

Imperatives Worth Hanging Onto

January 7, 2024 ▪ Nat Porter

Loving God is the _____ in life.

Loving God is an _____ endeavor.

These commands are _____ the same.

Loving your neighbor is _____ (_____) being nice.

All God commands _____ imperatives.

Matthew 22:34-40

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (ESV)

Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions

Open: How does the idea of being commanded or obligated to love someone cut against the grain of how our culture typically understands love and what should motivate it? If one is compelled to love as a duty, is it still love?

Read & Discuss: Matthew 22:34-40

1. Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (v. 37). What do you think is the main point of saying we must love God with these various aspects of our being? (Why not just say “Love God”?)
2. How might the force of this command change if we removed the three occurrences of “all”? How does the word “all” make this command more challenging?
3. Is there a difference between loving God and obeying God’s commands? How can you practically demonstrate love for God with all your heart, soul, and mind in your daily life?
4. How is the command to “love your neighbor” “like” the command to love God (v. 39), and how do these two commands relate to each other (*See also 1 John 4:16-21*)? What might be some differences in how we love one compared to the other?
5. Who should we consider our “neighbor”? Can you think of other things Jesus said which indicate that a neighbor in the biblical sense may be different from how we typically use the term? Why is this important for how we seek to obey this command?
6. Read the original context of the command to love your neighbor in ***Leviticus 19:9-18***. What sorts of people are talked about and what kinds of actions describe how the people of God were expected to “love” them?
7. What does it mean that all the Law and the Prophets depend (*literally translated “hang”*) on these two commandments of loving God and loving our neighbor (v. 40)? What should keep us from being overwhelmed by what these commands require of us?

Apply: Reflect on your own life and priorities. How does the concept of the greatest commandment challenge or affirm the priorities you currently hold? What are some specific opportunities for growth in love for God and for others that you might pursue this year? What kind of changes in your current routine might that involve?

Pray: Ask God to give us the wisdom and resolve to reflect these two priorities to a fuller extent this year.