

Sermon Study Guide

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THE MAIN THING: The greatest commandment is "Love God". (Mt 22:35-38) That means: BELIEVE IN HIM and BELIEVE HIM; WORSHIP HIM and ABIDE IN HIM by listening to and obeying His Spirit and practicing His presence daily.

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. What is your first memory of 'church'?
What did you learn about belief and worship from your church experience?
2. Have you ever had the experience of 'standing out' in the crowd'?
How did you 'stand out'? What was it like?

PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. What did Jesus mean by His words in Matt 22:35-38?
What is implied by loving God 'with our heart, soul and mind'?
How did the early Jerusalem Church demonstrate this? (Acts 2:42-47)
2. How is each of the following necessary in a relationship with God?
Believe John 1:12; Heb 11:6
Worship 2 Chron 16:9; Matt 6:21, 24;
Abide John 5:30; 15:5, 14, 15
3. Why do you think Jesus used the 'vine' illustration for the concept of 'abide'?
What other words help define 'abide'? How did Jesus set the example of dependence on His Father? (Lk 6:12; John 5:30, 36; 12:49)
4. How does the Holy Spirit work in our relationship with God? (John 3:8)
What are some of the daily practicalities of our relationship with God?
(1 Co 10:31; Col 3:23)

PURSUE MISSION: *Seek to be the community of God's people in your community as you live out your calling.'*

1. What does it mean for you to believe, worship and abide?
Which one of these do you need to nurture?
2. What ideas can you share (spiritual practices) with others in your group that have been helpful for you in your relationship with God?
OR, encourage others in your group by sharing a time when you have been obedient to the Spirit's prompting.
3. What steps can you take this week to grow your relationship with God?
What might the Holy Spirit be calling you to do?

THE WORD (NIV)

2 Chronicles 16:9

⁹For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

Matthew 6:21,24

²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. . . ²⁴"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Matthew 22:35-38

³⁵One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" ³⁷Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment.

Luke 6:12

¹²One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

John 1:12

¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

John 3:8

⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

John 5:30, 36

³⁰By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me. . . ³⁶"I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me.

John 12:49

⁴⁹For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken.

John 15:5, 14, 15

⁵"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. . . ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

1 Corinthians 10:31

³¹So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Colossians 3:23

²³Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.

Sermon Study Summary

“Which is the greatest commandment?” an expert in the law asked Jesus. He replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart...soul...mind.” (Mt 22:35-38) Nothing is more important than loving God and loving people. God created us for friendship with Him and with others. He established His Church for that purpose. The early church focused on relationships: they loved God, loved one another and loved others in their community. (Acts 2:42-47). God richly blessed them, grew their numbers and His miracles turned their world upside down.

How do we cultivate a close, loving friendship with God?

1. **BELIEVE IN HIM.** (Heb 11:6; Jn 1:12) We need to acknowledge we need Him because of our sins, believe He died and rose again. Then by faith ask His forgiveness, ask Him to invade our lives and live His life through us. Also BELIEVE HIM and what His Word says about how to live life to the full. Believe that HIS WAY is THE WAY for eternal life and for meaningful life here on earth.

2. **WORSHIP HIM.** (2 Chron 16:9) God searches the earth looking for those who want to know Him, to make Him the object of their highest affection so He can empower them to do His kingdom work. We worship whatever we treasure most—our treasure shapes us. (Mt 6:21) We may worship temporary idols: ourselves, family, position, approval, pleasure, money or achievement. When we worship God, we become more like Him. Our God is different from other gods; He loved humans so much He became human and died for all; He forgives, is gracious, generous, holy and just. When we make Him our highest treasure, He shapes our values, priorities and affections. How do we know what we really worship? Ask, “What do I worry about? What do I fear?” Examine “Where or for what do I sacrifice time, talents and money?” People try to worship God plus something else but Jesus says that is impossible. (Mt 6:24) Our hearts have room for only one all-encompassing devotion, one great treasure—the object of our highest worship.

3. **ABIDE IN HIM.** (Jn 15:5) This means live each moment and each day in humble dependence on Him. Jesus modeled this for 33 years when He was on earth. (Jn 5:30, 36, 49) What does abiding in Christ look like for us?

a) Listen to God, the Holy Spirit. (Jn 3:8) The Spirit moves like a wind and we can discern where it is blowing and align our lives with it. How do we discern what the Spirit of God says? Read and meditate on Scripture. Set aside time for prayer, solitude and daily quiet times. Take a Sabbath rest to replenish spiritually, emotionally and physically. Pray; Jesus prayed all night. (Lk 6:12). Listen to Godly people. They may affirm a gift or pinpoint a wrong attitude. The wind of the Spirit may speak through a sermon, a book or someone's testimony. Listen to the Spirit's whispers in the middle of our circumstances. Bad news, a time crunch, difficult people or tough projects, are potential training grounds to grow our character and our walk with the Lord. Recognize that God wants to hear from us and to speak to us in ALL of life's activities.

b) Be obedient to His call and do what He calls you to do. Jesus completed the work His Father assigned Him. (Jn 17:4) The Lord may give you a burden to pray for someone, to talk to or serve someone, to work in a ministry or to be generous. He may put you into a situation where you have to step out in faith and courage. Will you trust Him to give you the words, wisdom and strength you need to do it? Joy and spiritual growth come from obeying Him. Do not postpone your obedience.

c) Practice His presence continually. (1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:23) Invite Him to do your day with you, to be part of every activity, conversation, decision and challenge you face. Consciously include Him, asking for His wisdom, direction and power. Carry on an open-ended conversation with Him all day in praise and prayer. Paul challenged us to “pray without ceasing.” (1 Thess 5:17)

Do you follow Jesus from a distance like the crowd? Or do you step out of the crowd to follow Jesus closely? Step out in faith. Do everything as if you are doing it for Jesus. BELIEVE. WORSHIP. ABIDE.