

# discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living  
Study Guide

## CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

### LESSON 12: LOVING GOD

#### INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Christian Life and Worldview. This series of lessons examines the choices and practices that are essential for Christian living. To live as the Word of God teaches us means we understand that the choices we make each day affect our faith. It also means learning to pray, practising the commands of God and learning to serve others. These are important lessons for understanding the practice of Christianity and how to live out our faith within our Church community.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on [www.discipleshipessentials.org](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).

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# CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

## LESSON 12: LOVING GOD

### WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

God commands us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. But how can we respond to this command? This lesson looks at what it means to really love God.

### JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Love is a complex topic, but there is nothing more important to each one of us than to love and to be loved. God's greatest commandments to us are that we love Him, and that we love others. So we know that love is incredibly important to God. Love is sometimes thought of as an emotion or feeling we cannot control, such as falling in love with someone. This lesson explores God's commands, and examines what the Christian's response to Him should be. Love isn't something that only describes our feelings or emotions, but the thoughts of our mind and the actions of our body as well. We can carry out God's commands by choosing to act in love – even though often imperfectly.

## GETTING STARTED

1. How would you know if someone loved God? How could you tell by someone's actions or life that they do not love God?

2. What are your thoughts on the command to love God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength, as well as loving others as yourself? Is this impossible to do?



## STUDY

❖ **LOVING GOD:** When followers asked Jesus what the most important commandment was, He spoke about love. He did not list duties, or what we must not do. He responded by saying that the most important commandment was to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength – and to love your neighbour as yourself. Both the Old and New Testaments, therefore, point to loving God as the most important part of being in right relationship with Him.

➤ **The Old Testament** and the Laws of Moses recognize that true worship of God comes from within (our hearts and minds and souls), and that our love for God is the greatest commandment. Our obedience is important, but it must come out of love.

○ Read Deuteronomy 6:5 and Joshua 22:5 to see how this commandment is expressed.

➤ **The New Testament** re-establishes this central command of God through Jesus Christ, who, on several occasions, informed people that this was the greatest commandment. In addition, loving God correctly is the only way to please God. This will result in using our energy to love others. Our love for God is proven by our life.

○ Read Luke 10:26-28, 1 John 4:20.

➤ Is the meaning of the commandments in the New Testament different from the ones in the Old Testament? What do they have in common?

❖ **GOD COMMANDS US TO LOVE HIM:** When we talk about commandments, they are not mere suggestions but, in fact, are the Law of God. The whole of the Law (all morality) is summed up in this – that we love God and that we love others.

➤ **We Love God Because He Loves Us:** Nothing else will bring us peace, eternal security, and true joy in this lifetime apart from a relationship with God. Therefore, God’s command that we love Him more than all other things is a truly loving action on God’s part.

➤ What do these verses tell us about God’s Love? Read 1 John 4:19, Psalm 16:11, Psalm 107:9.



- **We Love God Because He is Worthy:** Does it seem strange to you that God would command His creation to love Him and worship Him? God is greater than all things, and indeed created the world out of nothing. Therefore, would it make any sense for us to honour or love anything else more than Him? Love is the recognition of admirable qualities or worth, and nothing has greater worth than God.
- What do these verses tell us about God’s worthiness? Read 1 Timothy 1:17, Revelation 4:11.

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- **Because We Love God, We Can Truly Love Others:** It would be unfair for God to command something we are incapable of doing. Love is more than a feeling. It is living for someone other than yourself. Our love for God compels us to love others. Jesus commands us to even love our enemies! This is something we have to choose to do.
- What do these verses tell us about our choosing to love others? Read 1 Peter 1:22, 1 John 4:20-21, Matthew 5: 43-45.

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❖ **LOVING GOD IS A CHOICE:** In many cultures, to say that we can choose to love God is confusing. Love is sometimes equated with romantic infatuation or feelings over which we have no control. However, when we decide to love, the emotion of love will grow as we choose loving actions.

We are told to love God with everything we are! As we look at what it means to love God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we will gain a clearer picture of whether or not we are truly loving God, and how that love should be expressed.

❖ **LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART:** When the Bible writers talk about our ‘heart’ (kardia in Greek), they are not talking about the muscle that pumps blood in our body. They are referring to our affections – our likes and our dislikes, the things that delight us and repulse us. Loving God with all our heart requires us to delight in God and be repulsed by sin.

- Read the following verses and write down what you learn about loving God with our heart:

Ezekiel 36:26	
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Hebrews 13:5	
1 John 5:21	

When we become Christians, God changes our hearts to be more like His, so we can love what He loves. God wants us to love His commandments. We are called to love God with our whole heart – not partially. To love God with our whole heart, we must ensure that we love nothing that God despises, and that we love nothing more than God. Anything we love more than God is an idol.

❖ **LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR SOUL:** In the Bible, the word ‘soul’ (psyche in Greek) means the unseen part of us that makes us a unique person. Personality, identity, and life are different words for soul. This encompasses the choices we make, the actions we carry out, the things we do that distinguish us from others.

- What does the Bible tell us about making Godly choices? Read the following verses and write down what you learn.

John 3:30	
John 14:21	
1 Peter 1:14-22	

We love God by making Godly choices. This affects how we spend our time, how we use opportunities, the actions we take. Sometimes we may not feel like making the Godly choice and it can be a struggle, but the choice to do what God desires is an act of love. We must also carefully study the Bible to see if there is sin in our life, and deal with it quickly.

❖ **LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR MIND:** Our mind is the source of our thought-life, our reason, our intellect. God is a reasonable and rational God who has ordered the world and everything in it according to complex patterns. The Greek word for mind here is ‘dianoia’. This mind-love requires knowing about God, knowing truth from God’s Word, and learning to think correctly about Him. Also, our imaginations can picture godly things, and comprehend beautiful art and music.



- Thinking about sin is playing with temptation and does not display love for God. Setting our mind on God, and focusing on positive and beautiful things can be difficult – especially when we are tempted to worry rather than trust God. Read the following verses and write down what they say about our mind and thoughts:

Romans 8:5	
Colossians 3:2	
Philippians 4:6-8	

- We can also love God with our mind by using our ability to reason as we study the Scriptures. When we discuss God with others, we use our reason; therefore, we should know what we believe and why. Our mind also involves our memory. It is very important to memorize verses of the Bible and be able to quickly recall God's Word and works.
- ❖ **LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH:** Our strength is the part of us that can act in accordance with what we think and feel. The actions of our body should be loving towards God, careful of His creation and creatures, and focused on carrying out God's plans.
- When we work and serve others, we should honour God with everything we do. Consider our work lives, business dealings, evangelism, discipleship and service to others. What do the following verses say about loving God with our actions?

Colossians 3:23	
Ephesians 6:5-7	
1 Peter 4:11	



## IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Both the Old and New Testaments command us to love God with our heart, soul, mind and strength.
- ❖ This commandment means that we love God above everything and everyone else. God is most worthy to be loved, and it is within our ability to choose to love Him. Loving God with all that we are is a choice we should make daily.
- ❖ Loving God with all our heart involves loving what God loves and hating what God hates (sin). It is choosing to delight in God above all other things, and putting our love and trust only in Him.
- ❖ Loving God with all our soul involves making Godly choices, and obeying His Word.
- ❖ Loving God with all our mind means loving God with our thought-life, our rational mind, our memory and our intellect.
- ❖ Loving God with all our strength is loving God through our work, service and life.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How can we love God more with our minds? What are good practices that will challenge, sharpen, and focus our minds on God?

2. What fuels your love for God? When you have days that you don't feel like acting in a loving way or in obedience to God, what can you do to remind yourself to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength?