



The Ten Commandments – Part 4
Deuteronomy 6:1-9; 30:15-20
GCSP – 07/25/2009

Love is an interesting word. Unfortunately we only have one English word so the meaning or the sentiment gets watered down more often than not. I can say I love baseball and in the same breath I can say I love my son. I can say I love cookies and I can say I love my job. I can say I love the mountains and I can say I love my wife. I can say I love music and I can say I love you.

The level and quality of love that I truly feel for each of these entities I just mentioned is different. I do have a love for each of you in here tonight but the love I have for my son and my wife trumps every one of you. If a choice had to be made, I greatly apologize but you would lose. By saying that it does not mean that I do not love you, it just means the love I have for my son and my wife is deeper and more intimate and more intense. And I would have to assume and hope each of you would be the same way toward your spouse and/or children.

Let me add one more comparison that we all can say: I love myself and I love God. Say it with me. "I love myself and I love God." In the other comparisons I started with a different, somewhat lesser love and ended with a greater, more passionate love. So if we truly want to be honest with ourselves, we may need to say, "I love God and I love myself."

Ouch.

J.I. Packer says, "*Your god is what you love, seek, worship, serve, and allow to control you.*" In **Colossian 3:5**, the Apostle Paul calls covetousness "**idolatry**" because the things you covet – houses, cars, possessions, money, status, success, or whatever – is indeed a god in your life. Putting God first and loving God first means you live for Him in faithful and loyal obedience.

In last week's sermon I spoke of the chaplain who signed up for another two years of service in Vietnam, even though he longed to return home to his wife and daughter, because he felt a strong leading of the Holy Spirit to continue his ministry with the soldiers.

Allow me to read an email I received from a missionary friend, who forwarded a letter from another missionary who had been serving in an area of the world that does not allow the gospel to be preached. My friend added that we will not hear about these incidents very often due to security reasons.

"Dear Pastor, you should only be opening this letter in the event of my death. When God calls, there are no regrets. I tried to share my heart with you as much as possible, my heart for the nations. I wasn't called to a place; I was called to Him. To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected; His glory my reward."

"The missionary heart cares more than some think is wise, risks more than some think is safe, dreams more than some think is practical, and expects more than some think is possible. I was not called to comfort or to success but to obedience. There is no joy outside of knowing Jesus and serving Him. I love you and my church family."

In His care,

Karen

We do not have the details of how Karen lost her life, other than she was martyred for the cause of Christ in a distant land, far away from her earthly home.

It kind of puts things into perspective when we complain about the cares of this world we live in, doesn't it?

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Deuteronomy**.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9; 30:15-20

Let's pray.

Loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice, and holding fast to Him, is your life! Loving anything above God, disobeying His voice, and holding fast to the things of this world, is cursing and death.

That is a sobering statement the Lord made to the Children of Israel, and it is a sobering statement He makes to you and I today. When you think it through, this is probably the most sobering and the most serious statement in the whole Bible; and it is a choice that is laid before each of us. God has given us the choice; He has left this to our own choosing. He tells us to choose life, but nonetheless He leaves that up to each of us individually.

Choosing life is also choosing prosperity and blessing, and choosing death is also choosing cursing and adversity. So this choice seems to be a no-brainer; but in reality very few of the Children of Israel chose life, and very few still today choose life. And the reason so many make the wrong, disastrous choice, is because their love is misplaced.

If you have been at Grace Church for any substantial length of time you have heard me ask this question before; but to bring it into the context of tonight's sermon let me ask it yet again: What is the opposite of love? Genuine love, the love we read about in the Bible, is an unconditional, self-sacrificing love. So the opposite of love by that definition is selfishness. Genuine love will always do what is best for the object of your love, over and above what is best for you, if a choice has to be made.

An example I can share with you in my life, and I don't even know if Connie has been aware of this through the years, has to do with a T-bone or Porterhouse steak. I do the majority of the cooking in our house for various reasons; especially any cooking that involves the grill. A good sized T-bone has enough meat for two, at least in our household. There is a bone that runs through the steak somewhat in the shape of a "T", hence the name. On one side of the "T" is large piece of steak and on the other side is

much smaller piece of steak. The smaller piece is called the tenderloin because it is much more tender and flavorful. If the particular steak I am grilling has a large tenderloin, I will cut it in half when serving the meal. But if the tenderloin is small I cut it out and put it on Connie's plate.

This is a small example of how I express my love for Connie; how I do what is best for her over any selfish leanings I may have. I don't look at this as a sacrifice in any way; I simply want her to have the best.

If I have things to do in the evenings when we are home together, more often than not I will wait until she goes to bed before I go into the office and get busy. I do this so I can spend time with her; even if that time is just sitting in the same room with her watching a movie.

If Connie asks me to do something for her, I do it. Not because I am obligated to or because I am hen-pecked, but because I love her and am willing to do anything for her.

If I did not love Connie, if I was selfish, then I would always take the tenderloin, I would take care of the stuff I need or want to do regardless of if I would forfeit spending time with her, and I would more often than not refuse to help her when she asks.

And do not get the wrong impression about me; there have been times in our marriage that I have allowed my selfishness to overrule my love. I am not perfect by any means. But through the years, as my love for her has grown and blossomed, the battle between love and selfishness is usually won by love.

So let's look at this choice we have before us; let's look at what it means to love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Let's see what we can do to make sure we love the Lord more than we love ourselves.

You don't have to turn there, but in **Ephesians 5:25** husbands are commanded to love their wives with the same quality and intensity that Christ loved the church; meaning you would willingly and immediately sacrifice your life for her if the situation arose. And by the way, nowhere in this passage is the wife commanded to love her husband. The reason for this is her love will naturally follow if she is loved in this way. There is no need for a command to love if the husband is fulfilling his God-given responsibility.

In the same way, all of us are commanded to love the Lord our God. We are commanded to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments. We are commanded to keep His statutes and His judgments. For genuine Christians the choice laid before us is one of loving obedience or selfish sin. Any choice to disobey is a reflection and a proof that we do not love the Lord with all of our heart and with all of our soul and with all of our might. Any disobedience, any aspect of walking in our own ways, is sin and it is complete and utter selfishness.

So let's look at the heart, soul and might in this passage, and we will also consider the term strength as it is added to **Mark 12:30** when Jesus quotes this verse from **Deuteronomy**.

Heart

In this context, the heart is the seat of man's affection, will, and devotion. It speaks of focus. When you are devoted to someone or something that person, or that thing, captures your focus. To some extent you in essence have tunnel vision; your every waking thought and action is greatly influenced by your devotion to this person or thing.

In **Matthew 6:21**, Jesus says, "**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**" And your treasure is the object of your affection or of your devotion. Jesus also says, "**For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil**" (**Matthew 12:34b-35**).

In these passages, Jesus uses the illustration of how our words will be defined by what we are devoted to in our hearts. The things we are devoted to will eventually be revealed by the words we speak; it is inevitable. Your actions will show your true colors because you are devoted to someone and something; and when we are commanded to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, that someone and something is God and His Word. And your actions will reveal to all the world if God is indeed the object of your affection and your devotion.

Let me use an example that hopefully is still active in your life today but most definitely has been in your life at one time or another, to illustrate the kind of devotion that is meant in loving God with all of your heart.

If you can remember when you were a teenager in love or when you have been around teenagers in love, you understand infatuation. They cannot focus on much of anything because the overwhelming bulk of their focus is occupied with the boy or the girl they can't live without. The expression of this love is often times displayed at inappropriate times and in inappropriate places. Throughout my years in ministry I have had to approach young couples who are a little too affectionate during the church service – wrong time and place to be hanging all over each other. But this is the intensity of focus and passion the "heart" refers to; it is almost uncontrollable.

I don't know if this still happens today but back in my teenage years the girls would write the name of their boyfriend incessantly on just about everything; their notebooks, their school books, their lockers, etc. I can remember a girl, who was trying to win my affection, writing my name all over her tennis shoes and her hands at a Christian camp we attended together. The point is that your mind is filled with only thoughts of the object of your affection; nothing else matters.

And while the intensity of teenage infatuation is a temporary condition, I trust all of you still have that condition in some way towards your spouse. If this is still smoldering within you, or if you can still remember the feeling, this is the sense of the word "**heart**" in the context of loving with all of your heart.

So loving God with all of your heart means that He is always in your thoughts, and your focus is to please Him in all that you say and do. Your love for God influences everything you do; you always consider Him in all your choices and decisions.

Soul

The soul is the seat man's consciousness; your breath and your life. The soul is the center of our personality. The soul, in this regard, is what separates man and animals from vegetation. Both have life but there is a difference in their living. Man and animals are breathing and conscious beings.

When God created everything, in **Genesis 1:20** He makes this distinction by saying, "**Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures...**", or as some translations say, "swarms of living souls." These beings possessed consciousness and awareness.

To love God with all of your soul is to love Him with all of your life and consciousness. To be intensely aware of God's presence in all that you do. To have that awareness of Him being with you everywhere you, of Him watching over you at every moment, of Him providing for you even through times of struggle, of Him always doing what is best for you even when you don't understand. To love God with all of your soul is simply to be supremely aware of His abiding and unending presence and to express that love in the best way you can with the unique personality God has endowed you with.

Might

This word translated as "**might**" in the NASB may also be translated as "**mind**." The word in the Hebrew is actually an adverb that literally means "very" or "exceedingly." I'm not a Hebrew scholar so I am not sure how it gets translated this way in **Deuteronomy**, but when Jesus quotes this passage in the New Testament, the Greek word is abundantly clear.

The mind is the seat of reasoning and understanding; the seat of the emotions and desire. God has given intellectual powers to mankind. We think and reason and sometimes we even understand. It refers to discernment and a way of thinking.

2 Corinthians 10:5 tells us to take "**every thought captive to the obedience of Christ**"; **Romans 12:2** tells us to "**be transformed by the renewing of your mind**"; **Philippians 4:8** tells us "**whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, (think or ponder or) dwell on these things.**"

We do all of this because we have a mind that God has given us; a mind that separates us from all other living beings. The purpose of which is to be able to consciously reason through the reality of Almighty God.

Loving God with all of your mind is then loving Him because of all that your mind can process and understand of who He is. God doesn't want robots that love Him because they were programmed that way; He gave you the capacity to think so you could reason it through. He gave you the capacity to think so you could grow in your understanding and be utterly amazed at who He is, and thus be awestruck at His love for you.

Strength

Some Bible scholars believe that this is more what was meant by the term might in **Deuteronomy**, and that Jesus added the concept of loving God with all your mind

when he quoted the passage in the Gospels. Whether they are right or wrong doesn't really matter, the point is we have another term to help us in our understanding of the love we are required to have for God.

The term means "great exertion or force." It speaks of an inherent ability and power that resides within each of us. This is not a physical strength or power but an inner strength. This means that regardless of your physical condition, you have been endowed with an inner strength and power to love beyond what you could ever imagine.

To love the Lord your God with all of your strength means to dig deep within you, tap into this divine resource, and with great inner exertion be able to express an uncommon, supernatural, agape love towards God.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30).

Notice the personal aspect of this command. Love the Lord YOUR God. It's a personal relationship not a distant one. God is not some entity in a galaxy far, far away. God is not impersonal. God is personal and living within you. He is as close as anyone could ever be. The songwriter got it right by penning, "He's as close as the mention of His name."

And it says we SHALL love God, meaning it is a living and an active relationship. It is a personal and intimate relationship that must be acted upon. It is to be a thriving and growing love and relationship.

Whenever I am called upon to do marriage counseling, I can count on hearing these words almost every time: "I don't feel any love for him or her anymore" – as if what we feel is what love is all about. But what is at the root cause for these "feelings" going away? They seem to go away because one or both have allowed their focus to stray elsewhere. They have stopped actively pursuing each other.

Usually their focus has turned to their circumstances. One or the other becomes consumed with the pace and hectic schedule of their lives. Or maybe the finances are in a shambles one or both parties are totally overwhelmed with debt and bills and mortgages and putting food on the table and gas in the tank. Others can become obsessed with their career or their education or getting ahead in society, etc. Their attention and focus has moved on to other things as opposed to remaining on the relationship. And when your focus drifts away, of course you aren't going to "feel" love for your spouse because you are not actively pursuing the relationship.

And as much as some will argue with me, when you are not actively pursuing a love relationship with your spouse you cannot be pursuing a love relationship with God; at least not with the passion and intensity that is commanded of us.

Love is a commitment; and a commitment is not something that is always convenient or easy. Commitment and loyalty in a love relationship means you will not allow even your thoughts to stray. You won't look at others with lust. You won't covet the relationships

others have. You won't long to be swept away. You won't be discontent with where you are, etc.

If we truly are committed to this kind of love for God, He will show you the way to having this kind of love for others; including your spouse if you ever have any trouble in that relationship.

And finally, you must notice that you shall love the Lord your God with all YOUR heart, and all YOUR soul, and all YOUR mind, and all YOUR strength.

I can't control how you love God and you can't control how I love God. I am responsible only for me in this regard. I am also responsible in my position as pastor to teach you these things, but I cannot control the results or force you to love God as you should.

When God tells us in the first of His commandments that we are to have no other gods before Him, this is what He means. We are to love Him with such an intensity that nothing could ever come between Him and us.

Heart...Soul...Mind...Strength – in other words, love God with every facet of your being.

Let's pray.