

EXEGETICAL GUIDE



Matthew 22:34-40



**BE UNITED
IN CHRIST**

Be United in Christ

Exegetical Guide

Matthew 22:34-40

BE UNITED IN CHRIST EXEGETICAL GUIDE

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Exegetical Guide Matthew 22:34-40

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Be United in Christ

Exegetical Guide

Matthew 22:34-40

Loving God and Others: The Greatest Commandments

In Matthew 22, the Jewish religious leaders tried to trap Jesus in His words. The Pharisees tried to implicate Him politically on the subject of taxes (22:15-22). The Sadducees baited Him theologically on the topic of the resurrection (22:23-33). Then an expert in the Law tested Jesus Scripturally (22:34-36) by asking, “What is the greatest commandment?” Jesus responded by summarizing the Law in two commandments: We are to love God wholeheartedly and to love others as ourselves (22:37-40).

Unity requires healthy relationships with God and others. Unless we are wholeheartedly devoted to God and committed to others as ourselves, we will never be unified. Loving God should lead to loving others, and only this will foster a healthy, harmonious community of believers. Jesus’ teaching regarding the greatest commandments is foundational to Being United in Christ.

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HOW TO USE A BE UNITED IN CHRIST EXEGETICAL GUIDE

An exegetical guide models how to study a passage of Scripture. The Introduction provides the context, while **Connection to Be United in Christ** highlights the text's importance for Christian unity. The Passage presents the Biblical text being studied.

We begin by **Studying the Passage** because God's messengers must convey God's words accurately. The Passage Comparison presents the text in its original Greek or Hebrew alongside seven English translations. Comparing translations allows for a better understanding of the passage and provides insight into the intent of the original Biblical manuscripts. The Structural Layout divides the passage into its component parts, because to understand what God said we must understand how He said it. It is an essential step in Bible study, but do not be discouraged if this section seems unfamiliar or daunting. The Narrative Flow explains the Biblical author's flow of thought through the passage. The Passage Overview then presents a simple outline that will form the foundation of subsequent outlines and the sermon manuscript itself. The Passage Focus distills the text into a statement that will be the main idea of the sermon. We then identify several Resources to further your study.

Having studied the passage, we are ready to begin **Preparing the Sermon**. Good preaching feeds God's people on God's Word, so our messages must be both healthful and appetizing. This is why this section begins by laying out several Sermon Ingredients that will be used to prepare a nutritious and appealing message. We must present God's Word accurately and clearly so that God's people will understand it with their minds, embrace it in their hearts, and apply it to their lives. The Passage Outline presents the passage's structure and flow while the Passage Details provide the grammatical, historical, and theological information needed to understand and teach the passage. The message is then fortified with Applications and seasoned with Illustrations. These ingredients are combined to prepare a spiritual meal to feed God's children. The Sermon Outline rephrases the Passage Outline to make it more understandable to an audience. The Sermon Manuscript for Your Use then offers an example of how the passage might be preached. Then we identify several Sermon Examples that model good preaching on the text.

Thus, an exegetical guide presents both a comprehensive analysis of one particular Bible passage and a model for studying and preaching Scripture. We pray that God will use this guide to promote love for Him, fidelity to His Word, and unity in His church.

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INTRODUCTION

The Gospel According to Matthew is the first book of the New Testament and the longest of the four gospels. Its author was a Jew who collected taxes for the Romans, yet he left his lucrative profession to follow Christ (Matthew 9:9-13). Matthew was an evangelist, and he wrote his gospel to demonstrate that Jesus was indeed Israel's long-awaited Messiah sent to usher in the kingdom of God (Matthew 4:17). The invitation to become Jesus' disciple was good news not only for the Jews but also for the whole world (Matthew 28:18-20).

Matthew's gospel opens with Jesus' messianic lineage (1:1-17) and miraculous birth (1:18-25), a birth met with a mixed reception (2:1-23). Jesus' public ministry was inaugurated by His baptism (3:1-17), temptation (4:1-11), and the gathering of His first disciples (4:12-25). The rest of the gospel alternates between five major teaching sections (5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25) followed by events that authenticate Jesus' teaching and move the story forward (8-9; 11-12; 14-17; 19-23; 26-28).

Matthew emphasizes Jesus' authority (9:6-8; 21:23-27; 28:18), an authority that most Jewish religious leaders resented and rejected. This conflict came to a crisis during Christ's Passion week. Jesus' triumphal entry on Sunday (21:1-11) and cleansing of the temple on Monday (21:12-13) led to a direct challenge from the chief priests and elders on Tuesday (21:23-22:14). This confrontation was followed by three attempts to discredit Christ more indirectly. Three different groups approached Jesus with questions intended to ensnare Him in an incriminating response.

First, the Herodians and the disciples of the Pharisees asked Jesus a political question (22:15-22). Then the Sadducees posed a puzzling theological scenario (22:23-33). Finally, the Pharisees regrouped to present a Scriptural question (22:34-40). The religious leaders were stumped at every turn both by Jesus' answers to their questions and by His own question for them (22:41-46). Chapter 22 records the final failed attempt of the Pharisees and Sadducees to entrap Jesus in His words before resorting to more treacherous and violent means to destroy Him. Jesus' most famous statement on love stands out starkly against this backdrop.

The subsequent chapters proceed at a rapid pace. Jesus condemns the scribes and Pharisees and grieves over Jerusalem's rejection of Him (23). He prepares His disciples for His departure by sharing signs, prophecies, and parables of the end times followed by a last supper together (24-26:29). Jesus then proceeds from His betrayal in the garden (26:30-56) to the mock trials before the Jewish and Roman authorities (26:57-27:31) and finally to the cross and the grave (27:32-66). On Easter morning, however, He rose! The book closes with Jesus' Great Commission to make disciples of all the nations (28).

Connection to Be United in Christ

God created man to love Him and to love others made in His image. Since Adam's disobedience, though, man has become selfish, loving himself rather than his Lord and others. However, love is still God's desire and demand. Love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:10), the essential element in everything we do for God (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). In the words of Moses and Christ, love is the great commandment. Only by loving God wholeheartedly and loving others as ourselves will we ever Be United in Christ.

PASSAGE: MATTHEW 22:34-40

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. ³⁵ One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And He said to him, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’” ³⁸ This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹ The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’” ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”¹

JESUS’ PASSION WEEK

This table presents the final days before the crucifixion and resurrection, according to Matthew.²

Sunday (21:1-11, 14-17)	Monday (21:12-13, 18-19)	Tuesday (21:20–26:2)	Wednesday ³ (26:3-5; 14-16)	Thursday (26:17-46)	Friday (26:47–27:61)	Saturday (27:62-66)	Sunday (28:1-10)
Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem (21:1-11) Jesus heals the lame and blind in the temple (21:14-17)	Jesus curses a fig tree (21:18-19) Jesus drives out money-changers and merchants from the temple (21:12-13)	Jesus draws lessons from the withered fig tree (21:20-22) Jesus enters the temple and engages Jewish religious leaders (21:23– 22:46) [The greatest commandments (22:34-40)] Jesus condemns the scribes and Pharisees (23:1-39) Jesus shares signs, prophecies, and parables of the end times (24:1– 26:2)	The Jewish leaders plot to arrest and kill Jesus (26:3-5) Judas agrees to betray Jesus (26:14-16)	Jesus celebrates Passover with His disciples (26:17-35) Jesus prays in the garden (26:36-46)	Jesus is arrested (26:47-56) Jesus is tried before Caiaphas (26:57-68) Peter denies Jesus (26:69-75) Jesus is tried before Pilate (27:1-2, 11-26) Jesus is beaten, crucified, and buried (27:27-61)	The Jewish leaders set guards at the tomb (27:62-66)	Jesus rises from the dead (28:1-10)

¹ While there are many fine Bible translations, the New American Standard Bible (NASB) is used here for its consistent word-for-word translation.

² The chronological data is taken from Andreas J. Köstenberger and Justin Taylor, *The Final Days of Jesus: The Most Important Week of the Most Important Person Who Ever Lived* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014). Note that Matthew orders Monday’s events thematically rather than chronologically.

³ It is uncertain whether these two events occurred on Wednesday or another day.

STUDYING THE PASSAGE

Matthew 22:34-40

**Loving God and Others:
The Greatest Commandments**

STUDYING THE PASSAGE

Passage Comparison: Matthew 22:34-40

The translations are in order from left to right, from more word-for-word (formal equivalence) to thought-for-thought (dynamic equivalence).

GREEK	NASB	ESV	KJV
³⁴ Οἱ δὲ Φαρισαῖοι ἀκούσαντες ὅτι ἐφίμωσεν τοὺς Σαδδουκαίους συνήχθησαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό,	³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together.	³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.	³⁴ But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.
³⁵ καὶ ἐπηρώτησεν εἷς ἐξ αὐτῶν [νομικὸς] πειράζων αὐτόν·	³⁵ One of them, a lawyer, asked Him <i>a question</i> , testing Him,	³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.	³⁵ Then one of them, <i>which was</i> a lawyer, asked <i>him a question</i> , tempting him, and saying,
³⁶ διδάσκαλε, ποία ἐντολὴ μεγάλη ἐν τῷ νόμῳ;	³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”	³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”	³⁶ Master, which <i>is</i> the great commandment in the law?

NKJV	NRSV	NIV	NLT
³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.	³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together,	³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.	³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again.
³⁵ Then one of them, a lawyer, asked <i>Him a question</i> , testing Him, and saying,	³⁵ and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.	³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:	³⁵ One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question:
³⁶ “Teacher, which <i>is</i> the great commandment in the law?”	³⁶ “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”	³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”	³⁶ “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?”

GREEK	NASB	ESV	KJV
³⁷ ὁ δὲ ἔφη αὐτῷ· ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ καρδίᾳ σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ ψυχῇ σου καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ διανοίᾳ σου·	³⁷ And He said to him, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’	³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.	³⁷ Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
³⁸ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μεγάλη καὶ πρώτη ἐντολή.	³⁸ This is the great and foremost commandment.	³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.	³⁸ This is the first and great commandment.
³⁹ δευτέρα δὲ ὁμοία αὐτῇ· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν.	³⁹ The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’	³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.	³⁹ And the second <i>is</i> like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
⁴⁰ ἐν ταύταις ταῖς δυσὶν ἐντολαῖς ὅλος ὁ νόμος κρέμαται καὶ οἱ προφῆται.	⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”	⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”	⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

NKJV	NRSV	NIV	NLT
³⁷ Jesus said to him, ““You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’	³⁷ He said to him, ““You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’	³⁷ Jesus replied: ““Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’	³⁷ Jesus replied, ““You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’
³⁸ This is <i>the</i> first and great commandment.	³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment.	³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.	³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.
³⁹ And <i>the</i> second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’	³⁹ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’	³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’	³⁹ A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’
⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”	⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”	⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”	⁴⁰ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

STRUCTURAL LAYOUT

The Structural Layout shows how the passage fits together. The left column contains the Biblical text divided into its grammatical elements. The right column explains how the various elements function in context. Main clauses are aligned left, and related elements are highlighted in color.

34	But when the Pharisees heard.....	This clause sets the context for the exchange that follows.
	that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees,.....	This clause states what the Pharisees heard that prompted them to gather together (22:23-33).
	they gathered themselves together.	This main clause states the Pharisees' response to what they heard: they gathered together.
35	One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question,.....	Verse 35 states the outcome of the Pharisees' gathering: a lawyer among them asked Jesus a question.
	testing Him,.....	This phrase explains the motive behind the lawyer's question—to trap Jesus.
36	“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”.....	This clause asks the ensnaring question the Pharisees came up with in v. 34.
37	And He said to him,.....	This short introductory clause sets up Jesus' response in vv. 37-39.
	“YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD.....	This clause provides Jesus' initial response (compare Deuteronomy 6:5).
	WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND..... WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’	These three parallel phrases state the manner in which people are to love God.
38	This is the great and foremost commandment.....	This statement explains the quotation of v. 37 and answers the lawyer's question in v. 36.
39	The second is like it,	This content clause sets up Jesus' second response to the lawyer's question in v. 36.
	“YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’.....	Jesus quotes the command recorded by Moses in Leviticus 19:18.
40	On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”	In this explanatory clause Jesus comments on the significance of vv. 37-39 in relation to the entire Old Testament and in response to the lawyer's question in v. 36.

NARRATIVE FLOW

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees (22:23-33) they gathered together to plot a new attempt to entrap Jesus with a trick question (22:34). Then, an expert in the Mosaic Law did the same by asking Jesus which was the greatest commandment in the Law (22:35-36).

Jesus responded by stating that loving God with all one's being is the great and foremost commandment (22:37-38). He then added that loving one's neighbor as oneself (22:38) was like it in importance (22:39), and that the whole of Scripture depended on these two commandments (22:40).

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Matthew 22:34-40 has two main sections:

I. What Is the Greatest Commandment? (22:34-36)

II. Loving God Wholeheartedly and Loving Others As Oneself (22:37-40)

PASSAGE FOCUS

God's greatest commandments are to love Him wholeheartedly and to love others as oneself.

PASSAGE CONNECTION

The inseparable link between loving God and loving others is clear in both the Old and New Testaments.

In the Old Testament Moses said:

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” (Deuteronomy 6:5)

“... you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Leviticus 19:18b)

In the New Testament Jesus said:

“‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND’ [and] ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’” (Matthew 22:37, 39)

“On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:40)

RESOURCES

Basic Resources

Boice, James Montgomery. *The Gospel of Matthew*. 2 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001.

Carson, D. A. *Matthew*. Expositor's Bible Commentary (EBC). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.

France, R. T. *Matthew*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary (TNTC). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985.

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Turner, David. *Matthew*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008.

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Allison, Dale C. and W. D. Davies. *Matthew*. 3 vols. London: T&T Clark, 1991-1998.

France, R. T. *Matthew*. New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007.

Keener, Craig. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

PREPARING THE SERMON

Matthew 22:34-40

**Loving God and Others:
The Greatest Commandments**

SERMON INGREDIENTS

Matthew 22:34-40

PASSAGE OUTLINE

I. WHAT IS THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT? (22:34-36)

- A. The Context (22:34)
- B. The Speaker (22:35a)
- C. The Motive (22:35b)
- D. The Question (22:36)

II. LOVING GOD AND OTHERS (22:37-40)

- A. Jesus' Initial Response (22:37)
- B. Jesus' Initial Commentary (22:38)
- C. Jesus' Second Response (22:39)
- D. Jesus' Second Commentary (22:40)

PASSAGE DETAILS

Matthew 22:34

But when the Pharisees heard

Verse 34 opens with the third of three consecutive failed attempts by Jewish religious leaders trying to trap Jesus with a question (Matthew 22:15-22; 23-33).

“But when ... heard.” The context for this third attempt was the failure of the second attempt.

“The Pharisees” derived their name from the Hebrew word meaning “separated ones.” They were an influential group known for their personal holiness and dedication to the Mosaic Law. Matthew mentions them more often than any other New Testament author (29 of 99 occurrences), often in conjunction with the word hypocrites (Matthew 23:13-29). Though admired by the people of the day, the Pharisees are consistently spoken of harshly by John the Baptist and Jesus (Matthew 3:7-8; 5:20; 15:12-14; 23:1-33).

that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees

This clause provides the content of what the Pharisees heard. Jesus is not explicitly mentioned in the Greek text but is clearly the intended subject.

“Had silenced” is a vivid term used for muzzling an animal (1 Corinthians 9:9; 1 Timothy 5:18; Deuteronomy 25:4) and by extension an opponent (1 Peter 2:15). Jesus, who had silenced demons (Mark 1:25; Luke 4:35) and a raging sea (Mark 4:39), had just silenced the Sadducees. The Pharisees were next (Matthew 22:46).

“The Sadducees” were the Jewish leaders most closely associated with the temple. Theologically they prioritized the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) over the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures, which led them to deny the resurrection (Mark 12:18-27; Acts 23:6-8). As the main power in the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling council) they played a crucial role in Jesus’ arrest, trial, and execution.

they gathered themselves together

Having failed once to trick Jesus (Matthew 22:15-22) and having heard that the Sadducees had similarly failed (22:23-33), the Pharisees regroup to try a third time (22:34-40). The language is similar to Psalm 2:2, “The kings of the earth take their stand / And their rulers take counsel together / Against the Lord and His Anointed.”

Matthew 22:35

One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question

“One of them.” In their first attempt to discredit Jesus, the Pharisees had sent their disciples along with the Herodians (22:15-16). This time they send one of their own to trap Jesus directly.

Lawyer refers to an expert in the Mosaic Law (Luke 10:25; 11:45-52; 14:3). Legal experts like lawyers and scribes (the words are used interchangeably; compare Matthew 22:35 with Mark 12:28) were especially associated with the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20; Mark 2:16; Acts 23:9).⁴

⁴ There is disagreement among scholars whether the term lawyer existed in the original manuscript. Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 48-49.

testing Him

Testing in this context means “to attempt to entrap through a process of inquiry.”⁵ The lawyer’s question was not genuine but rather a deceptive attempt to trap Jesus in His words. This was a repeated tactic of Jesus’ opponents (Matthew 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35; Mark 8:11; 10:2; 12:15; Luke 11:16; 20:20-26; John 8:6).⁶

Matthew 22:36

Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?

Teacher corresponds to the Jewish title Rabbi and is a typical form of address used with Jesus (Matthew 8:19; 12:38; 19:16). Each of the groups in Matthew 22 that approach Jesus with a trick question address Him as “Teacher” (vv. 16, 24, 36).

Great in this context means “greatest” according to Greek usage at the time (Luke 9:48).⁷

A rabbinic tradition going back to the third century AD divides the Law of Moses into 613 commandments, 365 negative commandments to avoid (one for each day in the solar calendar) and 248 positive prescriptions to perform (one for each of the purported number of bones and major organs in the human body). Although Jewish religious leaders during the time of Jesus agreed that the Mosaic Law was divine and therefore authoritative, they debated among themselves the best summary of the Law (Matthew 5:19; 23:23-24). For example, Rabbi Simlai “refers to the reduction of the 613 commandments of Moses to eleven by David (Psalm 15), six by Isaiah (Isaiah 33:15-16), three by Micah (Micah 6:8), two by Isaiah again (Isaiah 56:1), one by Amos (Amos 5:4), and one again by Habakkuk (Habakkuk 2:4).”⁸

Matthew 22:37

And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

In response to the lawyer’s baiting question, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5. This famous verse is part of what is known as the Shema, a passage of the Pentateuch that Jesus quoted in each of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 22:37-38; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27) and that devout Jews still recite twice daily. The title comes from the Hebrew imperative “hear” that opens Deuteronomy 6:4-5: “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Deuteronomy 6:4-5 condenses the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) down to one confession and a single response: There is only God, and He deserves and demands our wholehearted devotion. Jesus only quotes the command since the questioner had specifically asked about the greatest commandment rather than the central confession found in the rest of the Shema.

⁵ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (BDAG) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 792-793.

⁶ In context, the definition is “to entice to improper behavior; tempt.” This is the same word used of the devil’s tempting of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-3) and of other Christians (Acts 5:3; 1 Corinthians 7:5). The malicious intent of the lawyer’s question closely parallels Satan’s intent to entice Jesus and Christians to sin.

⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 298.

⁸ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, Word Biblical Commentary, 33B (Dallas, TX: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 646.

Love is from a Greek verb that means “to have a warm regard for and interest in another, cherish, have affection for, or love.”⁹ It conveys the adoration and devotion God’s children share with and show toward their Lord (Mark 12:30, 33; Luke 10:27; Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 8:3). The future tense here conveys a command.¹⁰

Lord is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Adonai, which was typically used as a substitute for Yahweh, the covenantal name of God. Jews were not commanded to commit themselves to an unknown or abstract deity but to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:4-6).

“Your God” also emphasizes the personal relationship underlying this call to complete commitment—not merely a God, but your God.

WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND

“Heart, soul, and mind” convey the totality of the devotion God demands. The essence of the Law is to love God with all our intellect, all our emotion, and all our will. Jesus is not dividing human nature into three parts but rather saying that we must love God with every aspect of our being. This is the primary significance of Jesus mentioning these three aspects of our true self and His threefold repetition of all.¹¹

Matthew and Deuteronomy mention heart, soul, and mind while Mark and Luke both add strength. “The reason is that the third Hebrew word [mind] can indicate a couple of different things. Mark (12:30) and Luke (10:27), both writing to a more Gentile audience, use two Greek words (mind and strength) to adequately translate that single Hebrew word. None of these four [words], however, are mutually exclusive. All of them are intertwined.”¹²

Matthew 22:38

This is the great and foremost commandment

Jesus here comments on His quotation of Deuteronomy 6:5, adding “great” to the adjective “foremost” for emphasis.

Foremost means “pertaining to prominence, first, foremost, most important, most prominent” (Matthew 10:2; 1 Corinthians 15:3).¹³

⁹ BDAG, 5.

¹⁰ Wallace, 452.

¹¹ “Heart, soul and mind are not different ‘parts’ of man, but different ways of thinking of the whole man in his relation to God; no clear distinction can be drawn between them.... The three nouns together indicate the essential nature of man, his ultimate, fundamental loyalty, not just a superficial allegiance” (R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985], 322-323). Craig Blomberg concurs: “Neither form of the text [i.e., with either *strength* or *understanding*] implies a compartmentalization of the human psyche. Rather, both refer to wholehearted devotion to God with every aspect of one’s being, from whatever angle one chooses to consider it.... This kind of ‘love’ for God will then result in obedience to all He has commanded (Deuteronomy 6:1-3, 6-9)” (*Matthew*, New American Commentary [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1992], 335).

¹² Mark E. Moore, *The Chronological Life of Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 2011), 522.

¹³ BDAG, 893.

Matthew 22:39

The second is like it

Having answered the lawyer's question definitively, Jesus goes on to pair the great and first commandment with a second. He quotes Leviticus 19:18: "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord." Jesus quotes this elsewhere (Matthew 5:43; 19:19; Luke 10:27), as do Paul and James (Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8).

"The second is like it' probably means that this commandment is of equal importance. Jewish interpreters had long recognized the preeminent value of each of these laws. Jesus apparently was the first to fuse the two and to exalt them above the whole law."¹⁴

YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.

The word neighbor suggests physical proximity (John 4:5). It is usually used as a noun referring to "the one who is near or close by, neighbor, fellow human being."¹⁵ Sometimes it refers to a fellow countryman (Acts 7:27; Exodus 2:13) or fellow believer (Romans 15:2; Ephesians 4:25; James 4:12), but more often of a fellow human being in proximity and therefore near enough to help or love (Matthew 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27, 29, 36; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8).

"As yourself" is not commanding or commending self-love but rather assuming it and using it as a practical guide to loving others (Matthew 7:12; Ephesians 5:28-33).

Matthew 22:40

On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.

Depend literally means to hang or to suspend "as a door hangs on its hinges."¹⁶ The word is used literally in the New Testament to refer to a millstone hanging around a neck (Matthew 18:6), a viper hanging from a hand (Acts 28:4), or a person hanging on a cross (Luke 23:39; Galatians 3:13). It is used figuratively here to convey how the entirety of Scripture depends (hangs) on these two commandments.

"The whole Law and the Prophets" refers to the Hebrew Scriptures as a whole (Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; Luke 16:16; Acts 13:15; 24:14; Romans 3:21).

¹⁴ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 335. Keener notes: "The distinctive primacy that love plays in virtually all early Christian ethics would not have been possible had the Christians not derived this primacy from the mouth of the one Teacher who united them" (Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009], 531).

¹⁵ BDAG, 830.

¹⁶ BDAG, 566.

APPLICATIONS

- External obedience to God without proper motivation behind the obedience is not true obedience. Words and deeds are only pleasing to God if the heart is right.
- Good deeds done for others are also incomplete without proper motives. Indeed, all of our spiritual gifts and actions are worthless unless motivated by love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).
- An unloving Christian is a contradiction in terms, for Christ embodies love. Those who claim to love God must love others, for God is love. Therefore we must repent of our lack of love and ask God to enable us to become more loving.
- God's Word is an indispensable part of growing in love. We fall more in love with God as we learn more of His loveliness and love. We can love more like Christ as we study the life of Christ and prayerfully try to follow His example.
- We must commit to loving others, not just for their sake, but for God's. We will only love the unlovely if the basis of our love lies somewhere other than them. We love the unlovely because God commands us to, because they are made in God's image, because God loves them, and because God loves us even though we are unlovely.
- Love must start in the family of God. He commands His followers to love one another (John 13:34-35). We must therefore dedicate ourselves to loving other believers, to being united in Christ, and this will strengthen and sanctify us to better love the non-believing world around us.

ILLUSTRATIONS

- Spouses do not want to be *a* priority in their spouse's life but *the* priority. Intimate, interpersonal relationships involve loving others with appropriate levels of affection.
- A child raised by caring parents would be shattered to learn that his parents had only been so attentive because his grandparents had paid them to do so. Behavior based on improper motives is invalidated to a great degree. Motives matter in relationships.
- Mother Teresa earned universal admiration for her love of the poorest of the poor. In describing her organization's mission, she explained how they ministered to this difficult group. "As Missionaries of Charity, we are here to help the poorest of the poor in whatever form that takes, which is always Christ in His distressing disguise."¹⁷
- John Quincy Adams wrote to his son about learning and embracing his duties. "It is in the Bible, you must learn them, and from the Bible how to practice them. Those duties are to God, to your fellow creatures, and to yourself. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself.' On these two commandments, Jesus Christ expressly says, 'hang all the law and the prophets;' that is to say, the whole purpose of Divine Revelation is to inculcate [teach by repetition] them efficaciously [effectively] upon the minds of men."¹⁸

¹⁷ Mother Teresa, *A Simple Path*, compiled by Lucinda Varday (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1995), 46.

¹⁸ John Quincy Adams, *Letters of John Quincy Adams to His Son on the Bible and Its Teaching* (Auburn, NY: James M. Alden, 1850), 18.

SERMON OUTLINE

Loving God and Others: The Greatest Commandments (Matthew 22:34-40)

INTRODUCTION

Image: A wife wants to be her husband's highest priority and deepest love.

Relevance: People in intimate relationships want to be central in the other person's affections.

Overview: God desires and demands to be central in our affections and to express and extend our wholehearted love to Him by loving others as ourselves.

Connection: When questioned about the greatest commandment in the Law, Jesus replies that wholehearted love for God is essential. He then adds that loving others as ourselves is equally important, and that upon these two commandments depend the whole Bible.

[Provide the context of the passage]

I. WHAT IS THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT? (22:34-36)

- A. The Context (22:34)
- B. The Speaker (22:35a)
- C. The Motive (22:35b)
- D. The Question (22:36)

II. LOVING GOD AND OTHERS (22:37-40)

- A. Jesus' Initial Response (22:37)
- B. Jesus' Initial Commentary (22:38)
- C. Jesus' Second Response (22:39)
- D. Jesus' Second Commentary (22:40)

APPLICATIONS

CONCLUSION

PRAYER

SERMON MANUSCRIPT FOR YOUR USE

Loving God and Others: The Greatest Commandments (Matthew 22:34-40)

INTRODUCTION

Picture, if you will, a romantic dinner. There is a quiet table in an intimate restaurant. The dark paneling and dim lighting seem to heighten the candlelight, highlighting the faces of a husband and wife. A violin and piano play quietly in the background. It is an anniversary dinner, and the happy couple leans in towards each other, holding hands.

The wife gazes adoringly into her husband's eyes and says, "I love you. You are the most important person in the world to me, and I am completely yours, body and soul." The man looks at his bride of many years and replies, "And I love you. You are one of the most important people in my life, and I am mostly yours, with much of my body and soul." And with these words the magical evening takes an immediate and irreversible turn for the worse.

It does the clueless husband no good to reassure his wife that he loves her. It means nothing to her now that he has been a good provider and protector, that he has been faithful and dutiful, that he has obeyed all the vows and rules of marriage. These actions are meaningless if his heart is not right. The wife does not want her husband to be dutiful but devoted. She does not want his compliance but his commitment. She does not want to be an important part of his life but the most important person in his life. Wholehearted love is the essential element in intimate relationships. This is true for husbands and wives. It is true for parents and children. And it is true for God. Wholehearted devotion to God lies at the heart of pleasing God. Loving dedication is the essence of obeying God. Moses said so. Jesus said so. And it is to them we must attend as we open God's Word today. So please turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew chapter 22 where we will be focusing on verses 34-40.

The Book of Matthew was written by a tax collector from Capernaum who joined Jesus' ministry. Matthew was still with Him two years later when Israel's Messiah entered Jerusalem on a donkey. That next day Christ cleansed the temple of the money changers, so it is not surprising that when He returned to the temple on Tuesday there was a confrontation with Israel's religious leaders. They challenged Jesus and made three attempts to trap Him in a compromising statement.

First the Pharisees' disciples and the Herodians asked Jesus whether it was lawful to pay the Roman poll tax. If Jesus answered yes, then He would upset patriotic Jews. If He answered no, then He risked upsetting the Romans. Jesus avoided this trap by telling them to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). Then the Sadducees tried to trick Jesus with a question about a widow who remarried her ex-husband's six brothers. Jesus replied that they understood neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matthew 22:29). This led to a third and final attempt to trap Jesus with a trick question that begins in verse 34.

I. WHAT IS THE GREAT COMMANDMENT? (12:34-36)

³⁴ **But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together.**

The Pharisees were the earliest and most vocal of Jesus' opponents. They insisted on strict adherence to the Mosaic Law, especially as it concerned ritual purity, including contact with sinners. Jesus did not keep their traditions, and this made them first question and then oppose His teachings and actions. Today we equate them with hypocrites, but at the time the Pharisees were highly respected as holy men. Paul had been proud to call himself a Pharisee (Acts 23:6; Philippians 3:5), a group he called the "strictest sect" of Judaism (Acts 26:5). When this group heard that Jesus had silenced—which literally means muzzled—the Sadducees, they gathered together to prepare another attempt to trick Jesus into making an indicting statement.

³⁵ **One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him,**

When the huddle breaks, the Pharisees send a lawyer to question Jesus. Lawyer in this context does not mean a litigator but a specialist in the Mosaic Law. This legal expert comes to Jesus with a question regarding the Law of Moses. Though the question appears innocent, Matthew tells us that it was really a trap. The word testing here means "to attempt to entrap." The same word is used for the devil's attempt to tempt Jesus, and us (Matthew 4:1; Acts 5:3; Hebrews 2:18; 4:15).¹⁹ Thus it is with deception and malicious intent that this lawyer approaches Jesus and asks:

³⁶ **"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"**

Teacher is the address used in each of the three attempts to trap Jesus (Matthew 22:16, 24, 36). It sounds respectful but was perhaps intended to flatter Jesus into speaking more freely and forthrightly.

This particular question was a matter of some debate among Jewish scholars. Tradition held that the Mosaic Law contained 613 Commandments: 365 laws about what not to do (one for every day of the solar year) and 248 laws about what to do (one for every bone and major organ of the human body by their count). The rabbis debated which laws best summarized the whole Law. There was, of course, the Ten Commandments that God personally inscribed into the two tablets at Sinai. But several shorter summaries were also proposed, such as Habakkuk 2:4—"the righteous will live by his faith"—and Micah 6:8: "He has told you, O man, what is good; / And what does the Lord require of you / But to do justice, to love kindness, / And to walk humbly with your God?"

Thus the lawyer's question tested whether Jesus prioritized the Mosaic Law the way the Pharisees prioritized the Law. If He did not, then they could attack His credibility as a respected teacher, and perhaps even challenge His true commitment to the Law. Jesus avoids their trap by quoting one of the best known passages in the Hebrew Bible, Deuteronomy 6:5.

¹⁹ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (BDAG) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 793:3-4.

II. LOVING GOD AND OTHERS (22:37-40)

³⁷ **And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.”**³⁸ **This is the great and foremost commandment.**

As Jesus recited Moses’ words, His audience could easily follow along, for at the open and close of every day every devout Jew recited this and the preceding verse: “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). The affirmation that there is only one God and that He deserves and demands His people’s complete love and allegiance is the essence of the Law. Without it no token obedience pleases God, but with it comes the proper motivation to obey all of God’s laws.

Wholehearted devotion to God is the great and foremost commandment of God. When Moses and Jesus command us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, they are telling us to love God with all our being. Every faculty, every aspect, every dimension of our being is to be dedicated to God. Our thoughts, our emotions, our wills—everything we are is to be directed by wholehearted devotion to God in everything we do. God our Creator desires it. God our Redeemer deserves it. God our Lord demands it.

God deserves our wholehearted love and devotion because there is no other being so lovely as God. There is none so loving and gracious, so patient and long-suffering, so compassionate and merciful. There is none so generous like our God; none so righteous and holy, faithful and true. Even if God’s power did not command our worship, His character would compel it, for there is none so amazing and awesome and glorious as He. God is simply and incomparably the loveliest being who exists, and He fully deserves our adoration and dedication.

God also deserves our wholehearted love and devotion because He is our Creator and Redeemer. God created this wondrous world that He sustains so faithfully and lavishly. Of all creatures, God made man in His image that we might enjoy an intimate relationship with Him. Even when we rebelled against Him, God sent His one and only Son to die on the cross for our sins, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. So amazing is God’s love that He is sending His Son back to gather His people to live with Him forever and ever. God is incomparably the most loving of all beings, and God alone is worthy of our complete affection and allegiance.

God is the most loving and lovely of all beings. He is our Creator and Redeemer and Lord. What is His supreme desire? That we love Him with all of our heart, and with all of our soul, and with all of our mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. Jesus could have stopped here. He had definitively and irrefutably answered the lawyer’s question. But our Lord goes on to add a second component to the command, a quotation from Leviticus 19:18:

³⁹ **The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’**

This passage in Matthew is so familiar to us that we easily overlook its shocking significance. How could any other command be coupled with the Great Commandment? How could anything be said to be like loving God? What could be of comparable importance to loving God? Who would dare even attempt adding another element to the central confession of God’s people?

The answer, of course, is that Jesus dared. He had the right to, for He is God. And God says that loving other people is an essential part of loving Him. We cannot love God without loving others. We cannot obey God's Law without loving others, for love is the essence of the Law. This undeniable and unavoidable reality is reaffirmed repeatedly throughout the New Testament.

“Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,’ and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” (Romans 13:8-10)

“For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’” (Galatians 5:14)

It is unthinkable that someone who claims to love God should be unloving to others, for God is love, and He requires those who love Him to love others as well. Listen to the words of the Apostle John:

“By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” (1 John 3:10-11)

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 John 4:7-8)

“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.” (1 John 4:20-21)

Whom does God command us to love? Everyone. God loves indiscriminately, and so must we. Listen to Christ's words from the Sermon on the Plain:

But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6:27-36)

There is no one we should not love, no one we are permitted to overlook or hate. Jesus loved His enemies, and so must we. Jesus befriended sinners, and so must we. God loves the unlovely, and so must we. Christ loved those who hated Him, and so must we.

But it is especially critical that Christians love other Christians. God's children demonstrate their love for their heavenly Father by loving His other adopted children. Listen to God's Word:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.” (John 15:12)

“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” (Galatians 6:10)

We cannot be faithful children of God unless we love God’s other children. Loving unity between believers is an essential part of being devoted to God. Christ is literally the embodiment of love, therefore love should be the characteristic quality of Christ’s followers.

How do we love others? “As ourselves.” This means that we love others attentively, diligently, persistently, practically, and sacrificially. Until we learn to love selflessly, self-love guides us to at least love practically. We apply the Golden Rule—we do unto others as we would have done unto us (Matthew 7:12). We learn to selflessly serve others by asking how we selfishly want others to serve us. God uses our own sinful selfishness to begin to overcome our sinful selfishness.

To sum up, the most important commandment in God’s Law is to love God wholeheartedly. God and God alone deserves our deepest affections and highest commitments. Then, when we do give ourselves completely to God, He tells us to love others as ourselves. Our Creator demands that we honor Him by honoring those whom He created in His image. Our King requires that we serve Him by serving His other subjects. Our Redeemer desires that we express our love for Him by loving those whom He died to redeem. We do this not because those around us are lovely or loving but because God is irresistibly lovely and loving.

Christ concludes with the statement, ⁴⁰ **“On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”** The word depend means hang. It is used literally of the viper hanging from Paul’s hand (Acts 28:4) and in reference to a person hanging on a cross (Galatians 3:13). Here it is used figuratively to depict all of God’s revelation supported by and dependent upon the dual commandments to love God and to love one’s neighbor as oneself. Love is the essence of the Law—love first to God and then to others whom God made and loves. There is no obeying God without loving God, and there is no loving God without loving others. Wholehearted devotion to God overflowing into selfless love for others—this is the great and foremost commandment.

APPLICATIONS

So how do we do this? What does this look like practically? Let me suggest seven initial steps.

First, we must embrace what Jesus has taught us. The heart of our faith is wholehearted devotion to God expressed in dedicated love of others. All of our gifts, knowledge, actions, and sacrifices are meaningless unless motivated by love. Remember Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13:

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

There is no true religion without love. An unloving Christian is a contradiction in terms, for Christ embodies love. Those who claim to love God must love, for God is love. We must accept the fact that we must be more loving.

Second, we must repent of our lack of love and ask God to make us more loving. Sinners are selfish, and we need God's forgiveness for our failures and His grace to make us more loving. We become more loving like Christ as we are conformed to the image of Christ, and this is a divine work of God through His Holy Spirit. So we pray for His mercy and grace.

Third, we fall more in love with God as we learn more of His loveliness and love. As we read His Word and reflect on His character and actions we cannot help but fall more deeply in love with the most lovely and loving being in existence. So let us learn of God, for to know Him is to love Him.

Fourth, we should study the life of Christ, for no one loved like Christ. He exemplifies love for God and others. He is the only man who ever loved God with absolutely all of His heart, soul, and mind. He is the only one to fully love His neighbor as Himself. We must examine how He related to God, how He treated and responded to others, for we are His followers and must follow His example.

Fifth, we must recognize that our love for others depends not on their loveliness but on God's. We love others not because they deserve it but because God does. We love others not because they demand it but because God does. When we love the unlovely with no acknowledgment, appreciation, or affection in return, only then are we beginning to love like God, for God loves us even though we are unlovely, ungrateful, and unresponsive. God loved us enough to die for us, and in return He wants us to love the unlovely—for His sake, not for theirs.

Sixth, we must commit ourselves to loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. Love begins in the family of God. Christians must abandon their schisms and divisions, their feuds and their fights. Christ prayed that His disciples would be one as He and His Father are one (John 17:20-21). He commands His followers to love one another. We must therefore dedicate ourselves to loving other believers, to being united in Christ, and this will strengthen and sanctify us to better love the non-believing world around us.

Finally, let us prayerfully commit to loving others wherever we encounter them, whether in our neighborhoods or on the road to Jericho. Let us treat others as we would want them to treat us. Person by person, word by word, deed by deed, let us love, for love is the great and foremost commandment.

CONCLUSION

Picture, if you will, a romantic dinner. There is a quiet table in an intimate restaurant. The dark paneling and dim lighting seem to highlight the candlelight highlighting the faces of a husband and wife. A violin and piano play softly in the background. It is an engagement dinner, and the happy couple leans in towards each other, holding hands.

The man gazes adoringly into the woman's eyes and says, "I love you. You are the most important person in the world to me, and I want to love you completely, body and soul. Will you marry me?"

The woman looks at the earnest, expectant man and asks, "If I say 'yes,' will you promise to love me, to comfort me, to have and to hold, for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part?" "I will," the man answers soberly. "I will love you and be committed to you above all others."

The woman smiles, then continues. "I believe you. But I also have a family. You say you love me, but there are people whom I love deeply, people whom I am committed to. Will you love them? Will you show your love to me by loving those whom I love? Because if you will not commit yourself to them, then I cannot commit myself to you, because I am committed to loving them."

The man pauses reflectively. "I have never thought about it that way before. But I can see how I cannot claim to love you and be committed to you unless I am committed to loving those whom you love. My love for them will not come as easily as my love for you, and my love for you will always come first, but yes, I will commit to loving those whom you love."

Hearing his great commitment to her, as well as his commitment to the ones she loves, the woman smiles and says, "Then, yes."

PRAYER

Father, we praise you that there is none so lovely or loving as you. We thank you for loving us though we are unlovely. We worship you for so selflessly sacrificing your Son to save such selfish sinners as ourselves. We acknowledge that you alone are worthy of our complete dedication and devotion, our wholehearted adoration and affection. Yet we confess that we do not love you as we should. Therefore, Father, we humbly ask that you forgive us our misplaced priorities, our mis-prioritized affections, and we ask that you help us to love you with more of our hearts, more of our souls, and more of our minds.

Father, we also acknowledge that we do not love others. Much less do we love them as ourselves. We are selfish and hateful, ungrateful and divisive. Like the Pharisees who opposed Jesus, we prioritize our religious rules and regulations over people. We avoid and condemn those whom we consider to be worse sinners than ourselves. We are self-righteous and hypocritical, unloving and judgmental. Please forgive us. Please help us to be merciful so that we may receive mercy. Please help us to be forgiving that we may be forgiven. Please help us to be united, just as Christ prayed. Please help us to indiscriminately and unconditionally love the unlovely as you do. Help us to love you, for you first loved us. Help us to love others, for you are love.

Merciful God, enable us to love you with all of our heart, soul, and mind; enable us to love others as ourselves, for on these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

SERMON EXAMPLES

Alexander, Eric. “Matthew 22:34-46.” St. George’s-Tron Church, Glasgow Scotland. www.monergism.com. (Accessed October 7, 2015).

This seasoned Scottish preacher and faculty member at Ligonier Ministries presents an excellent message supported with memorable illustrations. He excels at challenging modern notions of love while defining what Biblical love for God really is.

Anyabwile, Thabiti. “Matthew 22:34-46.” First Baptist Church, Grand Caymen. www.fbc.org.ky. (Accessed October 7, 2015).

This pastor and council member of The Gospel Coalition offers a clear expository message stressing that whatever people love they will worship.

Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn. “Man and Dogma (Matthew 22:34-40).” Westminster Chapel, London. www.monergism.com. (Accessed October 7, 2015).

Lloyd-Jones was the minister at Westminster Chapel for nearly thirty years and earned a reputation as one of the greatest preachers of the twentieth century. This message challenges the popular idea that one can love others while dispensing with Christian doctrine.

MacArthur, John. “The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:34-40).” Posted February 5, 1984. *Grace to You*. www.gty.org. (Accessed October 7, 2015).

This sermon from a noted conservative expositor contrasts worldly notions of love with the Biblical truth about loving God and others that finds its fullest expression in obedience.

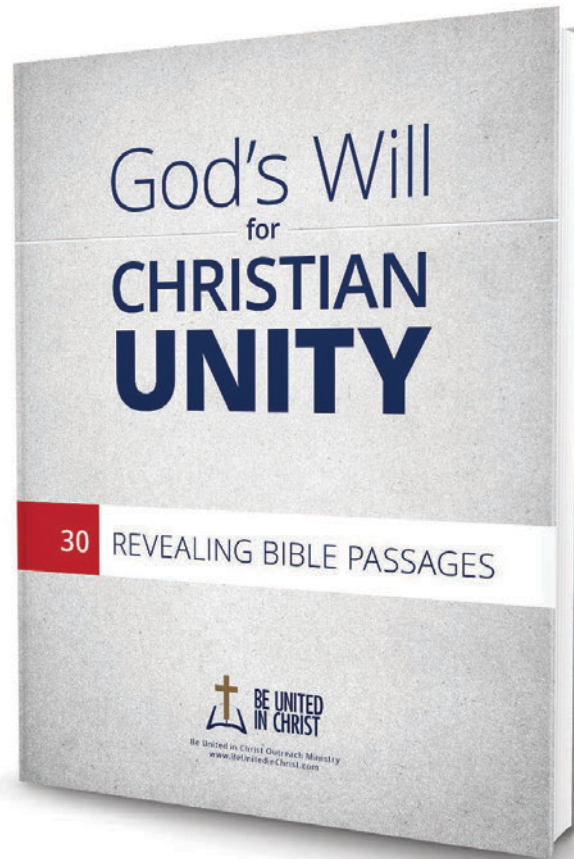
Piper, John. “Love Your Neighbor as Yourself, Part 1 (Matthew 22:34-40).” Posted April 30, 1995. “Love Your Neighbor as Yourself, Part 2 (Matthew 22:34-40).” Posted May 7, 1995. Bethlehem Baptist Church. www.desiringgod.org. (Accessed October 7, 2015.)

This former pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, first stresses the magnitude of the commandment and then applies it.

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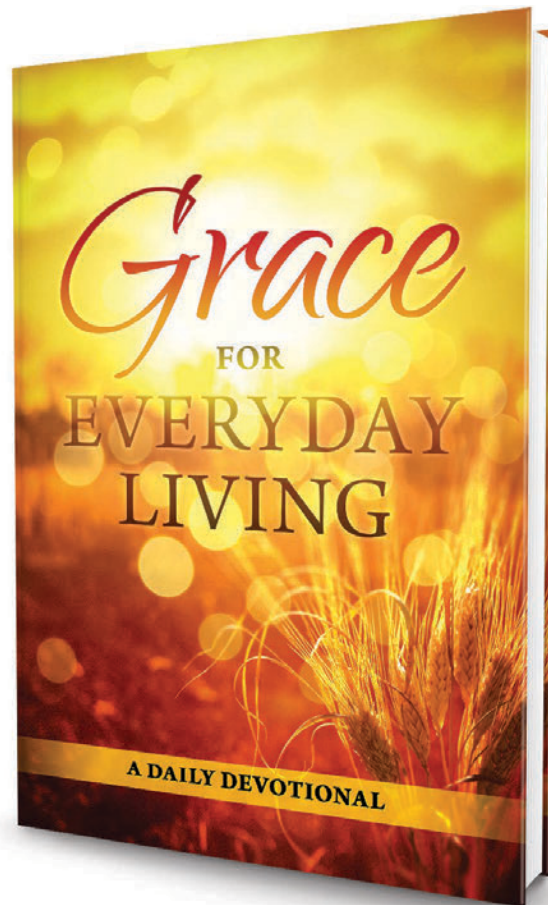
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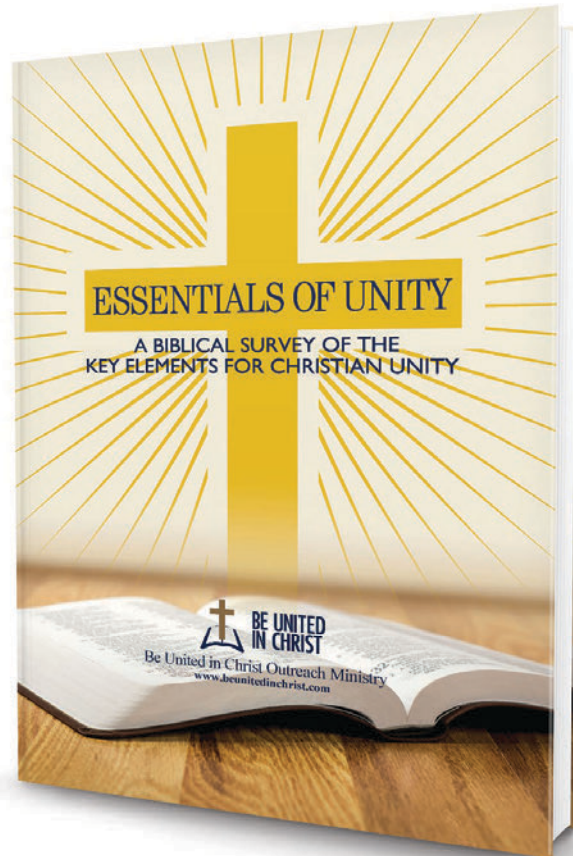
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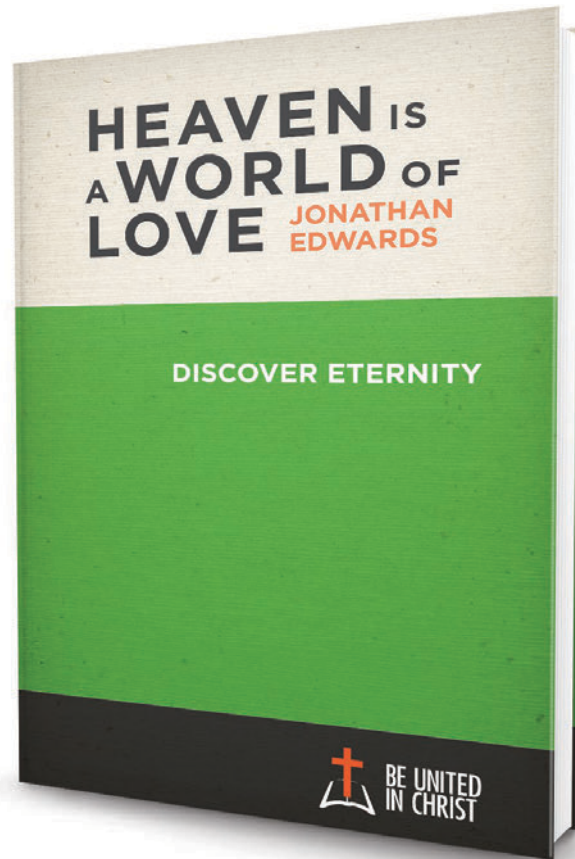
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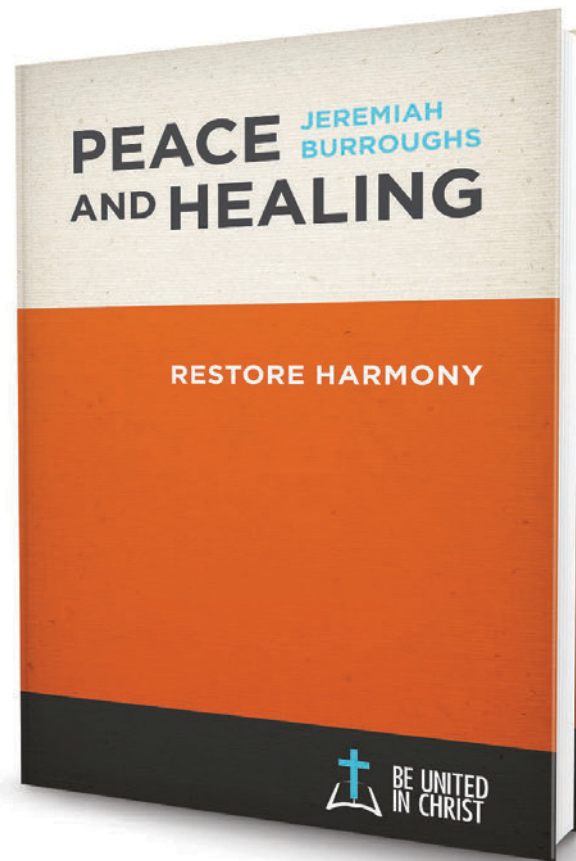


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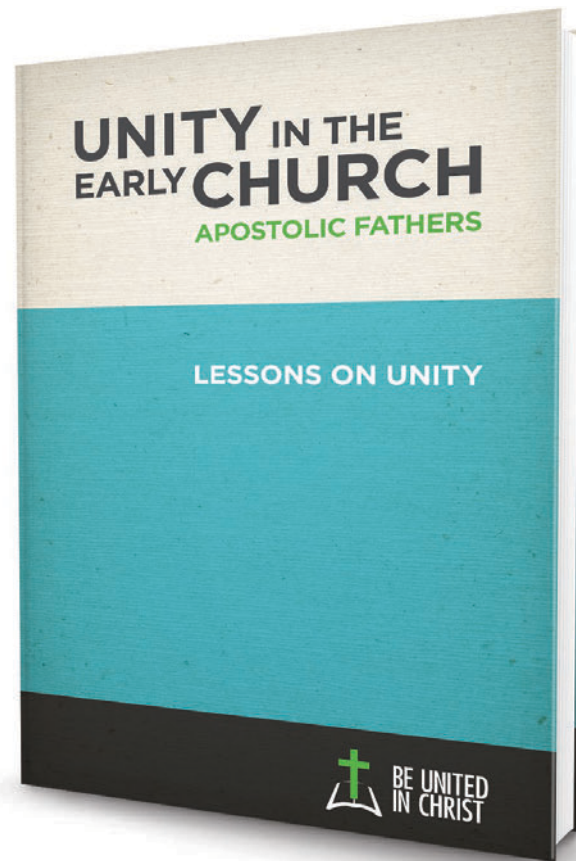


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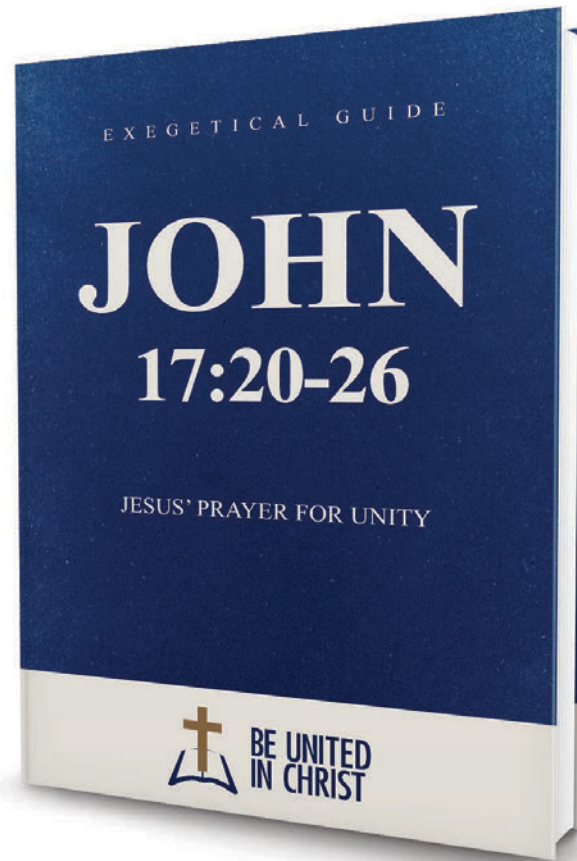
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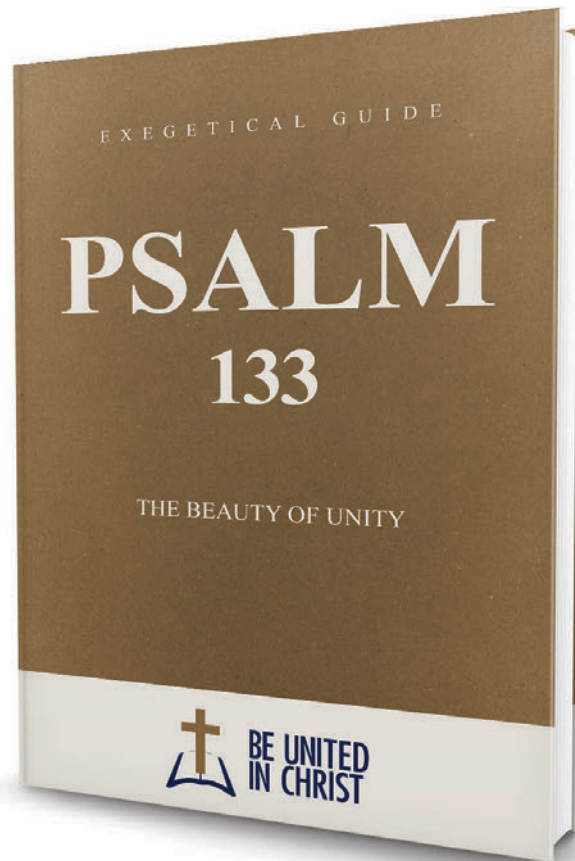


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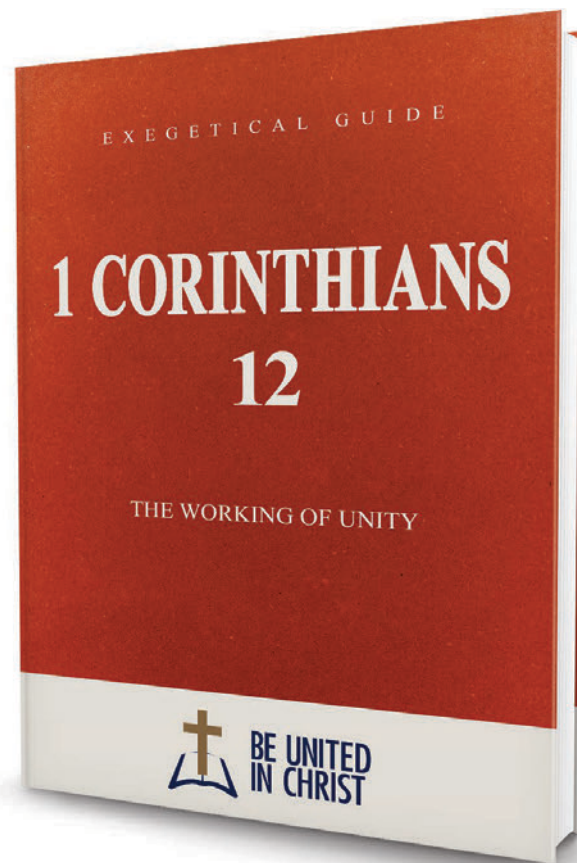


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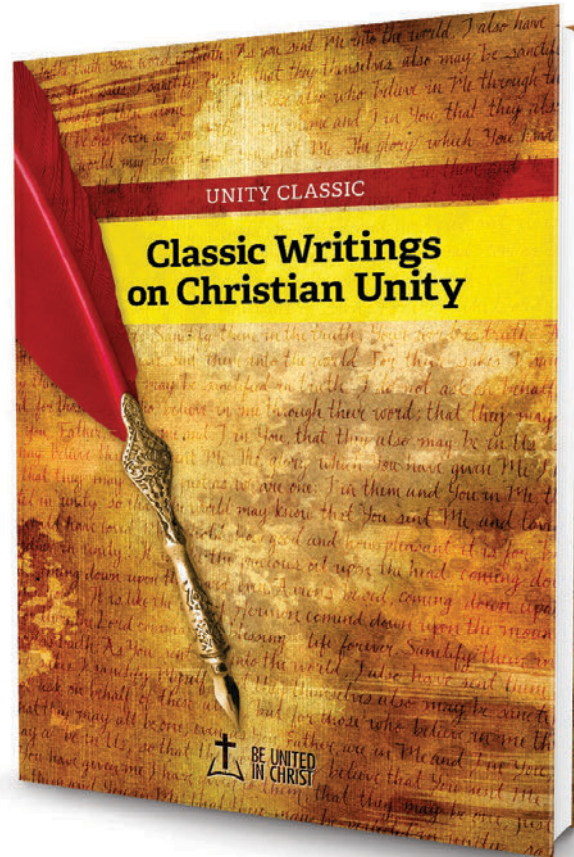


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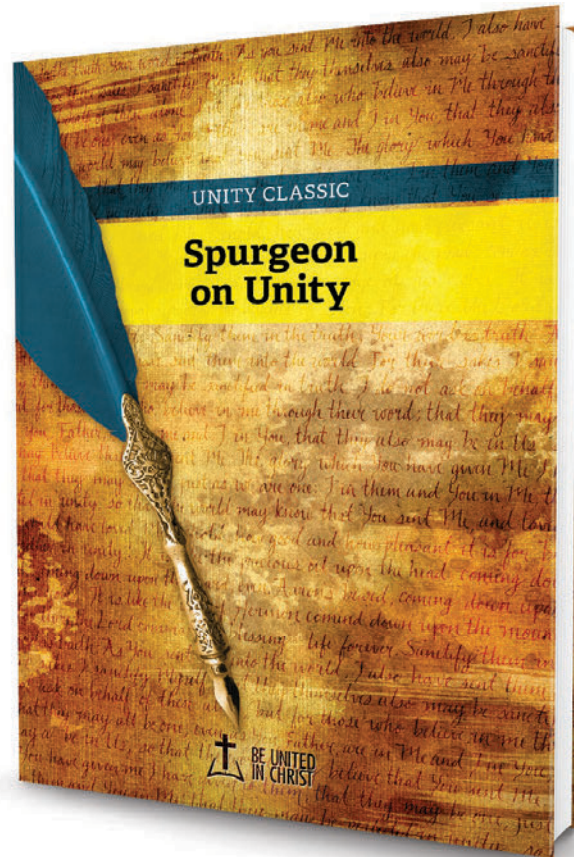
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