

## Lesson 11 – What is Your First Love?

(Ask the student if they know the most important commandment in the entire Bible.) One day some Pharisees asked Christ this very question. (Read Matthew 22:34-40) (Ask the student to detail what they learn from this text)

### Love God

There are many people who believe that the Ten Commandments are the most important in the entire Bible. Yet here Christ did not cite even one of them. The first one he quoted is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-7. Obeying the commandments out of fear is not the same as loving God who gives the commandments. The most important commandment for all of life is not about things of this world. It's about looking up to the heavens and loving the one who made everything we see.

(Ask the student: with what are we to love God?) "With all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." And Deuteronomy added "with all your might/strength." Heart, soul, mind, strength. That is to say that we must love God with all our being, without omitting anything. God asks us that He be the central force in our lives, that our main desire is to live with Him and for Him, and that we desire to please Him more than anything else. Love God completely.

Some people think that the most important thing in life is how we treat other people. They believe that the most outstanding thing is to practice what they call the Golden Rule: "As you would like people to do to you, do exactly so to them" (Luke 6:31). Well, we in no way want to belittle this mandate. However, "love your neighbor" is the second command, not the first. Being the second, it is certainly very important. However, if we don't love God first, there are times when we won't know the best way to treat our neighbor. God has to be first.

### More than Family

We have seen that loving God comes before loving our neighbor. Well, one's closest "neighbors" are family members: spouse, children, parents, and everyone else. Certainly, if one does not love those who live with them, they are in a very difficult situation. How much should we love the family? Well, as for husbands, Ephesians 5:25 says "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it." Extraordinary love! Christ died for the church and Scripture says that husbands are to love their wives to this extent. So the Bible teaches a level of love that is too often not seen in the world. However...

(Read Matthew 10:34-39) (Ask the student what they understand from this text) As we have said, the true Christian is going to love his family members. Many times, the Christian practices love towards the family better than the non-Christian, because Christ teaches us what true love is. However, loving father and mother, daughter and son, and even spouse cannot be the Christian's first love.

Unfortunately, as the text says, sometimes "man's foes will be those of his own household." Following Christ is a personal decision. Each individual has to decide if they want to give their life to Christ or not. Then, when some in the family decide to follow Christ and others decide not to, moments of conflict come – sometimes light, but sometimes even violent. On the other hand, in many homes there are no such open conflicts, but simply the Christian pays more attention to the family than to Christ. When there is a conflict between the family and Christ, some choose

the family. For example, when it happens that a children's activity is scheduled at the same time as the church service on Sunday, Christians have to ask themselves who they loves more.

### **More than the World**

(Read 1 John 2:15-17) (Ask the student: According to this text, what are the three things that are of the world?) ("the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life") The first two are desires. We all have desires. When are they bad? When our Father says, "No." In the Garden, Eve saw "that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes " (Genesis 3:6). Eve desired what God had forbidden. Eve sinned, loving something in the world more than God.

The text reads, "Don't love the world." "I love this dress." "I love that house." "I love chocolate." Really? Love things? It's okay to appreciate things, to be grateful for things, and to enjoy them. But love? In the Bible, "love" usually has to do with God loving us, us loving God, and us loving one another. There is a saying that goes, "Love people, not things." The Bible specifically condemns "the love of money" (1 Tim. 6:10). It condemns "lovers of self" and "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." (2 Tim. 3:2-4). In short, not only is it bad to love bad things, but loving good things more than God is bad as well. "If anyone loves the world, the Father's love isn't in him" (1 John 2:15).

(Ask the student what is the third part of love to the world.) (the pride of life) That is an unusual expression. It is about pride – thinking that one is better than others, that one knows more than others, that one lives better than others. It is related to selfishness. Pride prevents us from giving ourselves to God – if we think that we are not so bad, and that we do not need the cleansing that Christ offers.

### **Questions**

1. What is the most important commandment in the entire Bible? (love God with all our being)
2. Meditate well. Is there any person you love more than God? (\_\_\_\_\_)
3. Meditate well. Is there any thing you love more than God? (\_\_\_\_\_)
4. If you love God more than all people and more than all things, is there anything that prevents you from giving yourself to Christ? (\_\_\_\_\_) (On these questions, help the student reflect honestly to reach a positive decision)