

**A TWO-FOLD FOCUS FOR LIFE**  
**PART 1—LOVING GOD**  
**MATTHEW 22:34-40**

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**Introduction**

Every New Year there are many people who look at things in their lives and **make all kinds of resolutions for their lives for the coming year.**

Many folks **TAKE INVENTORY** of their lives and see things that they need to **CHANGE** so they **RESOLVE** to make some positive changes to at least some things in their lives. Now understand that some of those things may be **physical**, may be **financial**, may be **spiritual**, or they may be **any number of other things** in their lives.

As we enter this New Year, it is a good time for us to take a **SPIRITUAL INVENTORY** in our lives. In fact, **ANY TIME is a good time to take spiritual inventory!** We **don't have to wait** for a New Year in order to do that, in fact we **shouldn't wait** for a new year to do that! (**Short accounts!**)

When we do take the time to do a **spiritual inventory** of our lives, we most often find some area or areas in our lives that need **"shoring up."** You can say **"Amen"** right there because you know it is so anyway!

In our text, we see Jesus answering the question of a lawyer whose **purpose it seems was to trip up our Saviour.** But Jesus is God! You can't trip Him up!

We are not told, but I believe that Jesus' answer to this man's question brought **conviction** in the man's heart, **the same way it brings conviction to our heart** when we examine it and truly think about what He is saying.

Jesus said that **the top two commandments involve our love—specifically, our love for God and our love for others!** He said that all the law and the prophets (i.e. which was the whole of written Scripture at that time) hung on these two commandments!

How important is that? I don't know about you, but it seems very important to me! **Everything in life hinges on these two commandments!**

In thinking about this **New Year** that is before us, I want us to look at what I will call **"A Two-Fold Focus For The New Year"...or rather "For Life."**

This morning I want us to look at **our love for God** and then, Lord willing, tonight I want us to come back and **look at our love for others.**

In the world in which we live, there is a problem with the **definition of love.** Satan and the world have **clouded the issue of what love really is!**

**I. LOVE CAN BE MISDEFINED!**

**In Verse 37, Jesus says, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God. . ."** Well, the question is then, **"What is love?"**

**A. Biblical Love Is More Than Just An Emotional Feeling!**  
It is possible for us to have **emotional feelings that we may call love**, but in reality **they are not love at all!**

**B. Biblical Love Is More Than Just A Expression Of Our Emotions!**  
You can express so called **"love"**, without there ever being love. (*Exp. The kiss that Judas Iscariot greeted Jesus with as he betrayed him into the hands of Jesus' enemies.*)

**C. Biblical Love Is More Than Just A Fondness!**  
Love is more than somebody just being our big buddy!

**D. Biblical Love Is Defined By The Word Of God!**  
**(1 Corinthians 13:4-8)**

- 1. Love Is Patient or Longsuffering.**
- 2. Love Is Kind.**
- 3. Love does not envy.**
- 4. Love does not boast.**
- 5. Love is not proud.**
- 6. Love is not rude.**
- 7. Love is not self-seeking.**
- 8. Love is not easily angered.**
- 9. Love does not keep a record of wrongs.**
- 10. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices in truth.**
- 11. Love always protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres.**

A TWO-FOLD FOCUS FOR LIFE  
PART 1—LOVING GOD  
MATTHEW 22:34-40

E. **Biblical Love Of God Is Determined By:**

1. **Our Attitude.**

Just who is God to you? (**Do you view Him as just your Savior or is He the Lord of your life?!**)

2. **Our Allegiance. (What or who are you devoted to?)**

*Matthew 10:37–39—“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”*

3. **Our Actions. (Luke 6:46; John 14:15)**

What we do in our lives with regard to **obeying God** shows **who** we love or **what** we love.

*(Matthew 6:33—“But seek ye first. . .”)*

*LOVE CAN BE MISDEFINED!*

II. **LOVE CAN BE MISDIRECTED!**

Verse 37 says, “*Thou shalt love the LORD thy God. . .*”

Let me ask this, “*Who or what is the object of your love?*”

**Love always has an object!**

A. **Misdirected Love Can Become Self-Seeking!**

*John 12:25—“He that loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”*

*2 Timothy 3:2—“. . .men shall be lovers of their own selves.”*

*1 John 2:15–17—“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth. . .”*

A TWO-FOLD FOCUS FOR LIFE  
PART 1—LOVING GOD  
MATTHEW 22:34-40

*2 Timothy 4:10—“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.”*

B. **Misdirected Love Can Become Self-Sufficient!**

Rich Young Ruler in **Mark 10:17-22**

Jesus told him, “*go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.*” (**What was Jesus point?**)

*“And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.”*

*Luke 12:15—“Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”*

C. **Misdirected Love Can Become Sin-Seeking!**

*John 3:19—“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”*

*Amos 5:14-15—“Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate:”*

*LOVE CAN BE MISDEFINED...MISDIRECTED...*

III. **LOVE CAN BE MISPLACED! (Revelation 2:1-5)**

*Matthew 24:12—“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”*

**Our love for God may have been very fervent for the LORD at one time in our lives, but what about right now?**

Are we like the Church here at Ephesus?

**Are we guilty of having left our first love?**

A TWO-FOLD FOCUS FOR LIFE  
PART 1—LOVING GOD  
MATTHEW 22:34-40

If so, the Lord has a three-fold sure-fire remedy for getting it back:

1. **Remember—Look back at what you left!**
2. **Repent—Turn away from where you are and back to where you were and where you should be!**
3. **Repeat—Do the first works!**  
(i.e. **Our works or actions are what speak of our love!**)

*LOVE CAN BE MISDEFINED...MISDIRECTED...MISPLACED...*

IV. **LOVE CAN BE MISUNDERSTOOD OR MISINFORMED!**

*"Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy. . ."*

**Heart, Soul, Mind, And Strength—These are all tied together!**

- A. **Heart**— This is speaking about the seat of our emotions. It is what guides us! (**Matthew 15:18-20; Luke 6:45**)  
*Genesis 6:5—"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."*

*Proverbs 4:23—"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."*

We are to **guard our heart!** (i.e. **Be careful what you allow to fill and influence your heart!**)

What is your heart full of today? **Understand that what is in our hearts will most likely determine how we walk!**

Is your heart full of fear, immorality, jealousy or envy, anger or hatred?

Be careful! **Because what is in your heart will eventually show up in your actions!**

- B. **Soul**— the deep innermost being. It is the real you!

A TWO-FOLD FOCUS FOR LIFE  
PART 1—LOVING GOD  
MATTHEW 22:34-40

- C. **Mind**— the thought processes. **It is what or who we think about!**

God should be in all our thoughts. What is on your mind?

- D. **Strength (or Might)**— the physical body. **It is what we do!**  
What are you doing for Jesus?

I want you to ask yourself this question and answer it honestly.  
*"Am I loving God with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength?"*

If the answer is **"No,"** then you've **misunderstood** what kind of love that the Lord is looking for.

He's not looking for a half-hearted effort!

V. **LOVE CAN BE MISHANDLED! (John 3:16; Romans 5:8)**

Because we **mishandle our love for the LORD**, it can cause us to **mishandle the love our Lord has for us!**

- A. **We Mishandle God's Love When We Ignore It!**  
This happens when we have too much else to do to consider what He did for us.

- B. **We Mishandle God's Love When We Reject It!**  
This happens when we hear it, but say *"That's not for me."*

- C. **We Mishandle God's Love When We Delay Responding To It!**  
This happens when we hear it, but we have things we want to do before we commit to the Lord.  
*"Someday I will, just not today."*

The person who repeatedly delays responding to God's love is a person who has rejected the Love of God.

**A TWO-FOLD FOCUS FOR LIFE**  
**PART 1–LOVING GOD**  
**MATTHEW 22:34-40**

**D. We Mishandle God's Love When We Hoard It!**

This happens when we accept it but don't share it.

**Conclusion**

How is your love for the Lord today? Don't be too quick to answer!

In fact, let me give you just a couple of things to help you answer that:

**If you love the Lord the way you should, you will love what He loves!**

**If you love the Lord the way you should, you will love:**

- 1. His people–The Church.**
- 2. His Church house**
  - a. You will support it with your presence.
  - b. You will support it with your finances.
- 3. His Word.**
- 4. His Fellowship (i.e. Communing with Him in prayer.)**
- 5. Souls.**

Have you been guilty of misdefining it, misdirecting it, misplacing it, misunderstanding it?

What about God's love for you? (Have you received it or mishandled it?)