

THE GREATEST

If I asked you: “*What is the greatest sin that anyone could commit?*” What would you answer? Would you say: murder, idolatry, adultery, perversion, hatred or blasphemy?

If I were to ask: “*What is the greatest need and priority of your life?*” What would you think - academic achievement, promotion, marriage, political advancement, prayer, sanctification, tongues, evangelism?

When Jesus was asked, He replied that the **Greatest Commandment** is this:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second most important commandment is this: Love your neighbour as you love yourself. There is no other commandment more important than these two.”
Mark 12:30, 31

It follows then that **the greatest sin** would be to fail to love God with all our heart... Failure to love God is the root sin that leads to all others. You cannot love your neighbour unless you first love God. What counts in God's eyes is not so much the bad that we have done, evil as that is, but the good that we could have done, but did not do, (*James 4:17; Luke 12:47, 48; Matt. 25:41-46*).

Jesus demands **whole-hearted love** - not with some of, or most of, our heart, but love God with **all** ... Nothing less than everything we have is sufficient enough for God. Nothing other than the best we have is worthy enough for the sovereign Lord, who is our Creator and Redeemer.

There are four aspects to this command which Jesus emphasised.

We must Love God:

EMOTIONALLY - Our hearts should be filled

with love for God. We should get excited about Him and eagerly desire to experience His presence.

“Your presence fills me with joy and brings me pleasure forever,”
Psalm 16:1

SPIRITUALLY - We should seek to experience His glorious presence and Majesty through constant prayer, praise and worship. Our souls should feed on His Word and drink of His Spirit.

“O God, You are my God, and I long for You. My whole being desires You; like a dry, worn-out, and waterless land, my soul is thirsty for You.”
Psalm 63:1

MENTALLY - We should fill our minds with God's cleansing and life-giving Word - the Bible. As we study the Holy Scriptures we must always bring our minds into reverent submission to God's revealed will. What comes into our mind when we think of God is the most important thing about us. No person is greater than his religion and no religion is greater than its concept of God. The essence of idolatry is the entertaining of unworthy thoughts about God. We must purify and elevate our concept of our Almighty God for He is gloriously infinite and majestically eternal. He is the righteous One, the God of Justice, the God of Wrath and Judgement. He is the Most Holy God, the God of Glory and Grace, of Love and Mercy - the God of Creation and of Salvation. Our worship depends upon our understanding of Who God is.

“All I want is to know Christ”
Phil. 3:10

PHYSICALLY - Out of love we should present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God to serve Him practically with our talents, abilities and strengths. By living for God, we show our love for Him.

“But I reckon my own life to be worth nothing to me; I only want to complete my mission and finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave me to do.”
Acts 20:24

We must love God with all our heart, seek Him with all our soul, obey Him with all our mind, and serve Him with all our strength.

Everyone can tell who is a real Christian or not. Jesus said that **the mark of a real Christian is real love** (*John 13:35*).

We should love even as Jesus loved (*John 15:12*), and He showed us how much He loved us (*Romans 5:8*). He didn't just sing about it, or promise it: He proved it - by His actions (*1 John 4:9*). Jesus showed His love for us. Shouldn't we do the same?

“Our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.”
1 John 3:18

Jesus showed us by His great example that **true love is measured by sacrifice** and some of the most revealing indicators of our love for Him are the sacrifices which we make for Him. As one famous prayer expresses it:

“Teach us, good Lord, to serve You as You deserve; to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to ask for rest, to labour and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing that we do Your will.”

Love gives, and does not count the cost. Love rejoices in giving and wants to give - not out of duty but out of a glad and willing heart.

Someone has well said that love entails: intense enthusiasm, a longing to be near and a desire to serve.

Do you love God like that?

Do you get enthusiastic about Jesus? Does the thought of worshipping God and experiencing His presence excite you? Do you overflow with joy when you talk about Jesus? We must love God with **all** our heart.

Do you long to be near Jesus? Do you feel incomplete if you are separated from His presence? Do you eagerly long for the next worship service or quiet time with Jesus? We must love God with all our soul.

Are you dedicated to serving God in every possible way? Are you determined to use your abilities, talents and energies for God? If our love for God does not make us serve Him, then we do not love Him with all our strength.

In a materialistic society like ours, it may be beneficial to ask ourselves this question - if Jesus had promised us, say ten rand for every tract we distributed, a hundred rand for every hour spent in prayer and a thousand rand for every person we led to Him. . . If He had, would we have perhaps cared more about witnessing? Would we have tried harder or prayed more? If so, then, we love money more than we love Jesus!

“No one can be a slave of two masters; he will hate the one and love the other; he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” Matt. 6:24

OUR GREATEST PRIORITY is this:

We are commanded to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength. We are commanded to love Jesus above all else and more than anything else (Luke 14:26). The root source of all growth, fruit and success is our personal relationship with Jesus.

John Wesley's challenge rings out to us even today:

“Give me one hundred men who love God with all their heart, and who fear no one but God and hate nothing but sin ... and I will move the world”.

We need men and women who love God with all they've got. Such people can turn this world upside down and back to God (Acts 17:6).

The more we get to know the Word of God, the more we'll get to know the God of the Word. Love grows out of time spent together in a committed relationship. We must deepen our relationship with God through spending more time seeking Him (Jeremiah 29:13) in prayer and worship, on our own and together with other dedicated believers in a group (Psalm 37:4). A blacksmith keeps his iron in the fire long enough for the fire to be in the iron. We too must be so immersed in God's Word and spend so much time in His presence that His fire burns in our hearts.

Love is much like life: It grows if fed and dies if starved. Love is just like a fire: It spreads easily but constantly needs more fuel to keep it raging. Our love for God feeds by faith on His Word, in worship, in prayer, in praise and adoration.

May Anselm's prayer be our prayer:

*“Let me seek You in longing
let me long for You in seeking
Let me find You in love
and love You in finding.”*

Peter Hammond

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What is the greatest **need** in your life?

What is the greatest **sin** you could commit?

What is God's greatest **commandment** to us?