Lesson 2 focused upon the Great Commandment and its influence upon our hermeneutic. We continue our study of the foundations of our faith by beginning a discussion of the Great Commandment’s contribution to our Doctrine of God (theology) and our Doctrine of Christ (Christology).

Students of Scripture know that the Old Testament is the narrative of God’s progressive revelation of Himself to Israel. The pace at which God could make Himself known depended to some degree upon Israel’s readiness for new revelation. As His people grew in their knowledge of Him and in their love for Him, God revealed more of Himself. This is similar to the experiential sanctification process in which Christ-followers begin as spiritual children and grow into spiritual young adults, with some eventually becoming spiritual mothers and fathers.

The New Testament is largely the record of God’s ultimate revelation of Himself in Christ. We can best know, understand, and experience intimacy with God in our lives by knowing, understanding, and experiencing intimacy with Jesus. Our understanding of God the Father is limited to what natural humankind can understand about the supernatural Creator. For this reason, Jesus humbled Himself and took on the form of a human being (Phil. 2:5-7). By knowing, understanding, and experiencing the human side of Jesus, the Son, we better know and understand His Father (John 14:9).

We learn in this lesson that God desires to receive agapé love from those He loves (Matt. 22:37). Because God and Jesus are One, we can also say the same is true of Jesus. We also learn that “loving Christ” means ministering to Him relationally and obeying His commands and teachings. Only those who love Christ can obey His commands and live by His teachings (John 14:15-24a).

Some in your Bible Fellowships, like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, might practice Christian ethics and behavior out of duty and obligation. They see factual knowledge and performance as the key to their spiritual life. John Eldridge, in The Journey of Desire, calls what they are practicing “a very soul-killing spirituality.” Like first century Jews, they go church to learn how to get with the program. Such belief leads to the dangers and bondage of legalism. This group may struggle with the idea that ministry to Jesus and obedience to His commands and teachings flow from our agapé love for Him. If you know that some in your group struggle with this teaching, prepare yourself to respond with grace and patience to their resistance.

Our teaching pastors correctly have taught that God not only desires to know and love us, but that He desires that we intimately know and love Him, too. This truth undergirds our belief that growth toward spiritual maturity is a journey into deeper intimacy with the Triune God that produces a reflection of Christ’s love to our near ones and to one another. May the Christ who indwells you reveal Himself to you and, through the Holy Spirit, open your eyes to fresh insights into His desires and interests.

God Desires Our Love

The 22nd chapter of Matthew’s gospel reports that the Pharisees and Sadducees attempted publicly to discredit Jesus. The Pharisees first tested Him with a question about paying taxes (vs. 15-21). Next the Sadducees endeavored to trap Him with a question pertaining to marriage in heaven following the resurrection. In both cases, Jesus answered directly with reason and authority, amazing the crowds while embarrassing His questioners. In verses 34 through 40, the Pharisees again attempted to discredit Jesus.

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.” (Matthew 22:34-40)

Jesus responded to the Pharisee’s new test by citing Deuteronomy 6:5. Read again verses 37 and 38. Practicing what we learned in Lesson 2, let’s ask three questions of this passage: What does it say? What does it mean? What does it suggest to me about God?
**Faith Foundations**

**Lesson 3**

God Desires Our Love

**What Does It Say?**

Diagramming this imperative helps us both to “see” the sentence’s structure and to identify the key words and phrases that we later define.

Note that “Love” as translated from the Greek is an imperative verb, making the subject an implied plural “you.” The first phrase, “the Lord your God,” tells us who we are to love. The second, third, and forth phrases advise us how to love God.

The second sentence in the diagram (v. 38) describes the first (v. 37) as the “first and greatest commandment.” However, verse 37 is not actually a restatement of the first of the Ten Commandments as recorded in either Exodus 20:3 or Deuteronomy 5:7. Instead, Jesus cites Moses’ elaboration of the meaning of the first Commandment in the Decalogue as it appears in Deuteronomy 6:

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.*

(Deuteronomy 6:4-6)

**What Does It Mean?**

Our diagramed sentences contain four key words indicated in bold type: love, heart, soul, and mind. Understanding their meaning deepens our insight into Matthew’s intended meaning for His original audience.

The English word *love* is a form of the Greek verb *agapao*. In **The Generous Heart of God** we discussed the meaning of the *agapé, agapao* family of words. As a quick review, we consider the overarching connotation of the word group to include the following:

1. Love is an act of the will; it is a choice made by the “lover” without regard of the merit or worthiness of the beloved (Rom. 5:8).

2. Love respects and values the beloved (Rom. 5:10).

3. Love focuses upon the needs of the beloved (Matt. 6:8; 6:32-33; Phil. 4:19).

4. Love freely gives from its resources to serve (minister to) the needs of the beloved without demand of return (Matt. 10:8b; John 3:16; James 1:16-18).

5. Love gives first (Gen. 1:27-31; Rom. 11:35).

The phrase “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” is idiomatic for “with your whole being.” However, its individual parts are important, too. For example, the inspired author places *heart* at the beginning of the phrase to give it added emphasis. The ancients saw the heart as the locus of emotions, particularly love of God. The placement of *heart* at the beginning of the phrase tells us that the emotional (feeling) side of our relationship with God is very important. Deeper levels of love occur in emotionally close or intimate relationships. God loves us. We respond to His love with gratitude and devotion—with love. *Soul*, as used in this phrase, is similar to our understanding of personality. *Mind* refers to intellect or will. With the mind we choose to love. Hence, in the phrase we have emotion, personality, and intellect—the whole being.

Keil and Delitzsch⁶ offer commentary on the phrase from Deuteronomy 6:5 and, by extension, to Jesus’ citation:
The demand “with all the heart” excludes all half-heartedness, all division of the heart in its love. The heart is mentioned first, as the seat of the emotions generally and of love in particular; then follows the soul (nephesh) as the centre of personality in man, to depict the love as pervading the entire self-consciousness; and to this is added, “with all the strength,” (i.e. of body and soul). Loving the Lord with all the heart and soul and strength is placed at the head, as the spiritual principle from which the observance of the commandments was to flow…. Christ therefore calls the command to love God with all the heart “the first and great commandment” and places it on a par with the commandment contained in Leviticus 19:8—to love one’s neighbor as oneself—and then observes that on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Mt 22:37-40; Mk 12:29-31; Lk 10:27).

Even the gospel knows no higher commandment than this. The distinction between the new covenant and the old consists simply in this: the love of God which the gospel demands is more intensive and cordial than what the Law of Moses demanded…. [It] was displayed in a much grander and more glorious form in the gift of His only begotten Son for our redemption, than in the redemption of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt.

What Does It Suggest to Us about God?

In the Old Testament God progressively reveals His love for humankind. In the New Testament He more dramatically demonstrates His love with the gift of salvation and reconciliation that we receive by faith in Jesus, the Christ. This is why the Apostle John says to us that the essence of God’s Being is love (1 John 4:8, 16). All of Scripture reveals God’s heart to give generously in order to bless graciously those He loves!

On the other hand, the Great Commandment reveals that God desires to receive agapè love generously and graciously from those He loves! Explicit in this is a mutual giving and receiving of love. As the Apostle John said, “We love [God] because He first loved us” (1 John 4:10).

Just as God is sensitive to our desires and needs, He wants us to be sensitive to His desires and interests. As gifts we receive from Him issue from His love for us, He desires that the gifts we offer Him issue from our love for Him.

Finally, the Great Commandment says that the love we give to God from our whole being is VERY important to Him. Jesus expresses this by identifying the imperative to love God as the “first and greatest commandment” (Matt. 22:38).

Expressions of Love

The definition of agapè love as it occurs in the Great Commandment reveals that God desires to receive love from us in the same manner that He receives love from the Son and the Spirit. Recalling the connotation of agapè love, we can say that out of respect and gratitude, we choose to love God by giving freely and wholeheartedly from our resources to serve Him and to minister to His desires and interests. We might even be bold enough to say that we can minister to His emotions and feelings that are satisfied by close, caring relationships. 

I am aware that it is a stretch for some to accept that God might have emotional or relational “needs.” However, we must consider two points of argument. First, God the Father, Son, and Spirit exist in eternity in relationships characterized by the mutual giving and receiving of agapè love. The members of the Trinity are indeed spiritual beings, but they are also relational beings who presumably bring joy to one another by giving of themselves each to the other, ministering to and serving one another.
Some theologians argue that God is dispassionate, having no needs that cannot be satisfied within His self. However, the Bible indicates clearly that God is not devoid of emotion or passions. In fact, the inspired writers of Scripture often help us understand God’s nature by anthropomorphically ascribing human emotions to Him. For example, Jesus is pictured as mourning (Luke 19:41, John 11:35) and being full of joy (Luke 10:21), while the Holy Spirit is shown as being capable of grieving (Eph. 4:30). Therefore, we might rejoice with Christ when we perceive He might enjoy us celebrating with Him; we might mourn with Him when we think He might be blessed by our expressions of comfort (Rom. 12:15). Admittedly, I often feel my efforts to rejoice and mourn with God are meager and wanting. However, I have come to believe that He chooses to count my attempts to minister to Him in this way as meaningful and satisfying.

Jesus tells us we also can express our love for Him in other ways. Look at the two passages below. They are part of a conversation between Jesus and the Twelve a few hours before His arrest in the Garden. What do the passages have in common? How are they different?

**Passage One**
[Jesus said] “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth…. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” (John 14:15-17a, 21)

**Passage Two**
[Jesus said] “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.” (John 14:23-24a)

**Common Things**

The conditional phrase “if you love me” appears in both Passage One and Passage Two. Some imagine that Jesus is wagging a finger and scolding the disciples. However, the context does not support that interpretation. Notice, Jesus promises to send the Counselor (Comforter, KJV; Helper, NASU) to be with them. Why would He scold and comfort simultaneously? The context suggests a comforting tone rather than a scolding one. If I may paraphrase, it is as if Jesus is saying, “Don’t worry about laboring to keep the commandments as do the Scribes and Pharisees. If you love me, you will naturally want to keep my commandments and teachings.” The Apostle John would later say, “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

**Differences**

In the first passage Jesus equates loving Him with obeying His commands, while in the second passage He links loving Him with obeying His teachings. Commands translates from a Greek word that commonly referenced charges, commissions, orders, or commands given by a king or deity to his/her subjects. Teachings renders another Greek word that meant “a collection of words or sayings.” In the New Testament, the word nearly always refers to the complete body of Jesus’ teaching as revealed both in His spoken word and in His actions. Integrating the two ideas, we understand that we express love for Christ as we—motivated by love for Him—do ALL He commands and teaches.

In the second passage we note that in the same manner in which love for Christ naturally leads to obedience, so does a lack of love for Him result in disobedience: “He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.” Love is first a matter of the heart. Then kind, caring actions spring forth from that love.
There is an important corollary here that we must not miss. Jesus puts it this way: “He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.” A lifestyle of believing the right doctrine and doing the right things is insufficient in the absence of agapé love for Christ. This principle is at the heart of James’ New Testament writing:

My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ...

5 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. 6 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 7 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it....

26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

(James 2:1-4, 8-10, 26)

James is not writing to a group of Christians who think of salvation as a license to sin. He does not argue for an approach to sin management that earns the rule-keeper/sin-avoider a place in heaven. Instead, He is writing to Christian Jews who are holding onto a false standard by which to measure true spirituality or religion. James’ audience affirms the right doctrines and avoids scandalous sins.

The passage opens with James rebuking church members for discriminating against and judging the poor (vs. 1-4). Yet they believe themselves to be good Christians. They believe that Jesus is the Messiah and follow some of His commands and teachings. However, they have failed to obey the command to love others with agapé love. Consequently, they have broken what James calls the Royal Law. They have failed to love others with agapé love. James’ point in this passage is straightforward: right belief and right behavior produce a dead faith when exercised apart from agapé love.

**APPLICATION IDEAS & QUESTIONS**

There are two “big ideas” to take from this lesson.

1. The Great Commandment tells us that God desires to receive agapé love from those He loves!
2. We express our love for Jesus by ministering to His relational needs as well as by obeying His commands and teachings.

The first step in applying these truths and principles is self-examination. We must become aware of the condition of our heart (e.g., true feelings toward God). Then we determine the basis for our behaviors. Finally, we must commit to any necessary corrective action. Each step requires that we submit to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to be our teacher, as well as seek feedback from those who love us and know us well. Remember, wise men seek the wisdom of others (Prov. 9:9, 12:15).

Here are some helpful questions to ask in our quest for Spirit-informed self-awareness:

1. What expressions of love for God are typical for you?
2. During intimate moments with God, has the Holy Spirit ever prompted you to minister to some relational or feeling based need of the Father, Son, or Spirit?
3. Do you consider obedience to Jesus’ commands and teachings as simply...
Faith Foundations

God Desires Our Love

Helping People Close the Gap through the Sunday Morning Experience

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
7. Roger Barrier, from a sermon series at Casas Adobes Baptist Church during the fall of 2004.
In systematic theology, God’s “communicable attributes” describe elements of His character that answer the question, “How is God like us in His being, and in mental and moral attributes?” This Commentary is devoted to one of His moral attributes: love. The material abridges writings on the topic published by Wayne Grudem¹ and Paul Enns.²

### God’s Attributes

Most writers in systematic theology describe the attributes of God’s character as being either *incommunicable* or *communicable*. Incommunicable attributes are those that God does not share with or “communicate” to human beings. Of the two classifications, God’s incommunicable attributes are probably the most misunderstood because, as humans, we have no experience with them. Communicable attributes are those that God shares with or “communicates” to us. Space does not allow a full discussion of all of God’s attributes. However, because of the focus of this lesson, I list God’s commonly recognized communicable attributes in the chart below. Then we briefly discuss His moral attribute of love.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes of God’s Being</th>
<th>God’s Mental Attributes</th>
<th>God’s Moral Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♦ Spirituality</td>
<td>♦ Knowledge (Omniscience)</td>
<td>♦ Goodness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ Invisibility</td>
<td>♦ Wisdom</td>
<td>♦ Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦ Truthfulness (Faithfulness)</td>
<td>♦ Mercy, Grace, Patience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### God’s Moral Attribute of Love

Grudem defines the attribute of God’s love, saying, “God’s love means that God eternally gives of Himself to others.” God is self-giving to benefit humankind. His very nature moves Him to give of Himself in order to bless or bring about good. Scripture provides evidence of this attribute among the members of the Trinity even before creation. For example, speaking to His Father, Jesus refers to His own glory saying, “my glory which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24). This tells us that God loved the Son and honored Him from all eternity. Jesus also indicates love for the Father: “I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father” (John 12:31). There is reciprocity of love between the Father and Son. We can safely assume that such agapé love extends to and flows from the Holy Spirit. “Trinitarian Love” is the name sometimes given to the mutual giving and receiving of love between the members of the Trinity.

Grudem writes:

The self-giving that characterizes the Trinity finds clear expression in God’s relationship to mankind, and especially to sinful men…. Paul writes,
“God shows His love for in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). John also writes, “For God so loved that world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). It should cause us great joy to know that it is the purpose of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to give of themselves to us to bring us true joy and happiness. It is God’s nature to act in this way toward us for all eternity. We imitate this communicable attribute of God, first by loving God in return, and second by loving others in imitation of the way God loves them.

**Keeping a Balanced Perspective**

The incommunicable elements of God’s character describe Him as self-existent, unchangeable, eternal, and unified. The idea that our expressions of love to God bring Him joy is difficult for some to accept because they misunderstand one of the attributes of His Being: self-existence (sometimes called independence or aseity). This attribute says that God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, yet we and the rest of creation can glorify Him and bring Him joy. Scripture does indicate in several places that God absolutely is independent and self-sufficient (e.g., Job 41:11; Ps. 50:10-12; Acts 17:24-35).

It is important that we balance the truth of God’s self-sufficiency with the truth that we can glorify Him and bring Him joy. About this Grudem says:

...It is one of the most amazing facts in all of Scripture that just as God’s love involves giving of Himself to make us happy, so we can give of ourselves and actually bring joy to God’s heart. Isaiah promises God’s people, “As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” (Isa. 62:5), and Zephaniah tells God’s people, “The Lord, your God, is in your midst.... He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will renew you in His love; He will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival” (Zeph. 3:17-18).

Some theologians suggest another attribute associated with God’s unchangeable Being which makes it impossible for us to minister in a manner that appeals to the emotions or passions of the Trinity. That attribute is usually referred to as God’s impassibility. This attribute asserts that God does not have emotions or passions, but is “impassable”—not subject to emotions or passions. Those who assert this attribute base their belief upon a questionable interpretation of Acts 14:15. In fact, this is the passage that the second chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith cites as proof of God’s impassibility.

Casas’ teaching pastors and spiritual leaders do not accept “impassibility” as a valid attribute of God and they all reject it as doctrine. Two principles of hermeneutics argue against belief in this doctrine. First, we do not base doctrine upon obscure references or upon those that genuinely are subject to varying interpretations. Second, we allow Scripture to assist in the interpretation of Scripture. In this case, there are numerous references that picture God as having emotions (see “Studying the Word Together”). As Grudem says, “He is the God whose passions we are to imitate for all eternity, as we like our Creator hate sin and delight in righteousness.”

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Helping People Close the Gap through the Sunday Morning Experience
Helping People Close the Gap through the Sunday Morning Experience

STEP ONE: GETTING READY TO LEARN (10 MINUTES)

Use material from page 3-2 to prepare for this section.

- After telling your group that today’s discussion focuses upon God’s desire for our love and ways that we can express our love to Him, divide your department into groups of 3 to 4 people. Next, number the groups consecutively. Even-numbered groups work with the Great Commandment as it appears in Deuteronomy 6:4-5; odd-numbered groups, with Matthew 22:37-38 (passages on handout).

- Ask each group to answer the following questions (on handout):
  1. What does the passage say?
  2. What does the passage mean?
  3. What does the passage suggest to us about God’s nature?

STEP TWO: GOD DESIRES OUR LOVE (10 MINUTES)

Use material from Studying the Word Together pages 3-3 to 3-4, as well as Commentary pages 3-8 to 3-9, to prepare for this section.

- Explain what Matthew 22:37-38 says by quickly drawing the related sentence diagram on your white board. Point out the key points of the passage and discuss their implications for our lives.
out the implied subject and the imperative verb. Identify the phrases, explaining that the first tells us whom to love, while the second, third, and forth reveal some things about how we are to love. Next, circle the key words, telling your group that understanding these words will help us understand what the passage means.

♦ Explain what Matthew 22:37-38 means by reminding your Bible Fellowship of the connotations of agapé love (on handout).

♦ Next, define heart, soul, and mind, emphasizing the importance of the placement of “with all your heart” in the string of phrases.

♦ Tell your group that this passage suggests some important things to us about the nature of God. Remind them that 1 John 4:8 and 16 tell us that the essence of God’s nature is love. Therefore, He is a Being who wants to both give and receive agapé love. We are accustomed to thinking of God as loving, but we do not always remember that He longs for our love in return. Receiving our love is important to Him. That is the implication of verse 38: “This is the first and greatest commandment.”

STEP THREE: EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE (10 MINUTES)

Use material from pages 3-4 to 3-6 to prepare for this section.

♦ Emphasize to your department that recalling the connotation of agapé love leads us, out of respect and gratitude, to choose to love God by giving freely and wholeheartedly from our resources to serve Him as well as to minister to His desires and interests.

♦ Describe how Scripture helps us to understand God’s nature by anthropomorphically ascribing human emotions to Him. For example, Jesus is pictured as mourning (Luke 19:41, John 11:35) and being full of joy (Luke 10:21), while the Holy Spirit is shown as being capable of grieving (Eph. 4:30). Therefore, we might rejoice with Christ when we perceive that He wants us to celebrate with Him; we might offer comfort when we think He might be grieving (Rom. 12:15). Loving expressions of this kind minister to the relational needs of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

♦ Using John 14:15-17a and 21, as well as John 14:23-24a (both on handout), clarify that we also express love to Jesus when we keep His commands and live by His teachings. Be sure to make the point that doing “good, religious, or spiritual things” in the absence of authentic love for others is not true obedience (James 2:1-4, 8-10, 26).

STEP FOUR: APPLICATION IDEAS & QUESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Use material from pages 3-6 to 3-7 to prepare for this section.

♦ Have someone in your group read aloud John 8:31-32 and another read aloud Proverbs 9:9. (Assign the verses to volunteers prior to the teaching time, giving them opportunity to look them up in their Bibles and read them silently before reading aloud.)

♦ Refer your department to the “Application Questions” on their handout, giving them a moment to read each of the questions reflectively.

♦ Next, ask them “according to John 8:31-32,” to invite the Holy Spirit to reveal “freeing truth” to them about a question they need to ponder. Give them time to listen meditatively to the Spirit. Be aware that some in your Fellowship, as mentioned in this lesson’s Commentary under “Keeping
God Desires Our Love

LESSON NOTES BLANKS:

Love... includes:
1. An act of the will; a choice made by the “lover”...
2. Respects and values...
3. Focuses upon the needs...
4. Freely gives from its resources...
5. Gives first...
   ... with all your heart — i.e., your emotions
   ... with all your soul — i.e., your personality
   ... with all your mind — i.e., your intellect or will

God... desires to both give and receive agapé love....

We express to God our agapé love for Him by
1. Freely giving...— including sharing in His emotions....
2. Gratefully responding to His love by obeying His commands....
Helping People Close the Gap through the Sunday Morning Experience

**Today’s Scriptures**

*Deuteronomy 6:4-5:* Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

*Mathematics 22:37-38:* Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment.

*John 14:15-17a, 21:* [Jesus said] “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth…. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

*John 14:23-24a:* [Jesus said] “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.”

*James 2:1-4, 8-10, 26:* My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it….

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

**Next Week’s Lesson:** Knowing and Loving God

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**Lesson Notes**

**God Desires Our Love**

**Love** (from the agapè, agapao family of Greek words) includes:

1. An act of the will; a ____________ made by the “lover” without regard of the merit or worthiness of the beloved (Rom. 5:8).
2. Respects and ____________ the beloved (Rom. 5:10).
3. Focuses upon the ____________ of the beloved (Matt. 6:8; 6:32-33; Phil. 4:19).
4. Freely ____________ from its resources to serve (minister to) the needs of the beloved without demand of return (Matt. 10:8b; John 3:16; James 1:16-18).
5. Gives ____________ (Gen. 1:27-31; Rom. 11:35).

... with all your heart — i.e., your ____________

... with all your soul — i.e., your ____________

... with all your mind — i.e., your ____________ or will

God is a Being whose essence is love and who desires to both ____________ and ____________ agapè love (1 John 4:8, 16).

We express to God our agapè love for Him by

1. Freely giving from our resources to serve Him and to minister to His desires and interests—including sharing in His ____________ (i.e., His mourning, Luke 19:41, John 11:35; joy, Luke 10:21; grief, Eph. 4:30; see Rom. 12:15).
2. Gratefully responding to His love by ____________ His commands and teachings (John 14:15-17a, 21, 23-24a; James 2:1-4, 8-10, 26).

**Application Questions (for Personal Reflection):**

1. What expressions of love for God are typical for you?
2. During intimate moments with God, has the Holy Spirit ever prompted you to minister to some relational or feeling based need of the Father, Son, or Spirit?
3. Do you consider obedience to Jesus’ commands and teachings as simply a matter of knowing the actions to take and exercising the will to act?
4. To what degree do you believe that agapè love motivates your ministering to the relational needs of Christ and following His commands and teachings?
5. What transformation needs to take place in your heart to empower you to more wholeheartedly love God?
Daily Reflections

Begin each daily reflection by meditating a few minutes on the suggested Scripture passage. Seek to listen to the Holy Spirit as He speaks to you. Then consider the comments and questions about the passage. Be aware of both your thoughts and your feelings. Respond to God through both.

Monday: To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32)
How have you experienced freedom through the truth of Jesus’ teaching? In what ways might you experience greater freedom as He reveals additional truth?

Tuesday: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. (Deuteronomy 6:4-6)
Loving God is initially a matter of the heart! If this commandment rested more deeply in your heart, how might the Holy Spirit transform you?

Wednesday: Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment.” (Matthew 22:37-38)
Do you ever marvel that Almighty God desires the wholehearted agapé love of those He loves? How might your life be different if you could express your love for God more wholeheartedly?

Thursday: [Jesus said] “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth…. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” (John 14:15-17a, 21)
Look at the promises that Jesus makes to those who love Him and express that love through obedience! The Father loves those who love His Son. Jesus reveals Himself to those who love Him. As you more deeply believe these truths, how might the Holy Spirit transform you?

Friday: [Jesus said] “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.” (John 14:23-24a)
What is the correlation between loving Jesus and following His commandments? Without love for Christ, is genuine obedience to His teachings possible?