving God is the first and most important commandment then the second most important commandment is loving our neighbors as ourselves. This command is also a quote from the Old Testament taken from **Leviticus 19:18**.

Mark 28:31-34 again gives us more context. Here we see some remarks given from the scribe. He adds in **vs. 33** that to love God and to love one's neighbor as one's self is greater than burnt offerings and sacrifices. Jesus responds in **vs. 34** that the scribe is not far from the kingdom of God. This is important, and we will come back to it in a second. But for now, yes, God truly desires our love and that we love others more than anything else.. more than all of the sacrifices, more than any offering. Isn't it funny, how people would always rather just give offerings since that's easier than loving God and others.

We must again look at **Matthew 22:40** to bring this all together. Jesus says that all of the law and prophets depend on this commandment. Let's again, test this against the 10 commandments. If the first four corresponded to the greatest commandment, then my guess is that the last 6 will correspond to the second greatest commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves. The fifth commandment says to, “Honor your father and mother.” The first people we are commanded to love as ourselves is our family, namely our parents – they are worthy of honor. The sixth says “you shall not murder.” I think we most certainly love others when we refrain from murdering them. Adding more weight to this command, in the sermon on the mount Jesus tells us that to hate someone in our hearts is to murder their soul. Refusing to hate others is probably the second most obvious way to love others after not murdering them. The seventh says, “you shall not commit adultery.” Most certainly loving others means not cheating on them

or being unfaithful to them with another person sexually. Again, in the sermon on the mount Jesus also shows us the strictness of this command extends to lustful thoughts as well. It is important in loving our brothers and sisters in Christ that we remain sexually pure in our thoughts and our actions. Sexual sins such as adultery, fornication, and pornography leave some of the most painful and longest lasting scars. The eighth says, "you shall not steal." Clearly, loving others means not stealing their possessions or swindling them out of their wages. The ninth says, "you shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." Again, this is pretty self explanatory. If you are lying, slandering, gossiping, or back biting against your neighbor... you are not showing them real love. In fact, this is probably the most common form of non-love we show towards others – words hurt. Especially, in a cancel culture words are very powerful to destroy people, even without evidence. Lastly, the tenth commandment says, "you shall not covet." And as with the rest, you can't be jealous of your neighbor if you love them and want the best for them. Jealously and covetousness lead to resentment and bitterness. Of course, all of these are things you would not want done to you by others. All of these are things we should refrain from doing to others if we care about them and see them as people created in the image of God. I think love for others most certainly looks like and adoption of the ten commandments.

So, practically, if we are to love others as ourselves in conjunction with the ten commandments, what does it look like. I think there are two major ways to show people that we love them as we love ourselves. First, show grace. We are bear with one another in love. **We don't hold their short-comings or their mistakes against them but chalk it up to, "we are all sinners and we all make mistakes."** If God has shown us such a grace, then we must show others the same grace and forgiveness. And, secondly, act with compassion. We bare one another's burdens. When someone asked, who is my neighbor Jesus responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan who showed amazing compassion to a stranger he didn't even know. **Compassion isn't a feeling, compassion is an action. To love our neighbor as ourselves means to reach out with a helping hand when others are in need.**

Again, life gives us plenty of opportunities to love others in unique and godly ways. If we obey the great command of loving God, we will inevitably obey the second greatest command to love others as ourselves. **The Greatest Purpose of Our Lives Is To Love God And Love People.**

Application

So, what is our first and second greatest jobs in this life? What are our two primary purposes on earth? Loving God and Loving People.

How you respond to the first, loving God, will determine how you respond to the second, loving people. When you obey the second, it proves that you have truly embraced the first. And, we can use the 10 commandments as a guide to do both of these, but as Jesus makes it clear, all of the scriptures depend on these commands. The word of God is our guidebook on how to accomplish these. Yes, it will be a difficult and lengthy process, but at the end of our lives, we will be judged based on whether or not we did these well.

Conclusion

How well have you loved God and loved people up to this point? **Question – If the Christian life were a career, and your job evaluation was based on how well you loved God and loved other people, would you be in danger of being fired?** If you haven't done well... how can you course correct? Write yourself a job description of how to love God and love others more.

Remember, the point of the scribe asking this question to Jesus in the first place was to trap him or trick him into saying something they could use against him... but, in the end, Jesus tells the Pharisee, you are so close to the kingdom of God. He was close, but still too far away. Why? What's the distance from being so close to the kingdom and actually being in the kingdom? The answer is.... to love Jesus as God. Jesus, the one all the law points to is standing right there in front of this lawyer, and though he has all the right answers, he doesn't accept THE answer. So, the final question today is this.... "Have you accepted Christ as your Lord and savior today?" Perhaps that is why you don't love God with all your being, or others as yourself. You don't know love because you don't know Jesus.