

Loving God with all my heart...

(An outline from the Teaching Priest, Mark A. Dixon)

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, A&D WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, A&D WITH ALL YOUR MI&D.’**"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." – Matthew 22: 35-40 NASB

In his response to the testing question posed by the lawyer, Jesus quoted a passage from Deuteronomy 6:5 that informs and instructs us regarding the priority of loving God with all our heart. In fact, it may well be understood that one will find it difficult (if not impossible) to carry out the second commandment without an affirmative commitment to this primary directive.

As with any commandment of God, we can trust that the commandment to love Him with all our heart is for our own best and highest good. We may confidently assume that God is not some emotionally needy individual who requires our love and attention to somehow make Him feel good about Himself or to satisfy some other emotional or character deficit. No, He issues this command because it is absolutely in our best interest to love Him with all our heart. Also, it is essential to be aware and very clear on the fact that Relationship is God's number one priority.

But in our 21st century world, we find that there are many competing and even conflicting influences vying for our heart's attention and love. So, in response to this clear and primary commandment, there are at least two issues of immediate concern: 1) what influence(s) have control of our hearts presently and, (2) how do we ensure that "all" our heart is committed to loving God?

Like it or not, the fact is that your heart is the "control center" of your life. What you really believe and what decisions and actions you eventually take are the result of the dominant beliefs of your heart. Today, too many Christians may find, upon close and honest inspection, that love for God and trust in God are NOT the dominant beliefs that drives their thoughts, feelings,

and actions. This is precisely why they are not experiencing the abundant life that Christ himself stated he had come to make possible for them. For many believers, the state and condition of the heart is one of mixed beliefs and influences. These include personal experiences from the formative years, cultural influences (both secular and religious), various traumas to which they have been exposed, and flawed beliefs regarding who God is and how he sees and relates to them.

This is, at best, a recipe for a less than fulfilling life as a Christian. In other scenarios it is the prescription for a life of needless misery, pain, defeat, and failure.

In order to move from this kind of heart makeup to one which is fully engaged in loving God, we must free up the capacity presently being filled by the kind of stuff mentioned above and replacing it with an empowering understanding of who God is, what He has done, and how He sees you as a result. I am speaking of the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ, Jesus' exemplary life, His death as your substitute, and His resurrection, completing, finishing, and fully satisfying the demands of God's wrath against sin (past, present, and future).

Allow me to state this another way for the sake of clarity. Your ability to love God with all your heart is in proportion to your ability to receive His complete and unconditional love and acceptance of you, based on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

The growing and expanding peace that comes from knowing that God is already at peace with you because of Jesus' work on the Cross will create in you a capacity to love Him with all your heart and will open the floodgates to the abundant life He has ordained for you before the foundation of the earth.

So, how do we get there? What tools are available to help us in this process of the redistribution of our heart's capacity? How do we stop being dominated by wrong beliefs and past experiences and move into the life of love and abundance that Christ died (and rose from the dead) to provide for us? I'm glad you asked!

Here are some practical guidelines and tools for renovating the heart and bringing it under the management of God's love for us.

First of all, let me state that the truth is God is not angry with you. In fact, He has already made peace with you, through the Cross of Jesus Christ. Secondly, he has already poured out His wrath, with respect to your sins, nearly 2,000 years ago. Thirdly, you who have received Christ as Savior and Lord and believe that his finished work on the Cross applies to you have been qualified to receive and enjoy all the promises of God. You are fully qualified for an inheritance with all the “saints in Light.” (Colossians 1:12)

You have received the “gift of righteousness” and the “abundance of grace”, according to Romans 5:17. This righteousness was not on the basis of anything you did or some performance of works, but by the faith of Christ and his finished work on the Cross.

What freedom this brings to know that you are not required to be “smart enough”, “good enough”, or to perform “well enough” to “deserve” or “earn” righteousness. It is the gift of God!

So, what is necessary at this point is to inform and persuade your heart [mind, will, emotions, memory, and imagination] of this Truth. Because, without a “renewing of the mind” (a transformation of the heart-beliefs you carry) you will not be able to fully receive or reciprocate God’s love for you or enjoy this Abundant Life.

In the Gospel of John, 8:32, Jesus said, ***“and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”*** Notice it isn’t just exposure to the truth, but “knowing” the truth that will make you free. It has to replace the mixed bag of thoughts, beliefs, and emotions that presently may occupy the majority of your heart’s capacity.

Our goal must be to hit that “51% mark” where God’s love and peace are ruling our hearts, and to keep right on going until our heart is fully ruled by God’s love and we, in return, love Him with all our heart.

There are many tools that can help us in this endeavor. Below is a partial list of these tools and brief descriptions of each. It is important to understand that any one of these can make a difference in your life and in your heart’s capacity to love God. However, using several at once can vastly accelerate the transformation you seek. It is also very important to understand that none of these tools constitute or represent an attempt at “works righteousness” or “earning” or “attaining to righteousness or acceptance” via one’s own efforts.

MEDITATIVE READING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Select Bible passages that support and empower heart-beliefs about God's unconditional love and acceptance of you, His favor towards you, and how these are NOT predicated on your performance, but rather on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Prayerfully read and re-read them out loud, confessing to God your willingness to believe His Word, despite feelings or heart-beliefs you have held to the contrary. (This is one form of "repentance".)

ORGANIZED PRAYER

For heart-changing prayer to be effective it must be Positive, Present Tense, and Personal. It must be based on the finished work of Christ, i.e., those things which are already done. It must be in agreement with that which is already allowed or disallowed in heaven. It must recognize your Relationship with God as Father; your Identity as a Son; and your Position as being in Christ, seated in heaven at the right hand of God.

WORSHIP

Worship is "other focused" and puts one in an "alpha state" where openness to God and to transformation by God is more easily accomplished. (Singing, Worshipping in Tongues)

PAIN & PLEASURE

We gravitate toward pleasure and away from pain. Envision your dreams and imagine the pleasures that go along with the manifestation of those dreams through the grace of God.

CONFESSION

Confess the Truth of your identity in Christ. For example...

"I am a new creation. All the promises of God belong to me now. Health, Healing, Prosperity, Protection, Success, Peace, Joy, and Righteousness are mine. All that God is, He is inside me, right now! I intend to renew my mind until I think and feel all these promises as my reality.

God unconditionally loves me. God treats me like His favorite all the time. On my “worst day” God treats me like I’m His favorite. He is always for me. He is never against me. He never finds fault in me. He never looks for fault in me. And even if He did, it would not separate me from His amazing Love!

CASTING DOWN VAIN IMAGINATIONS

The devil is the accuser of the children of God. We have the ability and responsibility to take captive and cast down every devilish thought and imagination that is contrary to who we are in Christ and what great purpose and destiny He has for us.

“PUT OFF – PUT ON”

We may use our faculties to put off every weight and impediment to our growth, alignment, and maturation in God and put on the righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of Christ.

PATTERN INTERRUPT

Since we have an aversion to pain, we can use pain to interrupt and dissuade us from those patterns that lead us away from our desired direction and purpose in God. Even a simple rubber band on the wrist can be a reminder to change our pattern of thought and action.

RELEASING

We have the authority to loose/release anything that has been declared lawful in heaven, in the Kingdom of God... Righteousness, Joy, Peace, Love, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control, and more!

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a huge tool for freeing up the capacity of the heart to receive the love of God and thus to love God with a greater portion of our heart.

WRITING

Writing (by hand) is a powerful way to enter the “back door” of your heart and influence it towards new beliefs that are congruent and consistent with whom God has declared you to be in Christ. This is especially true of writing just before bedtime or just after rising, when the mind is more relaxed and the heart is more open to suggestion. Use this time to write out positive declarations/affirmation and confessions. Write out your dreams and the visions that God is sharing with you for a wonderful, hope-filled future.

VISUALIZATION

Our power to imagine... to see... to visualize is one of God’s greatest gifts to us and one of the most powerful for influencing and persuading the heart. Furthermore, your heart/subconscious mind does not know the difference between your visualization and your memories, so it is just as “real” and as impacting as those haunting memories have been up until now.

See the world the way it can be when you are following your Shepherd in paths of righteousness and are being followed by goodness and mercy!

AFFIRMATIONS

“Whosoever shall SAY...” (Mark 11:23) It’s not just what you think, or even believe, it is also what you say. Make sure you are affirming and agreeing with who God says you are as a result of your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Declare out loud and in the affirmative the realities of God in your life and in the atmosphere around you, and it will become a seedbed for miracles! Do this even when “contrary evidence” may arise.

DIET, EXERCISE, & REST

OK, this may seem like meddling, but it’s really not. We are to some extent and degree what we eat, how much we move, and the rest we get. The biology and biochemistry of belief is a subject that is being researched more and more these days, but it doesn’t take a Harvard scientist to tell you that eating things that are good for you and doing moderate, regular exercise has a direct effect on your attitude, feelings, and outlook. Consider how you might make some small adjustments in these areas, in concert with other actions you are taking to renovate your heart and re-purpose your capacity for loving God and experiencing His Life in you.