

# KNOW, LOVE AND SERVE JESUS

January 14, 2018 | Pastor Keith Jenkins

Last week our pastors started a series of messages aimed at clarifying, refocusing and perhaps reigniting our passion for our unique expression of God's mission called "KNOW, LOVE, and SERVE"

As was mentioned by Pastor Randy last week, our mission statement: "We are a family that helps people KNOW, LOVE AND SERVE Jesus."

Encapsulated in the statement you most commonly hear in our public gatherings "WE ARE A FAMILY ON MISSION"

Last week Pastor Randy began this series with "knowing God". This lesson we will focus on "loving God/Jesus". Let's start by taking a look at the Great/Greatest Commandment"

**Matthew 22:34-40** "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."

In our passage, Jesus was being questioned/tested so they could find fault in Him.

Jesus was very good at summing up what had become very complicated. In its simplest form, He is saying, love God and your neighbor. God doesn't just have love, He is love. The Law was instituted to provide access and relationship with God and with one another in community.

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

Jesus calls us to love God in our inner most being, our heart and soul and with our might (not just physical strength, but our wealth/homes/families, ALL that we possess)

## 1. **OUR FIRST PRIORITY MUST BE TO RE-ORIENT OUR AFFECTIONS, DESIRES, AND THOUGHTS ON GOD (HEART AND SOUL, OUR INNER MOST BEING)**

**"...love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind"**

- Everything and everyone is competing for our attention and affection, many times leaving leftovers for the Lord
- Our love and passion for God is demonstrated by how we prioritize the investment of our lives: time, treasures and talents
- We can't casually love Jesus, when He lavished love on us to the point of even sacrificing His life

**"...the proof of desire, is found in pursuit" - Myles Monroe**

**1 John 4:19 "We love Him because He first loved us"**

**"...loving God, must begin by experiencing His love, because He is the source and definition of what love is"**

## 2. **WE CULTIVATE OUR LOVE FOR GOD AS WE PRACTICE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES; THEY ARE DESIGNED NOT TO JUSTIFY US BUT TO DEEPEN OUR INTIMACY.**

**"... grace is not opposed to effort, but rather earning" - Dallas Willard**

- All of us have a "Practical Theology" (Theology not as an academic pursuit, but a practice - how we live)

## DISCIPLINES OF ABSTINENCE

### SILENCE & SOLITUDE

**Mark 1:35** *"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed."*

- Strips us away from busyness, people, activities, noise, a quiet place, alone with God
- Withdrawing from people
- Nothing to aide us, we might hear more clearly the Holy Spirit wooing and will for our lives, or quiet whispers of **HIS LOVE** for us

### FASTING

**Matthew 6:16** *"and when you fast"*

- Notice how it says when you fast instead of if you fast
- God alone becomes our sustenance, we turn aside from those things that sustain us, to have a devoted focus on Him
- Retraining our appetites, desiring righteousness etc.
- His word becomes our bread (Matthew 4:4)
- "Other food..."

**John 4:32** *"I have food to eat of which you do not know"*

*"Fasting our food frees us to feast on Him"*

*"We push away from the worlds table and pull up to the Lord's table"*

### FRUGALITY (to combat our consumeristic tendencies)

*"In frugality we abstain from using money or goods at our disposal in ways that merely gratify our desires or our hunger for status, glamour, or luxury." - Dallas Willard*

- Resist consumption, contribute more
- Cultivate a more simplistic existence and life
- "Just Do It" verses "Just Say No" for yourself and kids
- More doesn't satisfy, less actually does
- Look to be more generous, don't replace

**1 Timothy 6:6** *"Godliness with contentment is great gain"*

## DISCIPLINES OF ENGAGEMENT

### STUDY OF THE WORD (Not just morning devotions)

- Not as a scholarly pursuit, in actuality we let the Word STUDY US and we seek to conform our lives to it
- We read, hear, inquire, mediate & RESPOND (Action, we do something)

### PRAYER - CONVERSING WITH GOD (aloud or within our hearts, there should be both)

**1 Thessalonians 5:17** *"...pray without ceasing"*

- Specific communion & ongoing dialogue

- We train ourselves to invoke God's presence and blessing on all we do
- All this is done in private...

### 3. **THE LITMUS TEST FOR US TO DETERMINE OUR LEVEL OF LOVE FOR GOD IS FOUND AS WE LIVE IN COMMUNITY WITH OTHER IMAGE BEARERS, OBEYING HIS TEACHINGS**

*Matthew 22:39 "... Love your neighbor as yourself.'*

- Having received and experienced God's love, we love others as He has loved us

*1 John 3:16-18 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*

- How can we ever claim to love God & not demonstrate that love by loving those created in His image?

*"All who have life are to be understood as precious, the intentional gift of a loving God."*

Loving God overflows into loving those created in His image, recognizing their dignity and value. When we see the hurting, oppressed and marginalized, **LOVE COMPELS US FORWARD**

#### **WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?** (Luke 10:25-37)

- If we don't LOVE, we don't know God

*1 John 4:8 "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love".*

### 3. **HAVE WE (PERSONALLY OR AS THE CHURCH) LOST OUR FIRST LOVE**

"First" means: foremost in time, place, order or importance

- Have we become the "loveless church" of Revelations 2

*Revelation 2:4-5 "...I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works"*

*"It is possible to do righteous works without God's heart and love"*

*Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Our last lesson we studied about 'knowing God'. Now as we consider "loving God", what does Matthew 22: 34-40 say to you about loving God? Jesus condensed all of the laws down to two; what are they and what do they mean in your daily life?
2. Deuteronomy 6:4-5 is a powerful verse that challenges our depth of love for God, how are you challenged with this verse? Pastor Keith noted; that "our first priority must be to re-orient our affections, desires, and thoughts on God". Discuss what this means and take time to reflect on how you're doing in this area.
3. Pastor Keith talked about "spiritual disciplines", which he defined on page 3 of our notes. What do we learn about the following statement: "cultivate our love for God as we practice spiritual disciplines, they are designed NOT to justify us but to deepen our intimacy"?
4. Starting at the top of page 3 are listed 3 "Disciplines of Abstinence". Discuss what they speak to you:
  - a) **Silence and Solitude**
  - b) **Fasting**
  - c) **Frugality**
5. What does point 3 speak to you: "The litmus test for us to determine our level of love for God is found as we live in community with other image bearers, OBEYING his teachings"?
6. Lastly, what does it mean to you to lose your "first love" for Jesus? Even if you haven't "lost" it, discuss and pray for one another as you ask God to restore your love for Him and for others.