

PRECEPT

MATTHEW 22:34–40

³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.

³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’

³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

PROMISE

The great and first commandment in all of Scripture is to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind. The second greatest commandment is so essential that it must be mentioned along with the first one, to love our neighbours as ourselves. This means that our love of God is meant to overflow into our love for others. In Matthew 22, Jesus has “silenced the Sadducees,” but the Pharisees will have none of it and want to oppose Him publicly by testing Him. Thus, an expert in the law wants Jesus to answer a question that the Pharisees themselves struggled to answer: “Of all the commandments, which one is the most important?” Jesus’ response simultaneously simplifies our duty as believers, while also giving us the most challenging command we will be asked to live by. We are to love God with our total being and love others like we love ourselves. They work in tandem—we can’t do one without the other. The two commandments, Jesus says, stand together. Love in the truest sense demands abandonment of self to God, and God alone is the adequate incentive for such abandonment.

Trying to live our lives by focusing more on one of Jesus’ top commandments without the other is like driving a car that has its tires out of balance. We can still drive the car. It might shimmy a little when it gets up to highway speed, but it’s easy to ignore. Unfortunately, the longer you ignore it, the more damage it does. Tires wear off wrong, brake callipers warp, and soon you can hardly steer the vehicle. No doubt you’ll be frustrated and stranded before you know it. The two go together, it’s impossible to separate them, and Jesus said in verse 40, “*All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*” The greatest commandment means that the believer’s love of God ought to overflow to loving others in a genuine way. Our theology and our service do not stand alone but work in tandem. Good theology leads to loving action, and loving action is rooted in good theology. In John 13:34 Jesus said, “*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*” He said this right after He washed their feet; Judas, Peter, Thomas, and all His disciples. He gave this command after saying, “Truly, truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.”

LOVING LIKE JESUS MEANS LOVING OTHERS SINCERELY. Ephesians 4:32 tells us to be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven us.

LOVING LIKE JESUS MEANS LOVING OTHERS SACRIFICIALLY. According to Ephesians 5:2, we must live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

LOVING LIKE JESUS MEANS LOVING OTHERS SELFLESSLY. Philippians 2:5-6 says, “*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.*” Jesus humbled Himself in order to show His love for us and selflessly offered His life. Loving God and loving others happen best and most effectively in relationship. If we want our good theology to influence a broken world around us, we have to start with love for the people of our broken world—in and outside of the church.

PRACTICE

1. Loving God and Others. What does loving God and loving people mean to you personally? Why are these two meant to work together?

2. Challenge in Loving Others. What do you think is the most challenging part of loving people and what is the best way to overcome those challenges?

PRAYER

I. Worship Services

- Pray for more first-timers to know God and experience transformation in their lives.

II. Peace

- Pray for unity and peace to prevail in our world. Pray for transcendent peace to rule across all lands.

III. Unity

- Pray that God may raise His hands and let blessings, love, peace, unity, and joy fall on every country.

IV. Love

- Pray that God may help us be the change we want in the world by acting in kindness & love to one another.

V. Hope

- Pray that we will always hold steadfast to our living hope, Jesus Christ.

VI. Strength

- May God grant us strength during our weakness. May He always walk beside us especially in challenging times.

VII. Joy

- Pray that God may fill us with His joy, that overwhelming joy. May He use our lives to fulfil His purpose.