

How do we love God back? 05-17-15

Pastor Peter Smith, Exciting FCOG

What's Love got to do with it?

Recap last week:

1. God loves / loved us first!--most important thing for us to ever hear
2. We cannot earn God's love: it's free, we accept it
 - His love isn't performance based
 - He loves us 'just because' we are special, made in His image
3. We cannot un-do God's love. It's trustworthy, constant, always there for us
4. If all this is true, then we should respond to His love. So today, How do we love God *back / in return*?

What is sacred in your life?

- Do you have something you hold onto in life that represents love?
 - A picture, a memento...from your best friend, a penpal;
 - Is it a tradition, a family event that's on your calendar with an immovable date...
 - **Here is something from my life...My journal** from grade school

Shema prayer OT (a sacred prayer for Jews):

- A daily prayer, Morning & evening
- Has ALWAYS been prayed somewhere around the world!
- Boys, girls, even Jesus said this
- Deut. 6:4-9 it is the 1st of 3 sections of the Shema. Read with me in your sermon notes.

**"Hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one
Love the lord your God with all your soul and with all your strength."**

A sacred prayer. (Why is it sacred?)

Vs. 4: "Hear O Israel" **Hear (shema) hear what?...**Our God is one!

- All around the Jewish people there were many gods (for this, for that...god of fertility, god of war, god of love)
- For us, he is complete (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)

- They remember ***daily*** there is only One God

Vs. 5: what does this one God want? Love.

“Love the lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength.”

- What did all the other gods demand? Death, sacrifice, performance, etc.

God says in the OT, before the rules of sacrifice (which showed love), before offerings, before service, before duties....show me love.

- Our God is different!

Here’s my first Point:

God doesn’t demand, He desires your love.

- He doesn’t *need* our love, friendship, affirmation
- He *desires* it.
- He invites us in, to know Him

Read with me Vss. 6-7:

“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.”

- internal, inside, where love is at. Not just memorized here (head) but here (heart)

“Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

- parents, this is why we need to be broken records about our faith: God tells us to be! Focus on God

Vs. 8: “Tie them as symbols on your hands and your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” (explain, commentary?)

Does this mean I have to literally wear them? No!

- Let every thought, every action, my going out of my house and my coming back in should flow from my love of God.

Questions:

- Is your house a place of love, because of your faith?
- Is my job, my adventures, etc...reflections of my love for God?
- Love the lord your God with **all** your heart and with **all** your strength...do you anybody who lives like this? It flows out of them, surrounds them, it isn't 'worked up', bragged about, written on a tee shirt for you to know about it! It oozes out naturally...
- A guy named Keith at our college was like this. (show picture)

So God doesn't demand our love, He desires it.

2nd Point is this: *In order* To love God I must love people

Matthew 22:37-38

- Jesus prayed the Shema 2x a day all his life since he was a devout Jew
- So what do we hear Jesus telling people is the greatest commandment, the most important thing in life? The Shema!!

Read Mt. 22:37-39

"Jesus replied: Love the lord your god with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.

- There it is! To the point. It's what every Jew knew, only 1 way to answer the question
- They were trying to trick him, but he wouldn't fall for it. He gave them the Shema
- But then look at what he says next. Verse 39:

Vs. 39: "And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

- Jesus re-wrote, edited, basically *changed* the Shema prayer: "the 2nd is this"...he joined these two commands (Deut 6 & Lev. 19:17) together
- Jesus says, if you love God you must love people
- Live in harmony with each other
- Oversimplified? Take it up with Jesus! lol

Point 2: To love God I must love people

- You can love people without loving God
- You can't love God without loving people! Wow!
- Loving God means loving others
- 1 John last week we read this too!

How are you doing with this 2nd commandment? The equal one?

- Can we really love people if we hate them?
- How are you doing at loving people? The hard to love ones?

Jesus added to the sacred, to the revelation that was known at that time.

- Many ways I could go today: obedience (if you love me you will keep my commands), faithfulness...other words
- But Jesus says the most important thing(s) are to Love God and to Love People

What would our world look like if this were to really happen?

Here's a little glimpse of love:

- Clothing center, Food pantry, Teaching Kids, Nursery workers, Ushers, Musicians & singers who pray weekly for others, Home group studies, Crisis pregnancy center at Park Lane CoG, Provision on Wednesdays

How can start loving people?

With action, not feelings. Jesus said,

- When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat
- When I was thirsty you gave me something to drink
- When I was in prison you visited me
- When I was....you came...to me
- We love by serving...demonstrating our value of others *and of God*

So, God desires our love, to really love God I must love people and

Point 3: I love God back by following / obeying Jesus.

"If you [really] love Me, you will keep (obey) My commands."

-John 14:15, Amplified

- Implied in following Jesus is believing His story: why he died on the cross; that he returned to life; that only Jesus can remove the penalty of our sins and place us before God
- To really love, then, we must put it all into practice...Love God, Love People!
- Listen: if you love people but not God you are only a humanitarian! That's good, but not enough
- If you are 'spiritual', and don't believe and accept the work of Jesus, you are still separated from God and will die without being with God
- Have you asked Jesus to remove your sins and bring you to God by faith?

Next steps:

1. Who will I serve this week? Be present for others.
2. **Who will I care for this week?** Not to earn God's love but ***because*** you love God.
3. **Who will YOU love this week?**