



# # 1 The Lord's Call

## **Introduction to the series:**

Our vision sets our direction and shapes our daily activities – it drives our mission. Our vision is the Lord's vision – and it is to this that we will give our full devotion this year. The plan for carrying out the Lord's vision is plainly articulated in Mark 12 love GOD, love OTHERS and love the LOST.

## **Text: Mark 12: 29-31**

Points to discuss:

### 1. Our Lord calls us to love God

*Additional Text: Jeremiah 9:23-24*

We tend to associate our love for God with how much we are currently doing *for* him. But this is wrong. Our love for God is determined by our enjoyment of him for who he is. By knowing his character, we are able to respond to him in worship and adoration - as the treasure of our hearts and the object of our affections.

When we are saved, we are given new hearts that allow us to love and obey God. The reality of what he has done for us through his death on the cross and his resurrection to new life, causes us to really love him from the heart. Hebrews tells us that he will be merciful towards our inequities, and that he will remember our sins no more. The more we get to know God, and of his great love for us, the more we will love him.

This vision to love God more should set in us, as a church, the **commitment** to grow in our knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of God. There are many things that we allow to get in the way of spending time getting to know and love God more. We need to repent of the distractions and make God a priority. But we also need to intentionally and proactively seek to grow in our love for God, and keep that flame alive in our hearts. This will require some thinking and planning.

### 2. Our Lord calls us to love our neighbour – as we love ourselves

In order to love others well, we have to love ourselves. Self-love is fickle though, and though some days we may be able to sustain the best view of ourselves, we know that this is just not possible to sustain. Eventually we will disappoint ourselves. The only way to love ourselves in a real and sustainable way is by seeing, in ourselves, that which God sees when he looks at us. This view doesn't shift or change with circumstances or performance. God loves us consistently. When we love ourselves with this love, we can then love others with the same love.





When God looks at us he sees the following:

- The 'imago dei' – this means that our humanity bears God's very own image – we bear his resemblance in both our nature and character.
- Our need for redemption – we know that we fail to reflect God's character a lot of the time, because of our sinful nature. But instead of leaving us in that state, God sees us as a restoration-work in progress, and one that needs his loving, redemptive actions to bring it to pass. God is committed to loving us, changing us and using us all the way through the process.
- The perfection of Christ – having already redeemed us in Christ, God no longer deals with us on the basis of our sinful nature. Instead of him seeing our failure, he sees in us Christ's victory, instead of our guilt, he sees Christ's righteousness, instead of our weakness, he sees Christ's strength, instead of our ability to give up, he sees Christ's ability to persevere to the end. We are no longer viewed by our human limitations and weaknesses, but are seen in Christ.

When we begin to see ourselves in the way God wants us to see ourselves, it will directly impact the way we view others.

Instead of:

- being cold, we would engage warmly.
- judging others, we would have compassion and empathy.
- building barriers and fences between us, we would pursue intimate fellowship.

### 3. Our Lord calls us to love the lost

*Additional Text: Matthew 28:16-20*

Loving the lost means more than having a desire to see them saved. It means reaching them with the gospel, and then teaching them how to live it out faithfully in obedience so that it transforms their lives. This requires a plan, with commitment, intentionality and patience with someone, where you are in their lives regularly, teaching them and modelling to them what it means to obey Jesus.

There are no lost causes. No one is too far off for the Lord to save. To be equipped for the task, we as the church need to upgrade our discipleship skills so that we are ready to walk the long journey of true discipleship with others.





## Discussion Questions:

### Love God

1. Why is vision so important for us as a church?
2. "Do you love God?" For a Christian, the obvious answer is, "of course I love God". But when pressed to think about why we say that, we often come up short. Based on this week's message, how do we know if we truly LOVE God?
3. Why is our love for God based on what he has done for us on the cross and not just on how we might feel about him on any given day, and why is this a relief?
4. Why do you think it requires some commitment on our behalf in order to develop our love for God?
5. What do you think is the one thing standing in your way of loving God more? (Practical repentance: what one thing do you need to deal with and put aside this year?)
6. What one thing can you do this year in order to encourage and grow your love for God?
7. ♥ What do you suggest for a Christian whose heart has grown cold towards God, and cannot feel much love for him right now?

### Love your neighbour as you love yourself

8. ♥ Personal Reflection: Rate your self-love on scale from 1-10 and say why you do or don't love yourself so much.
9. Why is it so helpful to realise that we do not need to love ourselves based on how we feel about ourselves, our accomplishments, performance or even our own morality?
10. Why is it crucial to have a true love for ourselves before we can love others in a meaningful way?
11. Why is it important to know that God sees us as a restoration-in-progress, that he will restore, rather than "damaged-goods" that cannot be helped?

### Love the lost

12. Why it is important to believe that there are no "lost causes" when it comes to who God will save?
13. Why is it important to realise that reaching the lost is not just about evangelism, but about helping people in their long-term obedience to Christ?
14. ♥ What is the one thing that puts you off taking a long-term approach and commitment to walking a journey with someone who is lost?
15. Personal Reflection: who is the one person that God has put on your heart to walk a discipleship journey with this year, and what is your first step going to be.

