

Reimagine: So That My House Will be Full

Reimagine the Great Commandments, Part 1

Mark 12:30

Introduction: The 60's was a crazy time. People questioned the old institutions and experimented with radical new ideas. The nation was at war and people were divided over it. Many felt it was right to use violence to promote peace and freedom. But a subversive countercultural movement strongly believed that peace and freedom were not just goals to be pursued, but a way of life to be lived.

This movement rebelled against the capitalist ideals of the day-rejecting materialism that had ensnared so many and chose a life of radical simplicity, sharing everything they owned with each other as needed. They created a community that thumbed its nose at society's most cherished foundations, including religion. Members of this community considered themselves very spiritual, but they refused to follow the rules of organized religion.

In their view, established religious authorities had promoted ideas that enriched themselves, but had failed to help others. They believed that "love is all you need," so they lived like they believed. They embraced it because a man had taught it to them. His name was Jesus of Nazareth, who had died and risen again just three decades earlier.

Perhaps you thought I was talking about the 1960's, but I was really describing the original '60s, as in A.D. '60s, and the movement and community I was referring to was called, "The Way" later to be called Christianity. The war of the '60s was between Israel and Rome and in A.D. 70, Rome completely destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. Decades earlier Jesus prepared them to shun the way of war and to love their enemies and pray for those who persecuted and spitefully used them.

Today we begin a series of messages focusing on our 2023 church vision and mission called **REIMAGINE: So that My house will be full.**

Reimagine a church after God's own heart. Imagine followers of Christ being everything that God wants them to be, doing everything that God wants them

to do, living a life of such passion, power, and purpose that the people that he or she meets, where they live, where they work, are eternally impacted. I'm convinced that such a church is made up of Christ followers who do three things:

1. Embrace the Great Commandments - loving God, and loving others.
2. Engage the Great Commission – by sharing the Good News and serving others.
3. Employ the Power of the Holy Spirit in your everyday life.

Reimagine the impact a church like that could have. Imagine the lives that could be positively, permanently, and powerfully changed for all eternity.

It all goes back to a question that was asked of Jesus by a lawyer in Mark 12. Beginning with verse 28 it says, **“One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” 29 “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ 31The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”** (NIV)

The lawyer confronting Jesus also happened to be a Pharisee. A Pharisee was considered in his day a religious expert. He was a scholar of the law which was the first five books of the Old Testament.

Just so you know, through the years rabbis had studied the first five books of the law intensely and they had come up with 613 different commandments (248 were positive and 365 were negative). With so many rules, and regulations this lawyer asked a very good question.

Jesus basically said to these Pharisees, who were so legalistic, it doesn't matter how many "i's" you dot "t's" you cross, if you fail to love God with everything you have, if you fail to put God first in every area of your life, it doesn't really matter what else you do.

Illustration: Martin Luther was a devout monk. He was awakened by the bell

at two o'clock each morning and began the first of seven prayer cycles. His confessions lasted up to six hours. And he would often fast for three days without so much as a crumb of bread. Luther said of himself, **"I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery it was I."**

Today I want to begin our Vision Sermon Series by talking about the first and Greatest Commandment. Let's Pray

In each of the synoptic gospels, (Mat 22:37, Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27) Jesus gives the answer to this lawyer's question; ***"love God with all your heart, your soul, your mind, and strength It's called the Great Commandment!***

Jesus uses the words heart, soul, mind, and strength to describe four dimensions of love. It's hard to know where loving God with your heart ends and loving God with your soul begins. Loving God requires your whole being to be engaged. It's not enough to love God with just your heart or just your soul or mind or strength.

Let's look at how to love God in these four ways.

I. Love God with all your Heart

We have lots of saying about our heart. Her heart wasn't in it...He did that job half-hearted...I know this by heart...I love you with all my heart.

And amazingly in recent years, people can get a heart transplants. It's a marvel of modern medicine.

I heard about a mechanic and a doctor having a conversation, and the mechanic said, "You fix or replace a heart in a person, it's like how I repair or replace motors in a car, but you make 10 times what I make." The doctor said, try doing your job with the motor running.

But the heart is more than a physical pump that circulates five thousand quarts of blood through sixty thousand miles of blood vessels every day. The heart secretes its own brain-like hormones and has cellular memory. So, a heart transplant isn't just physical, it's metaphysical.

Research is backed up by numerous medical studies—that transplant recipients don't just receive a new heart. Along with that new heart, they receive whole new sensory responses, cravings, and habits.

Examples:

Ezekiel 1:19 says, ***“I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.” NIV***

When you give your life to Christ, Christ gives His heart to you. You literally feel different. Why? Because you feel what Christ feels. And chief among those sanctified emotions is passion and compassion.

A. Loving God with all our heart requires passion.

I love the paraphrase of Mark 12:30, in The Message translation, "Jesus said, 'Love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.'" That word passion, in Greek, is the word "heart." God is saying I want you to put some muscle into it, put some energy, put some emotion into your relationship with Me. Don't be half-hearted. Jesus is saying, "If you're going to follow Me, you've got to live passionately. You've got to give it maximum effort, enthusiasm, and zest."

B. Loving God with all our heart requires compassion.

As we grow in our love relationship with God, we begin to feel what He feels. We have compassion and sympathize with others. Don't underestimate the spiritual significance of even one act of compassion done in the name of Jesus.

What does it mean to love God with all our hearts?

It means our hearts break for the things that break the heart of God. It means we have identified the God-ordained passion that makes us glad, sad, or mad. It means inaction is not an option, because the compassion of Christ is the driving motivation of our lives.

Jesus also said, “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

In other words, Jesus identified an indivisible link between our heart and our money. And here's what it comes down to: **you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. And the more you love, the more you give.**

Don't let what you cannot do keep you from doing what you can. Every act of generosity creates a righteous ripple effect that can change the course of history.

STORY: Did you ever hear the story of John Blanchard and Hollis Maynell? John Blanchard was preparing to go overseas in World War II, and he found a book in the library, down in Opa Locka, Florida. And this book fascinated him, because the person who had donated it to the library had written their comments in the margin. And he read those comments, and he found a kinship of soul. And so he looked at the name of the person who had donated the book, and somehow he discovered where Hollis Maynell lived, and he wrote her a letter. And they became friends in the mail. And as he was overseas, they corresponded with one another.

He wrote her once and said, "Could you send me a picture?" And she wrote back and said, "If you really care about me, it won't matter what I look like."

He never got a picture. And the day came when he was sent back to the United States, and they wrote and determined how they would meet. And she said, "I'll be wearing a rose, and you be carrying my book, we'll meet at 12 noon in Grand Central Station in New York City."

So, he got there, and he saw a lady, not quite what he expected wearing the rose. And as he walked toward her, a beautiful blond, brushed his shoulder, bumped into him, and said, "Soldier, going my way?" And as he looked at this beautiful woman, everything inside of him said, "Go with her and forget about the lady with the rose." But he thought of all their letters and said to himself, "This won't be the love I was hoping for" and he kept walking on over to the lady he believed to be Hollis Maynell, and said, "Miss Maynell, I'm John Blanchard, may I please take you to lunch?"

And the lady looked at him and said, "Sir, I don't know what this is all about, but the lady that just walked by you gave me this rose and asked me to wear it,

and she said that if you were to ask, I should tell you to join her across the street for lunch."

What was she looking for? She was looking for man of integrity, a man whose motivation was pure, and whose love was not superficial. She knew she was attractive, but she knew that physical attraction has its limitations, and she wanted to see what kind of man he was.

The love of the Father was Jesus' disposition. What's your disposition? What's your disposition? Someone asked my wife, "Do you ever wake up grumpy?" She said, "No, I let him sleep." No, she didn't say that.

What's your disposition? Your disposition is the source of your motivation. Whatever your key motivation is, will be your outward disposition. It's what comes out of you, naturally, because of what you value the most.

I wonder, as God looks at our hearts, is He pleased with what He sees. Scripture says, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts."

II. Love God with all your SOUL

God breathed the breath of life into man's nostrils, so that the Spirit of God moved into it and man became a living soul, with a distinct personality.

- The body of man is world - conscious. It is through it that human beings relate with each other.
- The spirit of man is God - conscious, it is through it that he realizes that there is God and recognizes His Lordship.
- The soul of a man is the seat of his intellect, will and emotions; it is self-conscious. It is through the soul that a man knows that he is bold, weak, strong, and intelligent and that he is different from any other person.

The soul stands between these two worlds yet belongs to both. It is linked with the spiritual world through the spirit and with the material world through the body. It also possesses the power of free will. The spirit cannot act directly

upon the body. It needs a medium, and that medium is the soul. The soul makes it possible for the spirit and the body to communicate and cooperate.

It is only when the soul is willing to assume a humble position that the spirit can ever manage our lives to where we are a spiritual-minded and spirit-led person. If the soul rebels against taking such a position the spirit will be powerless to help us live as a Christ follower and mature in the faith.

We know the Jewish temple was divided into three parts. The first is the outer court which is seen by all and visited by all. All external worship is offered here. Going further in is the Holy Place, into which only the priests can enter. They are quite near to God, but still outside the veil and therefore unable to stand before His very presence in the Holy of Holies. Innermost, behind the veil, lies the Holy of Holies. It is "the secret place of the Most High," the dwelling place of God. Here man unites and communes with God.

A regenerated person's spirit is like the Holy of Holies indwelt by God, where everything is carried on by faith, beyond the sight, sense or understanding.

In Hebrews 4 the Holy Spirit relates to us the ministry of Jesus as the High Priest. It also tells us about the relationship between the believers and the High Priest. Verse 12 says, ***"nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (NIV)*** Verse 13 goes on to say, ***"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."*** (NIV)

Here the Holy Spirit considers a believer like a sacrifice on the altar. In the Old Testament, when a man offered a sacrifice, he tied the sacrifice to the altar. The priest then killed the sacrifice with a knife and cut the sacrifice into two parts, piercing, and dividing even the joints and the marrow. The Holy Spirit used this picture to show Jesus' work on our own lives.

The priests of old divided the sacrifices with a knife. The present High Priest, Jesus, divides the believers' soul and spirit with the word of God.

The sacrifices had to be laid on the altar before the priests could cut them in half. We know that the altar of the Old Testament is the cross of the New Testament. Unless the believer is willing to come to the cross and is willing to be crucified with the Lord, he cannot expect the High Priest to divide his soul from his spirit with God's sharp double-edged sword, His Holy Word.

Loving God with all your soul requires you first come to the cross so that the Lord can fulfill His priestly ministry of dividing your soul and spirit with His word.

Loving God with all your heart involves passion and compassion. Loving God with all our soul is to receive peace with God and the peace of God because our soul is only at peace when it is with God.

III. Love God with all your MIND

In Rom 8:6 Paul says, "the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace".

In Rom 12:2 Paul says that we should be "transformed by the renewing of our minds", which is a process.

In Mat 13:23, in the parable of the sower, it is the man who understands God's word who produces a crop; yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Rom 15:14 says that we are to be 'complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another'.

In Phil 1:9 Paul prays 'that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight'.

In 2 Pet 1:5-6 Peter says 'For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; {6} and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness'.

Mark Batterson says, **“there is an invisible link between loving God with all your soul and loving God with all your mind. Awe and wonder are spiritual cousins. When the soul stops wondering, the**

mind stops learning. A lack of wonder breeds a lack of awe, and a lack of awe breeds a lack of wonder.”

Individuals who suffer from a poor image of themselves are caught up in self-rejection. They do not see themselves as the objects of God's love. Self-rejection can be the enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us 'Beloved children of God.'

The process of spiritual formation in Christ is one of progressively replacing destructive images and ideas with the images and ideas that filled the mind of Jesus himself. We thereby come increasingly to see ***"the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the Image of God"*** (2 Corinthians 4:4,).

So, when we bring our MIND to dwell intelligently upon God as He is presented in His Word, it will have the effect of causing us to love God passionately, and this love will in turn bring us to always think of God.

In this way we enter a life of worship. To think of God as He is, we cannot help but be led into worship; and worship is the single most powerful force in completing and sustaining restoration in our whole being. Worship “in spirit and in truth” is the overall character of the renovated thought life.

The New Testament Greek word translated as ***"disciple"*** comes from a root that means ***"learner."*** By definition, a disciple is someone who never stops learning. A devoted disciple loves more because he knows more. A true disciple keeps asking and seeking and knocking.

Last week in talking about temptation, I mentioned the verse from 2 Corinthians that says, ***“Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ?”***

We usually interpret this verse in negative terms. Take sinful thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ. That is only half the battle. This verse is not just about capturing sinful thoughts and getting them out of our minds; it's also about capturing creative and God-ordained thoughts and keeping them in our minds. It means stewarding every word, every thought, every impression, and every revelation inspired by the Spirit of God.

You are to "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

Illustration: I coached baseball when Caleb was in Little League and my attitude was to never get on the kids when they made a physical mistake because it happens even in the pros. We practice getting better. But I focused on helping the kids keep their mind in the game. Know what you are going to do if you get the ball.

To love God "with all your mind" is to know that your mind has great influence on everything else about you. The Bible tells us, "For as he thinks within himself, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

To love God "with all your mind" is to use your mind to focus on the things of God. "Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth" (Col. 3:2).

To love God with "all your mind" is to know that your spiritual condition affects how you think.

Paul wrote, ***"those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so."*** (Rom. 8:5-7, NIV).

To love God "with all your mind" may cause people to sometimes wonder if you are "out of your mind."

We've seen what it means to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. But passion, compassion, awe, and wonder aren't enough. Strength is needed.

IV. Loving God with all your STRENGTH

So, what does it mean to love God with all your strength? It means expending tremendous amounts of energy for kingdom causes. It means blood, sweat, and tears. It means good old fashioned hard work.

Energy may be the least appreciated dimension of love because it's the least sentimental. But it's the most practical. And how we invest our energy reveals our true priorities. It also reveals how much we love someone.

At the end of the day, God isn't going to say, "Well said, good and faithful speaker." He's not going to say, "Well thought, good and faithful thinker." He's going to say; "Well done, good and faithful servant." God doesn't reward what we know. He doesn't reward what we say. He rewards what we do.

A. We Love God with All our Strength through SERVICE

We will love others best when we love God the most. To love God with all our strength is to love Him with our talents, abilities, and spiritual gifts.

I've found that there are six reasons most people don't serve in church.

- 1: They don't understand that they should serve.
2. They don't think they are capable.
3. They're burned out.
4. They've "served their time" and think its time for someone else to step up.
5. They don't agree with the vision or direction of the church.
6. They were never asked.

Can you imagine a church where people, instead of saying, "What's in it for me?" say, "Where can I serve, what can I do?"

The truth is: God has uniquely gifted you for joyful and effective service by giving you.

1. Spiritual Gifts

Scripture has three lists of what are called spiritual gifts – given by the Holy Spirit at His discretion for the sake of helping us serve Him through the Church.

The first list is in Romans 12:6-8

The second list is in 1 Corinthians 12:7-10

And then the third list is in Ephesians 4:11

2. Physical Talents - things like musical abilities, carpentry skills, artistic...

B. We Love God with all our strength through SACRIFICE.

In God's economy, breaking even is a loss. The servant with one talent broke even, but Jesus called him "wicked and lazy." The greatest risk is taking no risks. And it's not just risky, it's wrong.

Love doesn't play it safe; it takes risks.

Love doesn't make excuses; it takes responsibility.

Love doesn't see problems; it takes the opportunity to solve them.

If God's love for us was expressed by Jesus' sweat and great drops of blood; then our love for Him should be expressed in some sweat as well.

No one was more energetic than Jesus. He cast out demons, healed the sick, loved the outcasts, and taught the crowds. And He did all of that while defending Himself against the Pharisees and dealing with the insecurities and ineptitudes of His own disciples. That's not to mention the miles He walked. Or the fact that He got up early, and stayed up late. Where did all that energy come from? The answer is found in a fascinating dialogue when His disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." "My food, "said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish His work."

Jesus makes a profound point here: the will of God is energizing. Pursuing God-ordained passions with all your strength will energize you.

At its core, loving God with all your strength really means loving God with all His strength. It's not about what you can do for God. It's about what God can do in you and through you. The moment you put your faith in Christ, the best you can do is no longer the best you can do; you enter the realm of doing all things through Christ who strengthens you.

The Apostle Paul was a strong man. He endured physical, emotional, and spiritual onslaughts but he said, "I am pleased in weaknesses, in insults, in catastrophes, in persecutions, and in pressures. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). His dependence was upon Christ, and so should ours be.

Loving God with ALL your strength boils down to sacrifice and service.

When God puts you in a place to serve Him, He will give you the strength to do what He has called you to do.

Jesus said to his followers, Love the Lord your God with all your strength; but He gave them the strength they needed when He sent the Holy Spirit to empower us to be His witnesses.

CONCLUSION:

Let me close by making one final revelation: most of us have a natural leaning toward one of these four dimensions of love. Think of it as your spiritual love language toward God. Maybe compassion comes easily because of the pain you've experienced in your own life. Or maybe your love language is awe and wonder. You feel closer to God in the middle of creation than the middle of a church service. For some your spirit rises when your mind is stretched by a God idea. And for others, you feel most fulfilled when you break a sweat working for Kingdom causes.

God is big enough to be loved in so many ways. Every relationship with God begins in the same way: at the foot of the cross. But then our lives become unique expressions of compassion, wonder, curiosity, and strength. And no one else can take your place.

Oswald Chambers said, **"Let God be as original with other people as He is with you."** The way we love God will look very different based on our spiritual love language.

Love God in the way that comes most naturally to you. But you also need to cultivate the other ways, because loving God in one way isn't enough. We're commanded to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And when we do, its love to the fourth power and all things will be possible.

Sometimes the greatest act of love isn't the one that comes most easily. It's the one that is most difficult or requires the greatest sacrifice.

We're commanded to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And when we love God this way, I believe that all things will be possible.

Reimagine a church after God's own heart. Reimagine, you, as a follower of Christ being everything that God created you to be, doing everything that God wants you to do, living a life of passion, power, and purpose so that the people you meet, where you live, where you work, and wherever you go, are eternally impacted.