

With All Your Heart

Loving God

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Week 3

Deuteronomy 6:4-6

1. How do you approach God? Do you think of Him more as a friend, close and easily approachable or as a holy God who is worthy of your reverence?

We should approach God with humility. There's a verse in Psalms where the Lord says, "Be still and know that I am God." A sign in front of a country church said, "Be still and know that you ain't God." When Moses encountered God at the burning bush, he experienced both a "drawing" and a "distance." God called him by name and told him to draw closer. But at the same time, God said, "Take off your shoes. You're standing on holy ground." We can get close to God, but we should hold him in awe.

2. Who is someone you know that when they speak, you pay attention?

Today we're looking at one of the Bible's greatest texts. It starts by saying, "Hear, O Israel" (Deuteronomy 6:4, NIV). This text is known as the *Shema*: "hear, listen, heed." It means more than just hearing the sound of a voice. It implies focused attention and obedience. Like when your mom says, "Listen to me!" Or a teacher says, "Pay attention." It's like when Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Tune in and pay attention to this.

If God is holy and worthy of our reverence, then we should be careful to hear, listen, pay attention to Him! But we know not everyone believes this about God. Atheists and agnostics deny God. Idolatry and false religions distort God. Some simply disregard God and act like he's irrelevant. Polytheists worship many gods.

But... "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4, NIV).

This verse teaches monotheism. There is one true God. And this verse supports the concept of the godhead or trinity, because the Hebrew word translated “one” (*echad*) in this verse means a UNITED one. This same word appears in Genesis 2:24, which says a husband and wife become “one” flesh. Two persons, united as “one.” Christians do not believe in three gods. We’re not “tri-theists.” There is one true God, but he exists in loving unity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

3. How does knowing that there is ONE true God, yet revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit shape the way you think about Him?

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God...is one. And so, you are to... “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5, NIV).

This is the first time in the Bible that specifically tells people to love God.

There are logical reasons to believe God exists. Philosophers have come up with the cosmological, teleological, ontological, moral arguments. There are scientific reasons to believe God exists. There are historical reasons to believe God exists. Archaeology supports the Bible. There is reason to believe that God came to earth at a real point in history through Jesus Christ. But Deuteronomy 6:5 raises an important question. Do you love God? Not just do you believe he exists, or do you think about him now and then? Do you LOVE him?

After Jesus rose from the dead, he had a conversation with Simon Peter by the Sea of Galilee. Jesus asked three times, “Do you love me?” That’s the question for us, too. “Do you love me?” When you get up in the morning, do you think, “How can I love the Lord today?” Love is NOT just a feeling. It’s a commitment. An action. “Love is the zealous, selfless seeking of another’s true good” (Del Tackett).

Love doesn’t mean you never struggle in your relationship. There are things we don’t understand about God and sometimes we struggle in our relationship with him. But this verse is comprehensive and all-inclusive.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

We associate the heart with emotion. But to the Hebrews, the heart was also the center of your thoughts, will, and conscience. The word “soul” (Heb. *nephesh*) means a “living being”—the whole person or individual. In Genesis 2:7, God breathed life into Adam, and he became a “living *nephesh*”

(living soul). The Greek word for soul is *psuche*, where we get our word psychology. “Heart and soul” are comprehensive terms for the core of who you are. Love for God shouldn’t be a surface-level thing. It’s not just a religious duty. It’s something you deeply internalize.

4. How can you tell when you’re simply going through religious motions verses genuinely loving God with all your heart and soul and strength?

Deuteronomy 6:5 allows no room for divided loyalty. No rivals. No idols. Jesus even intensified this. A lawyer asked Jesus, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” and the Lord quoted this verse from Deuteronomy 6. But he *added* something. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul *and with all your mind* and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30, NIV). Jesus added, “And with all your *mind*.” When you become a Christian, you don’t stop using logic and common sense. Jesus emphasized loving God with your mind and intellect.

So, why does this matter? How does a love for God change us?

- Love for God will change how you see the world around you (science and nature). You can see his glory when you look through a telescope and gaze at the stars in the sky or when you look through a microscope to look at the wings of a hummingbird. You can see God’s wisdom and artistry in chemistry, biology, botany, zoology, mathematics, and engineering.
- Love for God will change the way you view others. Your family, neighbors, coworkers, friends, even your enemies. “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).
- Love for God will change the way you handle problems. “Love the Lord your God . . . *with all your strength*.” Love for God isn’t just a spiritual high. Sometimes you have to “gut it out.” It takes strength.
- Love for God will change how you view the Bible. The Bible is not a boring book of religious laws. It’s a message from God, who cares about you. You’ll see it differently if you read it with love for God.
- Love for God will change the way you worship and pray.
Why show up for church on Sunday? Because you love God! But connecting with God isn’t just a Sunday-only thing. “Pray without ceasing.” You naturally want to talk with someone you love.
- Love for God will change how you deal with doubt and disappointment. Moses felt disappointment when God told him “no”. Moses had lost his temper and struck a rock (water came out), but God had told him to speak to the rock. So, the Lord didn’t let him enter the Promised Land. He must have been very disappointed. But 1,500 years later, at the

transfiguration of Jesus, Moses appears on the mountain with Jesus. He sees Jesus glorified. He's in the Promised Land!

5. How has the love for God changed you?

So, in practical terms, what does it look like to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?

- #1- We praise him. Don't just critique him, criticize him, and second-guess him. Praise him! It's natural to say positive things about someone you love. Don't treat him like a "god" with a lower case "g." His name deserves a capital G.
- #2- Prioritize him. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." If you love the Lord, you'll give him priority he deserves. How can you say, "I love God," if you pay him little attention? Or if you put all kinds of other priorities ahead of him?
- #3- Put your affection into action. Love for God isn't just a spiritual high or an emotional experience. It's "a long obedience in the same direction." It's about humbly living for God, one day at a time. Obey him without resentment or rebellion.

Most of the time, loving God isn't dramatic. It's about consistent, intentional choices in your everyday life.

Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commands" (John 14:15). We don't just obey God because we're afraid of him. We obey God because we love him. Tim Keller said, "Legalistic remorse says, 'I broke God's rules. Real repentance says, 'I broke God's heart.'" (Tim Keller)

Loving God means trusting his good intentions. "His commands are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3).

"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5:1-5, NIV).



Guard your speech. Tell the truth. Honor God with your sexual morality. Show your affection for God in the way you handle money, how you treat your family and friends, and the attitude you show at work and school. Your life on this earth will be different if you love God. And your ETERNAL LIFE will be different if you love God. If you love God, it will change your view of death and dying, heaven and hell. In heaven we will enjoy forever a loving relationship with God and others. Hell means missing out on the blessings of God's love.

6. What one next step will you take to prioritize the Lord--to love Him with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind?