

# **LESSON 2:**

---

## **The Great Commandment**

**MEN OF THE WORD**

**September 15, 2021**

“Thinking Christianly is first and foremost a matter of love—of minds in love with God and the truth of his world.”

—Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 19

“But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’

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.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’” On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.’”

—**Matthew 22:34–40**

# 1. The Ultimate Question (Matt 22:34–36)

---

- Jesus had just “muzzled” the Sadducees in his response to their question concerning the resurrection (22:23–33).
- The Pharisees “gathered themselves together” (see Ps 2:2).
- Their representative to “test” Jesus is a “lawyer”—a legal expert trained in the minutest details of the law.



“But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, ‘Teacher, **which is the great commandment in the Law?’”**



- “Great” – the regular adjective used in the sense of the superlative, “greatest.”
- The rabbis were experts at taking all the 613 laws in the Mosaic Law (365 prohibitions; 248 exhortations) and dividing them between the “weightier” and the “lesser.”



**What is the  
chief end of  
man?**

## 2. The Supreme Answer (Matt 22:37–40)

---

**“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.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”**

- Jesus’ response is the most straightforward and direct answer in the narrative of Matthew 22.
- His answer is twofold.

## a) The Primacy of Love to God (Matt 22:37–38)

“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.’ This is the great and foremost commandment.”

- Jesus answers by quoting Scripture: **Deut 6:5** – “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”
- The *Shema* was recited by pious Jews twice daily; it was written on doorposts and on articles of clothing.





“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.’ This is the great and foremost commandment.”

- THE COMMAND: “You shall love!”
  - Not primarily a feeling or an emotional attachment.
  - An active, whole-personed *cleaving*—the highest dimension of relationship, the free and joyful giving of oneself to another.
- THE OBJECT: “the LORD your God” – Yahweh.

“Love is the most ruling and prevalent affection in the whole soul: but it cannot be fixed on any object without an apprehension, true or false, of an amiableness and desirableness in it, from a goodness suitable to all its desires. . . . How few are there, who have that spiritual discerning and apprehension of the divine excellencies, that view of the excellency of the goodness and love of God in Christ, as thereby alone to be drawn after him, and to delight in him! Yet is this the ground of all sincere real love to God.”

—John Owen, *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*, 349–50

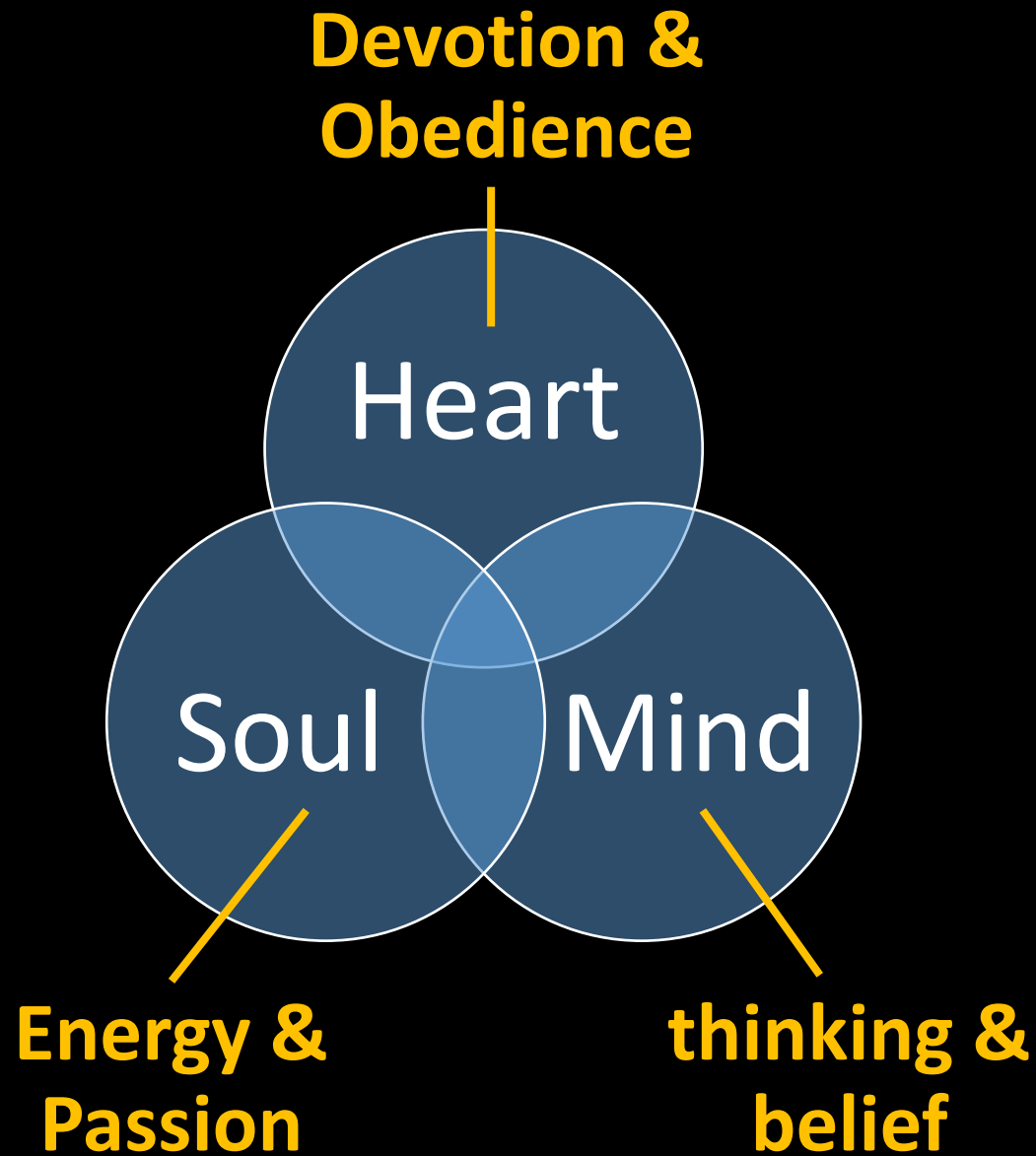
“We love God for himself, or for his own sake; not exclusively to our own advantage therein: for a desire of union and enjoyment, which is our only advantage, is inseparable from this love.”

—John Owen, *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*, 350–51



**“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.’ This is the great and foremost commandment.”**

- **THE INSTRUMENTS: “your heart . . . your soul and . . . your mind”**
  - Jesus substitutes “strength” (Deut 6:5) with “mind.”
  - The three terms are difficult to distinguish, primarily because man’s composition cannot be neatly divided—he is made up of interrelated, essential parts.
  - These three terms emphasize *comprehensiveness*—man’s complete being.



- **“Heart”** = the innermost center of one’s being; life’s mission control center (e.g., Prov 4:23).
- **“Soul”** = the life force that energizes us (e.g., Gen 2:7).
- **“Mind”** = the faculty of thinking, comprehending, reasoning, and believing; exercised in the heart (e.g., Luke 1:51).

“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.’ This is the great and foremost commandment.”

- THE EXTENT: “all . . . all . . . all”
  - The repeated “all” emphasizes *totality*.
  - “God will have no mere part, allow no division or subtraction. Not even the smallest corner is to be closed against God” (Lenski, *Matthew*, 880–81).
  - There is no room for a divided allegiance, for a half-hearted, half-souled, half-minded response.

“To love God with our minds is to hold Him in high esteem, to think about Him with reverence and with adoration. The more we love God with our minds, the more we’ll be driven to do that other thing that is alien to us in our fallen condition, namely, to worship Him. To pursue God with our minds simply for intellectual enjoyment and without the ultimate purpose of loving and worshiping Him is to miss what it means to love Him with our minds. . . .

“True knowledge of God always bears fruit in greater love for God and a greater desire to praise Him. The more we know Him, the more glorious He will appear to us. And the more glorious He appears to us, the more inclined we will be to praise Him, to honor Him, to worship Him, and to obey Him.”

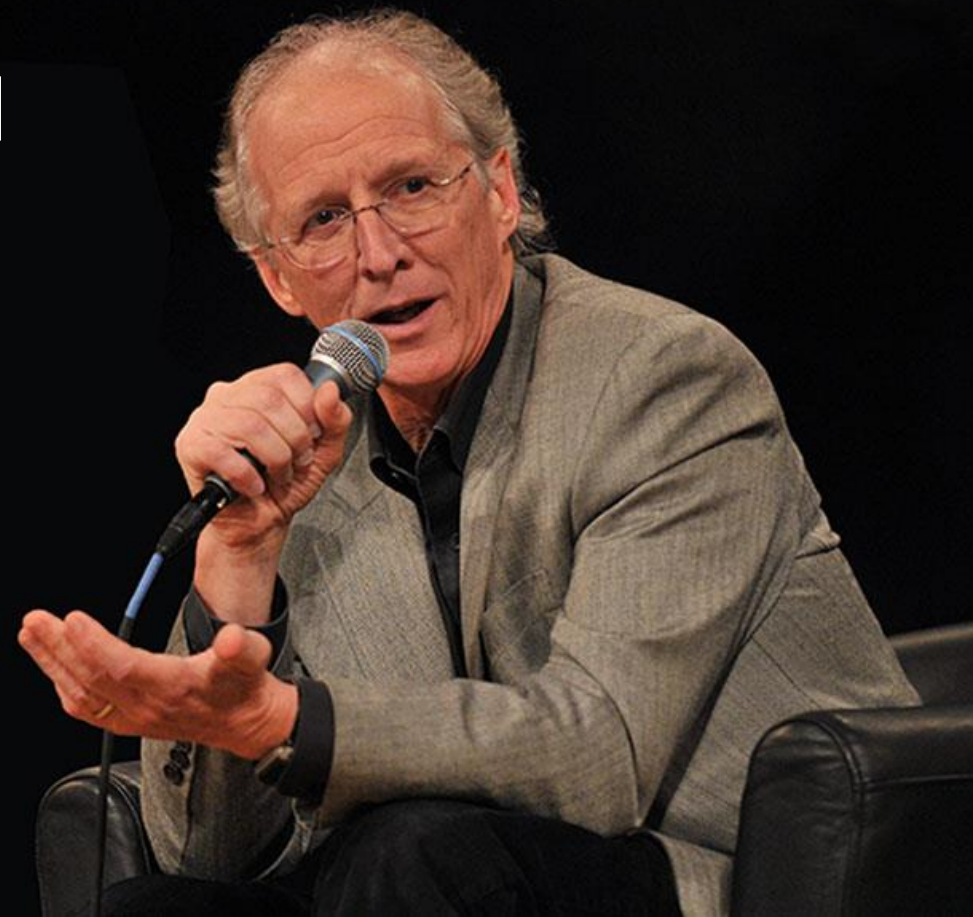
—R. C. Sproul





“Loving God with all our mind means wholly engaging our thinking to do all it can to awaken and express the heartfelt fulness of treasuring God above all things.”

—Piper, *Think!*, 85



**“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.’**

**This is the great and foremost commandment.’**

- Jesus reiterates the supreme importance of this duty, calling it not only the “great” (i.e., “greatest”), but also the “first” (i.e., “foremost”) commandment.
- This is *man’s chief end*.



## **b) The Necessity of Love for Others (Matt 22:39)**

**“The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’”**

- Jesus quotes Scripture again for the second part of his answer: **Leviticus 19:18** – “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.”
- Jesus connects this second commandment to the first, to show the relationship of the second to the first.
- You cannot truly love your neighbor without love for God; you cannot love your neighbor more than God.

“On these two commandments depend  
the whole Law and the Prophets.”

—**Matthew 22:40**

**How then shall we live?**

---

# 1. Loving God requires the use of your mind.

- You cannot love God without the engagement of your thinking.
- Christian *anti-intellectualism* is an oxymoron; it is impossible to have biblical faith without doctrine—to believe with your heart and not your mind.
- Reject the many false dichotomies popular in evangelicalism—between thinking and doing, doctrine and experience, the mind and the heart.
- The epitome of many false religions is to reject the centrality of knowledge in the pursuit of God (Hosea 4:6; Rom 10:1–3).

## 2. Loving God requires all of your thinking.

- Remember that Jesus placed an absolute claim not only each aspect of your being (“heart . . . soul . . . and mind”), but on everything within each aspect of your being (“all . . . all . . . all”).
- You cannot have divided loyalties within your thoughts; you cannot embrace divine revelation in part of your mind and a secular perspective in another part (Matt 6:24; James 1:5–8).
- Jesus makes nothing less than a radical claim to every thought; every thought must be brought into submission to the love of God.

### 3. Loving God with your mind is prior to loving others.

- Using your mind to love God must naturally lead to loving your neighbor; it must never fail to produce it.



- But the great travesty of our day is that the order of these commands has been reversed—the “greatest and foremost” has been subjected to “the second.”
- You cannot champion “love your neighbor” if you do not prioritize “love Yahweh your God” (Luke 14:26)



## 4. Loving God with your mind requires fuel.

- In response to the preeminence Jesus places on this command, you cannot neglect the cultivation of your mind toward this ultimate purpose in life.

“The fires of love for God need fuel. And the fires of love for God drive the engines of thought and deed. There is a circle. Thinking feeds the fire, and the fire fuels more thinking and doing. I love God because I know him. And I want to know him more because I love him.” —Piper, *Think!*, 89



## 5. Loving God is the ultimate purpose of your thinking.

- Notice that love is the *product* of the right exercise of your whole being—your heart, soul, and mind.
- Christian *intellectualism* is not an option. The purpose of “thinking” is never merely to become a “thinker” or a “theologian”—to be “puffed up” by knowledge (1 Cor 8:1).
- You must steward your intellectual abilities for the ultimate purpose of *cleaving to God*—of enjoying His person through delighting in thinking His thoughts after Him.

“Loving God with our minds is not finally a question of orthodoxy, but of love. Offering up our minds to God in all our thinking is part of our praise.”

—Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, 18

Orthodoxy → Doxology

**MEN**

— OF THE —

**WORD**

**Wednesdays 7:00-9:00 PM**

[www.gracechurch.org/motw](http://www.gracechurch.org/motw)