



Preparing for Small Group: Read the passage below, and answer the following questions.

- (1) What do these verses tell me about God?
- (2) What do these verses tell me about sinful humanity?
- (3) What do these verses tell me about Jesus?
- (4) What does God want me to know?
- (5) What does God want me to do?

“Loving Now!”
Matthew 22:34-40

Main Point: God desires that worship and obedience would flow from your love for him.

Answers to an important question:

God allows you to ask questions, even with mixed motives (34-36).

Matthew’s account of this exchange made it clear that the scribe asked Jesus the question in order to “test” Jesus. The Pharisees liked the response that Jesus had given to the Sadducees related to the resurrection (Matt. 22:23-33), while at the same time being both offended and amazed at the response that Jesus had given them related to taxes (Matt. 22:15-22). While Mark’s account of the exchange may point to some genuine motives in the heart of the scribe, who asked Jesus the question, the clear witness of God’s Word in both accounts was that the question came with mixed motives. What’s amazing in this account, as well as the accounts of the questions in chapter 22 that preceded the scribe’s question, was that Jesus allowed the question to be asked! God in flesh came to the world and allowed foolish, sinful men to come to him — even with sinful motives in their hearts — and to ask him questions. What a wonderful picture of God’s patience and his desire that all should come to repentance. He answered in truth, whether the truth was accepted or not, and thank the Lord that he still allows us to ask questions that give us the opportunity to hear the truth today!

1. Read through the accounts of the questions that Jesus was asked in chapter 22. Discuss the willingness of Jesus to hear the questions and to respond to the questions. What do these exchanges reveal about God?
2. Have you ever come to God with questions? Were the motives in your heart always pure? How did he provide the truth in those times? Share testimonies.
3. Do you know someone who has questions, even with mixed motives? How can you encourage them to ask questions in order to allow God’s Word to respond?

God wants your love for him to be totally complete (37-38).

In response to the question of which commandment is the greatest, Jesus responded by quoting from Deuteronomy 6, recalling a foundational statement of faith for Israel. While the wording isn’t exactly as it is in Deut. 6:5, the essence of the words are the same. God, as the one, true Lord of all, deserves the total love and loyalty of his people. As kings of that time required, God deserves a loving commitment from his people that is a love and commitment even unto death, which is the greatest expression of love! God wants your love for him to be

totally complete. He wants you to love him with all that you are: All your affections, from the core of your being, and with all that you think and do. God desires genuine love above all else in the lives of his people, and it's this love that is the foundation for truly living a life of love now.

1. Since the greatest commandment isn't connected to some act of obedience for God, but is connected to the condition of your heart towards God, what does this say about God?
2. In the ancient world, kings demanded love and loyalty, and the highest expression of that love and loyalty was the willingness to give one's life for the king and the kingdom. How is this sentiment still in existence today in the world, even in the U.S.A.? Is God the one, true King? If so, discuss the implications.
3. In what ways do you love God with your heart, soul, and mind? What does this mean?

God wants your love for others to reflect your love for him (39).

Jesus provided a little lagniappe in his response to the scribe's question. Jesus didn't stop at the first and most important commandment, but he went on to answer the question of what was the second, great commandment, which he said was like or similar to the first. Once again, Jesus quoted from the Old Testament, stating that the second, great commandment was to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). The second commandment, like the first, was connected to love. As a matter of fact, these two commandments are necessarily connected. If you truly love God with everything, then his love in your life will lead to loving others well. Loving God will lead to knowing how much God loves the world, and it will lead to seeing others through the lens of God's love for them. Loving God will lead to reflecting that love in your life through the way that you love others. God wants your love for others to reflect your love for him!

1. Some interpreters have argued that the second commandment and the first commandment are like two sides of a coin. Would you agree or disagree? Why, or why not? Make sure that support your position with the Word, from this passage and others if needed.
2. Why is love of your neighbor important? How does Scripture define a neighbor?
3. What does it mean to love your neighbor? What does that look like?
4. Evaluate your love for God from the current state of your love for your neighbors. Share, encourage, and pray for one another.

God gave his Word so that we can truly know and love him (40).

Finally, Jesus made an astounding statement. He said that all of the Law and the Prophets are based on the two commandments that he shared! In other words, all of God's Word that we know as the Old Testament is founded on God's desire for love in the lives of his people. To state another way, loving God more than anything else will lead to a life that glorifies and obeys God in love. What a wonderful gift! Jesus is saying that true obedience and relationship doesn't come from obligatory or ritual obedience; rather, true obedience and relationship comes from true love. Are you living a life of love right now?

1. What is the Law? What are the Prophets? What do these terms refer to in their use in the New Testament?
2. How can all of the Law and the Prophets hang on the two commandments that Jesus shared? What does that mean?
3. Read Matt. 5:17. Read, and discuss. Do these words of Jesus relate to the discussion in Matt. 22:34-40? If so, how?