The Most Important Thing In Life
Matthew 22:37,38 (NKJV)

Please open your Bibles to our scripture text in Matthew chapter twenty two. And let's read verses 37, 38.

Matthew 22:37,38 (NKJV)

37 Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

38 This is the first and great commandment.

Let’s go to God in prayer.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE? Let’s think about that this morning.

If you were to ask the average person to make a list of the most important things in life no doubt their list would include FAMILY........and FRIENDS......and GOOD HEALTH ......and LOVE......and HAPPINESS.

And I believe most all of us would probably have all of those things on our list wouldn't we? But while all of these things are important, none of them are THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE.
What could possibly be more important than all these things put together? Jesus answers that for us in our scripture text:

*Jesus tells us **THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE is to.....**

“For love the LORD your GOD with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the FIRST and GREATEST commandment.” (Matthew 22:37,38)

What Jesus is saying is **there is NOTHING more important in this life than to LOVE GOD!**

Do you know the **quality of your life** is greatly determined by **the quality of your relationship with GOD.**

When you are “out of fellowship with God,” when your relationship with Him isn’t what it ought to be it will have a very negative effect on every area of your life.

It will effect you **physically......emotionally......and spiritually.**

It will effect your relationships with your FAMILY, your FRIENDS, and with your BROTHERS AND SISTERS-IN-CHRIST.

When you are not in the right relationship with GOD it will have an effect on your peace......your happiness......your confidence......your courage......your joy......and your sense of well-being.

**Yes, the most important thing in life is to LOVE GOD,** and any time we give ANYBODY or ANYTHING a place of greater importance in our lives than GOD, it will be to our own detriment.
THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO DOUBT THAT GOD LOVES US!

**JOHN 3:16 (NKJV)** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

**ROMANS 5:8 (NKJV)** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**I JOHN 3:1 (NKJV)** Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

**I JOHN 4:10 (NKJV)** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

**I JOHN 4:19 (NKJV)** We love Him because He first loved us.

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Don’t you see? GOD loved you before you ever loved Him?

- **GOD** loved you before He even laid the foundations of the world.

- **GOD** loved you when you were a tiny little embryo inside your mother’s womb.

- **GOD** loved you before you ever drew your first breath.

- **GOD** loved you before you ever set foot inside a Church building for the first time.

- **GOD** loved you before you made your great confession of faith.

- **GOD** loved you before you were ever baptized into Jesus Christ.
In his book, “Knowing God” J. I. Packer describes God’s incredible love for you and me this way:

“I am graven on the palm of His hand. I am never out of His mind. There is never a moment when His eye is off of me, or His attention distracted from me, and no moment therefore when His care for me falters.

There is unspeakable comfort in knowing GOD is constantly taking knowledge of me in love and watching over me for my good. There is tremendous relief in knowing that His love for me is utterly realistic, based at every point on His knowledge of the very worst about me.

God's love for you and me is UNDENIABLE! But the Bible makes it perfectly clear, GOD isn't interested in a “one-sided relationship.” More than anything, GOD WANTS US TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL OUR HEART.......ALL OUR SOUL.......AND ALL OUR MIND!

He isn't interested in a “one hour fling” on Sunday morning; God wants us to love Him every moment of every day.

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For the remainder of the message I would like for us to answer two very important questions.

The first question is this............
I. What Keeps Us From Loving God The Way We Should?

1. In light of the countless ways GOD has demonstrated His undying love for you and me, one would think it would be so easy for us to show our love for HIM in return.

   But sadly, many of us know we fall far short. But why?

2. There may be many reasons why. Here are three:

   Reason #1: We Don't Put As Much EFFORT As We Should To KNOW Him

   JEREMIAH 29:13 (NKJV) And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

   Deuteronomy 4:29 (NKJV) But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

   Whenever you enter into a love relationship with another person it requires a lot of effort to get to know that person.

   - You have to spend time with them.
   - You have to talk with them and listen to them.
   - You have to know their likes and dislikes.
   - You have to know the things they are interested in.
   - You have to know what pleases them and what displeases them.

   You literally have to become “a student” of the one you love and learn everything you can about them.
The same is true when it comes to loving GOD. Those who **love GOD the most** are those who are willing to **put forth the EFFORT to get to know Him**.

That requires **time**. It requires **commitment**. It requires **discipline**. You have to **talk with GOD in prayer**. You have to **spend time in His holy word listening to His voice**.

Sadly, many aren’t willing to put forth the effort to get to know GOD, and that is **one reason why they don't love Him as they should**.

**REASON #2:** We often allow **SOMEONE or SOMETHING** To Come Between Us and God

**I JOHN 2:15 (NKJV)** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

**MATTHEW 6:24 (NKJV)** “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Years ago I had a couple called me up to see if they could come talk to me. As soon as they sat down in my office I knew they were in serious trouble because she turned her chair where she wouldn’t have to face him.

She had suspected for a long time that her husband was involved with another woman. He had just confirmed that day they came to see me. That broken-hearted wife sat there and talked about how close she and her husband once were and all the things they did together; and how things drastically changed when this other woman came between them. Sadly, their marriage didn't make it.
Exodus 34:14 (NKJV) “for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

GOD will not play “second fiddle” to anyone or anything......not our family......not our friends....not our career.....not our money....not anything!

GOD is fully invested in His relationship with us and He expects us to be fully invested in it as well.

REASON #3: Many BLAME God For A PAINFUL Life Experience

Remember in John 11 when Lazarus died? Do you remember what Martha said to Jesus? She said, “LORD, if You had been here my brother would not have died.”

Over the years, I have met a number of people who were bitterly angry with GOD because He didn't heal their loved one of cancer......or because they blamed God for their loved one's fatal accident......or they blamed God for taking their child.

Sadly, GOD gets the blame for many of life's tragic experiences, when the truth is sickness, disease and death are part of our human experience because of man's sin in the Garden of Eden. How easily people forget that the GOD whom they blame for their loved one's death is the same GOD who didn't STOP the crucifixion of His only begotten Son.
3. As you search your heart this morning, is it possible the reason you don't love GOD the way you should is ……

*Because you haven't really put forth the effort to get to know Him?

*Or because you have allowed somone or something to come between you and GOD?

*Or because you are still bitter and blame GOD for some painful life experience?

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Well let's move on to our second question and that is…..

II. How Can I Show God How Much I Love Him?

1. In our human love relationships there are numerous ways we express our love…..

   A hug......a kiss......holding hands....an romantic dinner
   ........an intimate conversation.....buying them a gift.....
   cuddling next to each other at night......a love letter.....
   a romantic card.

2. How do we express our love to a GOD whom we cannot visibly see or physically touch?

3. The Bible mentions three very specific ways we can do that.
First, we can show GOD we love Him, **BY LOVING OTHERS.**

Let's go back to our text in **Matthew 22.** This time let's read **verses 37-39.**

**MATTHEW 22:37-39 (NKJV)**

37 Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the **Lord** your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

38 This is the first and great commandment. (now listen carefully to **verse 39**)

39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

**I JOHN 4:21 (NKJV)** says, And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God **must** love his brother also.

In both of these passages, there is an inseparable link between **LOVING GOD** and **LOVING PEOPLE.** It is impossible to **LOVE GOD** and **NOT** love people.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Have you ever been in a conversation with someone and just as you were about to say goodbye you said something like this: “Give my love to your family” or “Give my love to your wife and kids.”

**GOD** has commanded us to “give His love” to others.

“Give My love to your neighbor.”
“Give My love to your brothers and sisters-in-Christ.
“Give My love to your fellow man.”
“Give My love to your enemies.”

**One way we show love to GOD is to love OTHERS!**
(B) Second, we can show GOD we love Him by **OBEYING** His **COMMANDS**

I JOHN 5:3 (NKJV) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

One of the greatest ways to demonstrate just how much we love GOD is to obey His commands.

I actually heard a lady say in an adult Sunday School class one time, “Well, I know that's what the Bible says, but I don't agree with it, so I'm going to do as I please.” I stepped back because thought a lightning bolt might be headed her way instantly.

If you and I truly love GOD we will obey His commands without **debate, argument, or question.**

**OUR OBEDIENCE** says, “GOD, I LOVE YOU!”

(C) And thirdly, we can show GOD we love Him by our **GENUINE WORSHIP.**

JOHN 4:23,24 (NKJV)

23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

When we come here each Lord’s Day we sing songs of praise.....and we pray.....and we commune.... and we give our tithes and offerings....and we hear God's word proclaimed. To us it may seem like another typical worship service.
But to GOD, its more than just a worship service, it is an expression of our LOVE for Him. When we PRAISE HIM and EXALT HIM and HONOR HIM we are saying, “GOD, I love YOU!”

And our worship isn’t to be limited to one or two hours on Sunday. We are to worship GOD each and every day.

4. How do we show GOD we love Him? By loving others..... By our obedience to His commands......and By our genuine worship.

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CONCLUSION

What God Has Promised

God has not promised skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through;
God has not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, Peace without pain.

But God has promised strength for the day,
Rest for the labor, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, and undying love.

------Annie Johnson Flint

How could we not love a GOD like that?

“Love the LORD your GOD with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE!