

# Loving Others

One of the questions that people have been asking since the very beginning is, “What is the purpose of life?” We have good news because God’s Word is very clear as it relates to this question. The purpose of life—your life, my life—is bound up in one central, powerful command: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. (Mark 12:30-31)

What is your response when someone bares their soul to you? What should be our response when someone shares their emotional or spiritual struggles?

Few things reveal our inadequacy more than listening to someone’s problems and not having a clue what to say. When people use words like “depression,” “anxiety attack,” “addiction,” or “mental illness,” we tend to shrink back. These are words that describe deep problems, likely requiring a combination of medication and professional counseling. Or do they?

During the last century, the church began to drink from the well of psychology. The water promised to be the potion that would resolve emotional, mental, and even spiritual problems. Psychology cast troubles in a new light, identified new sources for our problems, and proposed new solutions to solve them.

Even with its multitude of contradictory theories and questionable therapies, psychology has successfully altered how the world responds to the problems of life. Tragically, setting aside its infinite spiritual resources, the church of Jesus Christ embraced this revolution of humanistic thinking.

For centuries, the burden of caring for the souls of men and women was gladly accepted by the church. With its trust in Scripture, its empowerment by the Spirit, and the all-sufficient grace of Christ, the church could provide comfort in affliction, light in darkness, rebuke in rebellion, help in weakness, and hope in every trial.

Famous preachers of the past are known rightfully for their faithful expositions, powerful evangelism, and insights into Scripture. But many of these men were also exemplary in their care for sinning and suffering saints through their preaching, writing, and counseling.

Many of today’s preachers are known for having sermons that merely scratch the surface of what the congregation needs. So, what happens when someone seeks help for intense personal struggles? It’s quite common for them to be referred to a professional counselor outside the church. Many churches are no longer centers that care for the soul. They are not the place where sinning and suffering souls can go for help and comfort.

Jesus' message for us today should be centered on loving sacrificially, especially when it feels undeserved. He might remind us that our love isn't just a response to people's behavior but a reflection of God's love for us. "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them" (Luke 6:32). Loving difficult people isn't easy, but it's powerful—revealing God's love to those who may have never seen it before.

Now, we all know the world is full of distractions. We live in a time when our hearts and minds are pulled in every direction. But Jesus, in His great wisdom, boiled it all down for us. He said that the very heart of God's law, the very essence of what it means to live as a child of God, is rooted in love.

This is not a passive kind of love. This is not the kind of love that just says, 'I love God' and leaves it at that. No, Jesus said we are to love God with all of our heart. That means our deepest affections—our passions, our desires—should be completely given over to Him. Answer this question before moving on: What does it look like for you to give everything over to God?

...What should it look like? It means that God must come first in everything. First in our hearts, before any other affection or desire. We love Him above all else because He is our Creator, our Savior, and our Provider. He is the One who gave us life, and He is the One who offers us eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ. But it's not just our hearts, is it? Jesus also said we are to love Him with all our soul. This speaks to the very core of our being, the eternal part of us that will live forever. Our souls were made to know and worship God. They were made to be in relationship with Him. We cannot love God in half-measures, or with a divided heart. Loving God with all our soul means we dedicate ourselves fully to Him—our thoughts, our will, our actions—are all aligned with His.

And then Jesus says we are to love God with all our mind. Our minds are powerful things, because what we think shapes how we live. So many people are consumed by the thinking of this world, by what the world says is important. But God calls us to think differently, to set our minds on things above (Colossians 3:2). We are to love Him with the fullness of our understanding, to fill our minds with His Word, and to meditate on His truth. This kind of love isn't passive; it's active and intentional. We must choose to think about God, to reflect on His character, His goodness, and His faithfulness. Loving God with our mind means we think about Him, we seek Him, and we let His truth guide us.

And finally, Jesus says we are to love God with all our strength. This speaks to our physical bodies, our energy, and our efforts. Everything we do—whether it's at work, in our relationships, or in serving others—should be done in a way that honors God. Loving God with all our strength means we give Him the best of our ourselves; our time and our resources. It's not just about what we say, it's about how we live. Our strength, our actions, our lives are to be fully surrendered to Him.

Now, Jesus didn't stop there. He went on to say, "Love your neighbor as yourself." This is where the rubber meets the road! It's one thing to say, "I love God," but it's another thing to say, "I love my neighbor." Jesus didn't just tell us to love those who are easy to love. You know, those who are kind to us, those who are already our friends. No, He calls us to love everyone. He calls

us to love those who may not love us back, to love those who are different from us, and to love those who might even persecute us.

You see, loving our neighbor is not a suggestion; it's a command. It's an overflow of our love for God. The Bible tells us that God is love, and those who abide in God must also love others. We don't get to pick and choose who we love. Our love should be a reflection of God's love for us. He loved us when we were unlovable, when we were His enemies, and He calls us to extend that same grace and love to those around us.

Are you loving your neighbor the way Jesus loves you? Are you loving your neighbor in a way that shows the love of Christ in your life? Are you willing to serve, to sacrifice, and to give, even when it costs you something? This command to love God and love others is not just a nice idea; it is the foundation of the Christian life. Everything else we do flows from this. Our worship, our service, our relationships, our actions—everything comes down to love.

So, what does that look like in your life? Are you truly loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Are you loving your neighbor as yourself? If you're struggling with that, know that you can't do it on your own. You need the power of the Holy Spirit working in you. You need to surrender your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength to God. Only then can you begin to love others the way He has loved you.

This is the greatest commandment. It is the call of the gospel. And it is a call to radical love—love that changes lives, and love that transforms the world. If you are a true child of God, then the call from Jesus Christ has already been placed on your heart. Make the decision to pray daily to be blessed with humility and courage to live this out moment by moment. Obeying this call comes with the promise of a *spiritual* abundant life. Will you answer that call today? By your love, others will know that you are disciples of Jesus Christ, and through your love, the world will see the glory of God!



## GOD'S PROMISES

John 13:34-35

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1 John 4:7

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”

1 John 4:19

“We love because he first loved us.”

Romans 13:10

“Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.”

1 Peter 4:8

“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”

Matthew 22:39

“And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Galatians 5:13

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

Colossians 3:14

“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

Ephesians 4:2

“With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.”

Luke 6:31

“And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-5

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful.”

Mark 12:31

“The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”

John 15:12

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

Ephesians 5:2

“And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Matthew 5:44

“But I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.’”

Titus 3:4-5

“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy.”

Philippians 2:3

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

James 2:8

“If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well.”

1 John 3:18

“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

Romans 12:10

“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”