

Student Lesson

I Love God...and I Love My Church

Key Verses

Mark 12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Introduction

The Sunday School lesson today is designed to emphasize the blessed appreciation that we as the people of God should possess and maintain concerning God and His system of the Local Church. God so loved us that - not only did He send His Son Jesus to die for us (John 3:16) but He sent His presence through the Holy Spirit to guide us and His Local Church to nurture us.

The love of God extends to us to the point that our lives should reflect with love and gratitude concerning what the Lord has done for us. Therefore, love God and loving His Church is not just a statement but a manner in which we should function throughout this journey called life.

I Love God

Loving God is something that we all know that we are supposed to do – but are we actually doing it? Love has action and results. Jesus said Himself in **John 14:15**:

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

Real love has an inward motivation that “overflows” to outward manifestation. Throughout the Bible there are various scriptures and accounts that highlight this love

for God. Deuteronomy Chapter 6 describes this - and this particular verse would become a scripture that Jesus directly quoted in the New Testament.

Deuteronomy 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Here's what Jesus said:

Mark 12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy **heart**, and with all thy **soul**, and with all thy **mind**, and with all thy **strength**: this is the first commandment.

Let's examine the four elements of how we are to Love God:

1. Loving God with All of Your Heart

Jesus' words are a quote from Deuteronomy 6:5. It starts by telling us to love God with our whole hearts. Our contemporary culture understands the "heart" as the center of emotions, but the Jewish culture in Jesus' times understood it as the "heart of man" or the center of a man's will (Proverbs 4:23). Here are key elements:

- Strong desire to love God
- Strong desire to please God
- Expression of love through praise and worship
- Feelings of appreciation and gratefulness directed toward God

Psalms 34:1 I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth

2. Loving God with All of Your Soul

God's Word also tells us to love our God with our "whole" soul. The Hebrew word for "soul" gives the idea of the breath of life. The Greek word gives a more global idea of the inner self, the individual, the personality (in the sense of our deep thoughts). This is where our morals are developed. We can say that it is the non-physical part of the human being (Psalm 16:10; Ezekiel 18:4). Here are key elements:

- It's justly, ethically and morally right to love God
- Decisions that you make for Christ are done in the soul
- Where your 'personal' relationship with God lives
- Your morals, ideas, dreams and aspirations
- Reflection on what God has done for you
- Thankfulness for the Cross – and resurrection

3. Loving God with All of Your Mind

God's people must also love Him with ALL their minds. The biblical meaning of "mind" is the intellect. It is very important that our intelligence is submitted to God and our decisions (from our minds) are obedient to Him. Romans 12:2 reminds us that we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds to be able to live "God approved" – that is how we can love God with our minds.

- Love as a logical response to the Creator
- Love as a respectful response to the Father
- Love God because He's God (positional aspect)
- How you love your child (natural ability to do this)

4. Loving God with All of Your Strength

Jesus Christ also told us to love our God with all of our strength. We find the word "strength" in the Bible a lot of times, and most of them refer to the power of God. Strength refers to the physical aspect of loving God. It is how we show that we love Him and do everything we can to put our love for God into action. If our inner motivation and desire are to love God, our actions (the strength of our bodies) will show it.

- Love in action – for God
- Honor in motion. An act that a person does (Example: We stand up for the President)
- Living a life that pleases God
- What you give and sacrifice

God also states that there is a reciprocal "love" that comes back to the giver – for those that truly love God! **Proverbs 8:17** says "**I love them that love me**; and those that seek me early shall find me." And **1 John 4:19** "We love him, because he first loved us."

I Love My Church

A great part of loving God is loving and appreciating what He has established for us – the Local Church! Loving externally cannot happen if we don't love His church and the people assigned to this branch of the Body of Christ. Listen to Galatians:

Galatians 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Take the time to reflect upon the systems and the people that God has assigned you to, for you to: develop, fellowship, serve, worship, give, lead, follow and hear the Word of God. God has given you all that you need to grow and be strong in Him! So get involved with the vision and mission and make things happen. Understand that with your brothers and sisters we are called to make a difference.

Romans 12:10-13 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

¹¹ Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

¹² Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

¹³ Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Always remember to consider with heartfelt appreciation that God loved you so much that He provided what you needed. Let's look at why we should love our Church: We love our church because God's plans for us have a place and people to lead us called Pastors: Listen to God's words through Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an ***expected end***.

and

Jeremiah 3:15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

Here are other reasons why I Love my Church – it's:

1. A place that is specifically focused on your spiritual needs
2. A place where you can give your life to Jesus Christ through salvation
3. A place where you will hear the Word of God
4. A place where you can worship God freely
5. A place of prayer, spiritual connection and restoration in Christ
6. A place that is positive and Christian oriented concerning family and children
7. A place where you receive pastoral leadership & counsel concerning your life
8. A place where you can learn how to break personal habits and/or addictions
9. A place of relationships and fellowship
10. A place where you can be equipped to reach the lost
11. A place where you can be a part of serving the social needs of the community

12. A place to grow individually and in leadership
13. A place to participate in world missions – touching the world with God’s love
14. A place to be a part of God’s mission and vision
15. A place to invite others to come (to change their lives in Christ)
16. A place to grow and develop your relationship with God
17. A place to tell others about what God has done for you (testimony)
18. A place to give in tithing and offering to support the Kingdom of God
19. A place to be a part of something “bigger” - such as supporting the construction of the new worship center