

# Talk It Over

I'M ALL IN  
(Week 1)  
LOVE GOD WHOLEHEARTEDLY

## SMALL TALK

1. Describe an event or activity where you “gave it your all”.

## VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Matthew 22:34–40; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18.** There are three loves in Matthew 22:38-39, how are these three related to each other? How are these three loves related to the Law and the Prophets? How are these three loves related to “situational ethics” today?
3. How was this teaching (Matthew 22:38-40) surprising? How is it strongly relational? How might it be deeply disturbing?
4. What changes this potentially deeply disturbing commandment to good news?

## GETTING PERSONAL

5. By Jesus’ definition what kind of “lover” are you? In what way do you want to grow in love right now: Toward God? Toward those in your family? Toward the needy? Toward yourself? How might you do so?

## PRACTICE!

6. Of VVCC’s 5 core statements, do any poke you right now? What step will you take this week to move from wherever you are to where God wants you to be?

August 1, 2021

## **I'm All In (Week 1) Love God Wholeheartedly**

We are beginning a series called "I'm All In." In this series we will be taking a look at our 5 core statements.

- 1 Love God Wholeheartedly
- 2 Do First Things First
3. Don't Do Life Alone
4. Saved People Serve People
5. Followers Say, "Follow Me!"

"Love God Wholeheartedly" is VVCC's summary statement of the First and greatest Commandment as Jesus taught.

As a teacher, I prepared a message, but as the week's events became heavy for our community, but as a Pastor, I rearranged this presentation to guide each of us who have been weighed down in a battle of faith, or in a battle of doubts, depending on how you look at it.

So today, we will be studying the first and greatest commandment. This time while studying this familiar teaching I believe God showed me that the first and greatest command is both the answer, and the point at which we struggle; a compass and a lightning rod.

The condition of our faith is constantly under attack.

Jesus gives us the tools we need to experience more of his kingdom than we are presently experiencing.

In our world everyone is looking for the "Happily ever after" feeling. And sometimes new or immature believers expect a "Happily ever after" answer right now in our present condition, simply because we prayed believing God will provide a miracle. But "Happily ever after" doesn't come fully till AFTER!

Why do we expect all the happy endings at the end of every paragraph, page, or chapter of life's story? God promised that in the end of the whole story he would work it all out for the "happily ever after". Jesus himself was crucified to give us the happily ever after. The apostles didn't expect a "happily ever after" life in this world. It was because of the "happily ever after" that they were willing to suffer and die as they did.

When things get dark, and they do, we need to lift our eyes toward his kingdom. We need to look to the hereafter, and experience more of his Kingdom in the here and now, which brings us great joy even in the middle of difficulties and trials.

*Lord Jesus,*

*We look to you in the dark times of tragedy, and in the confusing times of battle. We love you, and trust you, and look to you. Even when we don't understand, we trust you, because we know you know the whole picture, and you will never leave us or forsake us. We choose you. Strengthen us today as we learn more about how to love you no matter what. AMEN*

There is nothing more central to our faith than Jesus, and there is nothing more central to his teaching than Jesus' teaching about the first and greatest commandment. So let's begin.

***Matthew 22:34–40 (CSB)*** *When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. <sup>35</sup> And one of them, an expert in the law, asked a question to test him: <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?" <sup>37</sup> He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the greatest and most important command. <sup>39</sup> The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."*

# THE FIRST AND GREATEST COMMANDMENT IS...

## 1. SURPRISING

We forget how surprising Jesus' teaching is because we are already familiar with it. This go around, there were a few surprising truths that leapt off the page for me. As we look at the context, it seems to me that Jesus' answer was not what anyone expected. We read that the religious "expert in the law" was "testing" Jesus. Certainly it wasn't what he expected.

### **SURPRISE:**

**First** of all, the question was what is the greatest. Can you have two greatest commands? Jesus answered the question about one, with two together: **Love God and people.**

**Second:** Jesus didn't pick a commandment from the 10 commandments.

1. The first command was from Deuteronomy 6, the most familiar passage to any Israelite, recited twice a day by devout Jews.
2. The second command was more obscure, tucked away in Leviticus 19:18. Jesus packaged these together as one. SURPRISE!

RENDERED LITERALLY: *This is the greatest and most important commandment **but** a second is like it* [like it in what way? It too is the greatest and most important. So Jesus packaged the two together, one leads to the other, you can't have one without the other.]

There was no arguing this one...it made perfect sense to the crowd and it synthesised and summarized ALL. SURPRISED?!

## 2. Strongly RELATIONAL

It cut through the religious expert's frame of reference.

- **It was not legalistic**, not from the list of behaviors to check off which was their frame of reference.
- **It was positive, not negative.** Nine of the **Ten commandments** are stated in the negative, but Jesus summed all God's commandments up

**in the positive.** Nevertheless, this covers every sin of **commission** and every sin of **omission**.

- **It was not obedience only on the outside.** It was from the inside out. It took it from the realm of actions on a list, to the realm of attitudes and motivations from the heart.
- **It put everything in relational terms,** combining the comprehensive everyday recited truth about love for God, with the often neglected truth about love for people.
- **It was no abstraction about loving God...** but inside out, and nothing abstract about it. If you love God you will love your neighbor (even if he is an enemy!)
- **God wants a relationship over religion!**

### **3. Deeply DISTURBING**

Jesus' answer was deeply disturbing in this one simple fact. **On our own we can't do it!** This is deeply disturbing to the RELIGION approach to God. *"Oh, is this all I have to do?"*

- *love God with ALL your heart, ALL your Soul, ALL your Mind*
- *And LOVE your neighbor as yourself!*

Is there any of us who can do this perfectly even for a day?

Again, this was deeply disturbing to the RELIGION approach to God! *"Oh, is this all I have to do?"*

### **4. GOOD NEWS!**

Although it is **deeply disturbing** to those of a religious mindset, it is **fabulously freeing** once you understand the nature of this relationship that is offered to us by grace.

God offers us something far better than the RELIGION approach to God.

He offers us a RELATIONSHIP based on his gift of His grace through Jesus death, burial, and resurrection. And once this grace is received,

then by God's grace we are also empowered by his spirit to live out this commandment with a love that is bigger than our own.

The first and greatest commandment is our compass and lightning rod. It's at the center of every battle, the center of every temptation, and the center of every solution. It's at the heart of our choice between light or darkness, trust or doubt, hope or despair, obedience or disobedience, God's will or my will. The first and greatest commandment is our choice to be strengthened or weakened.

The good news is that through Jesus you can choose a life of love, loving God and others, with a love greater than your own. If God SO loved you by sending his son, why not love God wholeheartedly?!