

Series – ALL IN

#5 Love God with ALL Your STRENGTH

Mark 12:30

INTRODUCTION: Martin Luther was a devout monk. He was awakened by the bell at two o'clock in the morning and began the first of seven prayer cycles. His confessions lasted up to six hours. And he would often fast for three days on end 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."*

In the fall of 1516, Martin Luther was teaching through the book of Romans at the University of Wittenberg when he came to this scripture: ***"The just shall live by faith."*** Luther experienced a theological tipping point. He said, "This passage of Paul became to me the gate of heaven." And the rediscovery of a simple truth—*sola fide*, by faith alone—became the rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation.

Reformations are not born out of new discoveries. Those are often called cults. Reformations are born out of rediscovering some ancient truths, that are re-imagined and radically reapplied to our lives.

In the past few weeks, we've been looking at what it means to go ALL IN for Jesus. It means first to pick up our cross and follow Him daily, and then we've also seen that in each of the synoptic gospels [Matt. 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27] we are told to love God with ALL our heart, soul and mind and STRENGTH.

Loving God with all your heart – involves passion and compassion.

Loving God with all our soul is to have a sense of wonder.

Loving God with all our mind – holy curiosity and creativity.

We all love God in all four of these ways, but each of us tends more naturally toward one than the others. **God has created you primarily to love Him as a talker, a feeler, a thinker, or a doer.**

Talkers most easily love God with their hearts.

Feelers love God with their souls.

Thinkers love God with their minds.

Doers love God with their strength.

Today we're going to see what it means to love God with all our STRENGTH.

Let's PRAY

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 two things for Christ-followers: *sacrifice* and *service*.

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. At the end of the day, God isn't going to say, "Well said, or well thought good and faithful servant." 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.

If you love someone or something enough, the expenditure of energy isn't seen as a chore. It's a privilege. It's not something you have to do; it's something you get

to do AND want to do. Love for God turns work into worship.

I. Loving God with All Your Strength involves SERVICE

We will love others best when we love God the most. To love God with all our strength is to love Him PRACTICALLY. This is loving God with our talents, abilities, and spiritual gifts; and is seen in: *service*

There is no place in Scripture that lends itself to the idea that it's okay to just be a Christian and sit on the sidelines and do nothing.

Loving God with all our strength by serving Christ and His Kingdom is not reserved for those who would be considered "professionals" like pastors and missionaries; it's for every believer and follower of Jesus Christ.

The local church is Christ's main vehicle for spreading the gospel around the world as well as for worship, discipleship, fellowship, and ministry.

Do you realize how unbelievably astounding the human body is?

- Our heart beats 100,000 times each day
- Our blood is on a 60,000-mile journey
- Our eyes can distinguish up to 1,000,000 color surfaces and take in more information than the largest telescope known to man
- Our lungs inhale over 2,000,000 liters of air every day without thinking. They are large enough to cover a tennis court.
- Our hearing is so sensitive it can distinguish between hundreds of thousands of different sounds.
- Our brain is more complex than the most powerful computer and has over 100 billion nerve cells
- We give birth to 100 billion red cells every day
- When we touch something we send a message to our brain at 124 MPH

- We are about 70% water
- Our nose is our personal air-conditioning system: it warms cold air, cools hot air and filters impurities.
- In one square inch of our hand, we have nine feet of blood vessels and 600 pain sensors, 9000 nerve endings, 36 heat sensors and 75 pressure sensors.
- We have copper, zinc, cobalt, calcium, manganese, phosphates, nickel and silicon in our bodies.

The human body is one of the most amazing parts of God's creation, but there is another body that is even more incredible and that is the body of Christ, otherwise known as the CHURCH. God sees His church not as a building but as a body. We are members of that body!

We are explicitly told in Romans 12:5, ***"So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."*** (Romans 12:5, NIV)

To become a member of something conjures up different images. Some people think about paying dues, some think about having their name on some invisible roll, and some people think about making a commitment.

The Bible paints a very different picture of church membership. Being a 'member' of the church is considered the same thing as being a 'vital' organ of a living body. The church is not a building - it is a body. The church is not an organization - it is an organism.

For the organs of the body to fulfill their purpose they must be connected to the body. For the body to be healthy all the organs must be connected, and they must be functioning. Any vital organ that is detached from the body will not only fail to

fulfill its purpose, but it will also die. In other words, every vital organ of your body must be 'ALL IN' or your body will die.

Almost every time the word "church" is used in the Bible, it refers to a local, visible, single, congregation that meets in a certain location. The New Testament always assumes membership in a local church. The Christian who is not a member of a church is compared in the Bible to an organ without a body, a sheep without a flock and a child without a family. Ephesians 2:19 says, ***"You belong in God's household with every other Christian."*** (LB)

In the early church there was a health problem. Not every organ was 'ALL IN' and the body was suffering for it. People began to make the church just one of many options on where to spend their time, talents and treasures. The author of Hebrews tells them why their relationship to the church is so important.

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another." (Hebrews 10:24-25, ESV)

[There are some great benefits to being ALL IN to a church.](#)

1. There are PHYSICAL benefits from church membership.

According to a study from Indiana's Purdue University published in the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, people who attend church regularly, and get involved in the church, get sick much less often than those who don't.

I saw one article that said,

- Do not ride in automobiles - they cause 20% of all fatal accidents. Do not

stay home - 17% of all accidents occur in the home.

- Do not walk on the streets or on the sidewalks - 14% of all accidents occur to pedestrians.
- Do not travel by air, rail or water - 16% of all accidents happen only by these three types of transportation.
- Only .001% of all deaths reported occur in the worship services of a church and these are related to previous physical disorders. Therefore, the safest place for you to be at any time is in church. Come to church. It could save your life!

2. There are EMOTIONAL benefits from church membership.

You will be healthier and happier. The Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company studied people who had joined a church, were actively involved, prayed, read their Bibles and had surrendered their lives to Christ. When they compared those people to the people in America who did not attend church or were not religious, they discovered:

A. Church attenders are twice as likely to say their home life is happy.

B. Church attenders are almost twice as likely to believe that their work contributes to society.

C. Church attenders are more than twice as likely to reconcile marital problems rather than divorce.

D. Church attenders are six times more likely to do community volunteer work.

3. There are the SPIRITUAL benefits from church membership.

Identity. - Just as a uniform identifies you as a soldier, and a badge identifies you as an officer, church membership identifies you as a believer.

Maturity. - We grow best as we grow together, and the church provides you a place where you can mature in your faith.

Ministry. - The church gives you a place to discover your spiritual gifts and an avenue to put them to work.

Authority. - Every church member needs to be under the spiritual authority of a church pastor.

Accountability. - The church can help you be accountable to the Lord and to one another, and to encourage you in your daily walk with God.

Listen to how the first church in the New Testament started. ***"Those who believed... were baptized and added to the church...they joined with the other believers and committed themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship... they worshipped together at the temple each day and met in homes [small groups]... and shared their meals with great joy and generosity." (Acts 2: 41-42, 46, NLT)***

1. They believed
2. They were baptized
3. They joined the church family.
4. They committed to regular worship.
5. They connected to one another in authentic relationships.

The difference between being a church attender and a church member is commitment.

Attendees are spectators. Members are participants.

Attendees are consumers. Members are contributors.

The Christian life is more than just commitment to Christ. It is also a commitment to other Christians. God wants all of us to be ALL IN to all of His church.

Where Should I Belong as a Member of a Church?

Word - Find a church where the Word of God is preached every week.

Worship - Find a church where the worship is uplifting, inspiring, motivating, centered on Jesus Christ and directed to the praise of God.

Witness - Find a church that believes that people without Jesus Christ are spiritually lost and in need of salvation.

Work - Find a church where you can enthusiastically get involved, putting your spiritual gifts to work in the service of that body.

Key takeaway: Find a church where you can be ALL IN and then go ALL IN with that church.

The point is that to Love God with all our strength is to – SERVE.

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 it's time for someone else to serve.
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 be of help?"

Can you imagine church where the attitude isn't "It's all about me," but instead, "It's all about Christ and His Kingdom?"

God has uniquely gifted you for joyful and effective service.

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 – We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

The second list is in 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 – Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

And then the third list is in Ephesians 4:11 –It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers...

Keep in mind: the Spirit decides who gets what gift for what purpose.

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

Scripture tells us that at times God has gifted certain people to do certain things like singing, playing instruments, and even building.

The main impact of a church loving God with all their strength in service is that the church grows SPIRITUALLY AND NUMERICALLY.

II. Loving God with all your strength involves SACRIFICE

STORY: In 1908, John Perkins and his wife were on board a steamship rounding the coast of Liberia. They knew God had called them to Africa, but they didn't know exactly where God wanted them to go. As the ship made its way around Garraway Bay, they sensed the Holy Spirit prompting them to get off the ship.

Unknown to the Perkins, there was a young man living in that region named Jasper Toe. He was a God-fearing man who practiced his tribal rituals, but he'd never heard the name of Jesus. One night he looked into the night sky and said, "If there is a God in heaven, help me find You." As Jasper stood under the stars, a voice he'd never heard before said, "Go to Garraway Beach. You will see a box on the water, with smoke coming out of it. And from that box on the water some people will come. These people will tell you how to find Me."

Jasper Toe traveled seven days on foot to Garraway Beach, arriving on Christmas Day, 1908. From the shore he saw a black box floating on the water

with smoke coming out of it, also known as a steamship. And that is when John Perkins and his wife sensed the Holy Spirit saying, "Get off the ship here. This is where I want you to go."

When they went to the captain of the ship and asked him to let them get off the ship, he said, "I can't let you off the boat here. This is cannibal country. People that go in there, never come back." John Perkins insisted, "God wants us to get off the boat."

The captain stopped the steamship. Then the Perkins and all of their belongings were put into a canoe, and they rowed to shore. When they got to the shore, Jasper Toe was waiting to welcome them. He motioned for them to follow him, and they did. They could not speak each other's language, but the Perkins followed Jasper Toe through the interior all the way back to his village. They eventually learned the language. They started the first church in that village. And Jasper Toe was their first convert.

Those who knew him at the end of his life described Jasper Toe as one of the godliest men they'd ever met. And his legacy is the hundreds of churches he led as the first superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Liberia.

What if the Perkins had ignored the prompting of the Holy Spirit? Faith is not faith until it is acted upon. Faith without works is dead. So is love without sacrifice.

I think the perception that many people have of Christians stems from the negative energy we project. We falsely view righteousness as doing nothing wrong. So, we practice holiness by subtraction. "Don't do this. Don't do that." But

the problem with that approach is this: **you can do nothing wrong and still do nothing right.**

In God's economy, breaking even is a total loss. The servant with one talent broke even, but Jesus called him "wicked and lazy."

Love doesn't play it safe; it takes risks. Love doesn't make excuses; it takes responsibility. Love doesn't see problems; it seizes opportunities to step up and serve and sacrifice. If God's love for us was expressed with Jesus' sweat with great drops of blood; then our love for Him must be expressed in sacrifice that involves all our strength.

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 logged hiking mountainous terrain. Or the fact that He got up early, stayed up late, and pulled all-nighters. 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." Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

"My food, "said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." Food is a source of energy. And Jesus makes a profound point here: **the will of God is energizing.** So how do you stay energized? Stay in the will of God. **Pursuing God-ordained passions with all your strength will energize you.**

Where there is no vision, the people perish. Vision is the cure for sin. It energizes

everything we do. It's also the difference between making a living and making a life.

God loves it when we break a sweat for a kingdom cause, but loving God with all our strength is not enough. Loving God with all our strength is living in His strength. But many of us never receive the power He promised; and without His power, we become nothing more than theological Christians. Our testimony is reduced to our words. Our impact is reduced to our abilities. Without His power at work in us, we cannot accomplish His purposes.

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 word for "strength" that Paul used in his prayer is the same word that Jesus used in the Great Commandment. It refers to supernatural strength beyond natural ability. 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 infinite possibility.

A century ago, Albert Einstein published what may be the most recognizable equation in science: $E = MC^2$. Energy equals mass multiplied by the speed of light, squared. Think of mass as sweat equity. It's the energy we invest in kingdom causes. And without our expenditure of energy, nothing happens. But the real key to the equation is light. And God is light. Think of light squared as His power at work within us. It's His power that completes the equation. He empowers us, enables us, and energizes us. **And our human effort plus His divine power equals supernatural synergy.**

Let me say it this way: **Albedo is the measurement of how much light a celestial body reflects.** Our night-light, the moon, has an albedo of 0.07. In other words, 7

percent of the light that strikes the moon's surface is reflected. Enceladus, a moon of Saturn, has the highest albedo of any celestial body in our solar system. It reflects 99 percent of the light that hits its surface.

We are called to reflect the light of God—His compassion, His wonder, His creativity, and His energy. You cannot manufacture those things. You can only reflect them. Our love for God is nothing more and nothing less than a reflection of God's love for us that we have embraced with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. **How much of the light of Christ do you reflect?**

To fully appreciate God's incomparably great power, we must go all the way back to God's first words: "***Let there be light.***" God speaks, and the first sound waves don't just travel through space, they create it. Light waves begin to defeat darkness at a rate of 186,000 miles per second.

Less than a century ago, the prevailing opinion was that the Milky Way galaxy was the sum total of the universe. Nineteenth-century Austrian physicist Christian Doppler had theorized an expanding universe, but there wasn't much tangible evidence to back up his belief.

Then an astronomer named Edwin Hubble spied several spiral nebulae that were far too distant to be part of the Milky Way galaxy. The announcement of his discovery on January 1, 1925, was an astronomical paradigm shift. He discovered that the degree of redshift observed in light coming from other galaxies increased in proportion to the distance of that galaxy from the Milky Way. **In other words, the universe is still expanding - the original "Let there be light" is still creating galaxies at the outer edges of the universe.**

The same voice that spoke order into chaos at the dawn of creation is still doing it. He can speak order into the chaos of your life. He can speak light into your darkness. He can bring back to life the parts of you that have died. He can do it with just a word or a touch.

Now, here is the amazing thing: the same Spirit that raised Him from the dead is at work within us. Without Him, we can do nothing. With Him, all things are possible.

STORY: Phil Vischer, the creator of Veggie Tales started out with loose change and grew Big Idea Inc. into a multimillion-dollar company that has sold more than fifty million videos. Over a three-year span during its heyday, revenues grew from \$1.3 million to \$44 million—that's an increase of 3,300 percent. But that all came to an end with one lawsuit. As Phil himself said, "Fourteen years' worth of work flashed before my eyes—the characters, the songs, the impact, the letters from kids all over the world. It all flashed before my eyes, then it all vanished."

Big Idea declared bankruptcy. The dream died. And Phil was left to do some serious soul-searching. That's when Phil heard a sermon that saved his soul and changed his life. "If God gives you a dream, and the dream comes to life and God shows up in it, and then the dream dies, it may be that God wants to see what is more important to you—the dream or him."

In Phil's words, "The impact God has planned for us doesn't occur when we're pursuing dreams. It occurs when we're pursuing God."

Isn't it time to stop striving in your own strength and start flowing in His? Isn't it time to stop building your own kingdom and start advancing His?

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

The Apostle Paul was a strong man. He endured physical, emotional, and spiritual onslaughts and 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, in whom he learned he could do anything God asked him to do (Phil. 4:13).

Loving God with all your strength means you allow God to direct your strength to glorify Him and make Him known (Eph. 1:19).

"God is not looking for people to work for Him but people who let Him work mightily in and through them."

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.

CONCLUSION: Let me make one final revelation: most of us have a natural bent toward one of these four dimensions of love. Think of it as your spiritual love language. Maybe compassion comes easily because of the pain you've experienced in your own life. Or maybe your love language is wonder. You feel closer to God in the middle of creation rather than the middle of a church service. For some it's curiosity. Your spirit soars when your mind is stretched by a God idea. And for others, it's energy. You feel most fulfilled when you break a sweat for a kingdom cause.

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 energy. And no one else can take your place. Oswald Chambers said, "Let God be as original with other people as He is with you."

Love God in the way that comes most naturally to you. But you also need to cultivate the other love languages, 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, it's love to the fourth power and all things will be possible.

We need supernatural strength, because to fulfill the law of love as it is laid out in the word of God, we need strength outside of ourselves. Jesus said to his followers, Love the Lord your God with all your strength; but then, at the end of his ministry, before ascending to the right hand of the Father, he gave them the strength they needed to pull this off. He gave them the Holy Spirit. Paul put it like this; I can do all things, through Christ who strengthens me.

Compassion, wonder, curiosity, and energy are nouns. It's our job to turn them into verbs. It's our highest calling and greatest privilege when we go ALL IN.