



## Loving God with All of You<sub>(Part 6)</sub>

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God wants us to live like healthy humans—the way He created us to be. Over the last few days we have been discussing Jesus' great commandment in loving God: "Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength" (Mark 12:30).

It makes complete sense that in this command Jesus emphasizes our interior life more than our exterior. If under the hood of an automobile the engine is not working properly, the task of driving to work, school, or the neighborhood coffee shop would be futile. It does no good to talk about driving to a destination if the thing required to do the driving is broken. In like manner, if we are not properly ordered with heart, soul, and mind, the action we accomplish with our strength will not be proper to the task. God doesn't merely want good actions. He wants us all, for He knows that true behavior, true love in action, is born out of an ever-growing coherence in the interior life.

Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith wrote a group study guide on the spiritual disciplines. In that guide, they insightfully discuss various movements that have been highlighted in church history. An overemphasis of a particular tradition would lead a movement astray. A couple of those traditions highlight the outward life, including holy behaviors and social action. Both of these movements, while having good motivations, could easily slip into problems, including legalism or the social gospel, neglecting grace and our purpose to love God with our whole selves.

I grew up in a Christian tradition that often stressed a proper outward life much more than a proper inward life. I'm afraid some of the legalism there, along with blaming and shaming people into good behavior, has caused many persons to experience spiritual defeat. This kind of overemphasis does not work. Jesus' order seems well advised in his commandment. The interior life is the source from which the exterior life flows. From there, we focus our strength in outward behaviors and social reforms.

"Love the Lord your God with all your strength" is his command. What does Jesus mean by "strength"? This word carries with it, not merely the capability to do

things, but the actual activity of involvement in the kinds of things a godly interior produces.

You see, God gave us bodies and they are part of what it means to be a human person. Our bodies are the only instruments God gave us to exercise power in the world. My mind directs my body to action. I do not have direct power over anything else in nature. The bottle of juice before me I cannot move without my body. The keys on this computer I cannot type without my body. My soul or mind does not do the typing. My mind must command my body to do it. My will moves my body into activity.

This is what is meant when Jesus said to love God with your strength. He means to animate your body into the kinds of activities that demonstrates love for him by using our wills which are informed by our minds.

What are the activities our bodies can engage in to love God? There are many! They can range from cooking for the family to feeding the poor, from fixing up your house to building an orphanage, from painting a picture to writing about the gospel, from speaking a thoughtful word to a neighbor to listening

to God in a wilderness park. In short, in every activity we do as worship to make God's name great in the earth, we are loving God with our strength.

Our goal is to lay our tasks before Him, to be thoughtful in our activity, and to take pleasure in God in what we do. When we worship and love God in this way, no activity is more sacred than any other. It's just a matter of obedience to God's Word and the promptings of the Holy Spirit in what we've learned with our minds, surrendered with our souls, and the habits we've developed with our wills. It all works together in a splendid union, a genius that only God could have created.

Loving God with all you—with all the components and instruments that make you who you are—is God's great command. Here we find our highest end, our best good, and our deepest desire, both in this life and in the life to come.

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