

Loving God in the Real World
Loving God with All Your Strength
1 Corinthians 6:19-20
GCF – November 1, 2009

I. Introduction

As a leadership group we are seeking to clarify not only our vision, but also to simplify the process we use to accomplish that vision. Initially, I submitted to the group that we are called to love God, love people, and serve others.

Not only does this simplify the five-fold purpose we have had here for years while still including them, but it also speaks to the process we use to accomplish that goal.

Let me explain. Our five-fold purpose has been to passionately worship God, intentionally reach others, build a loving fellowship, strategically disciple, and joyfully serve.

“Love God” includes passionate worship.

“Love people” includes loving fellowship and strategic discipleship.

“Serve others” includes reaching out and joyfully serving.

It also embraces the process we need to utilize to see people become mature followers of Jesus Christ.

Love God: People need to meet the Lord, discover His love for them and fall in love with Him.

Love People: We need to grow in our relationship with God, but this primarily comes through our interactions with other people. We grow in our love for God and others in the context of relationships.

Serve Others: as we mature, we begin to see the need in others, not just in ourselves. We start to reach out to those around us and serve in the context of the church according to our gifts.

As I brought this to the group that is meeting on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, I said that we need to be committed to this general process and vision, but that I was open to new terminology.

At this point we are still working through that process.

Remember our goal has not been to change the vision, but to clarify it and simplify how we communicate it. Right alongside this we are working to clarify and simplify the process of how we accomplish the vision – how we help people become mature followers of Christ.

But more on all this as we progress through the process ourselves.

Although our wording has now changed, I am going to finish our series on the first phrase (Love God), before incorporating and teaching through our new statement.

So, having said all that, we have been looking at what it means to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

I have attempted over the last two months to share from the Bible what it means to love God on a day-to-day basis.

We have spoken about loving God with all our heart, soul and mind and now we want to look at what it means to love God with all our strength.

But first, let me share with you a true story:

In the first game of the best-of-seven, 2004 American League Championship Series between baseball's New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox, Boston's ace pitcher Curt Schilling was in pain. An ankle injury kept him from being able to plant his foot and throw the ball with his usual skill. Schilling was removed from the game after allowing six runs in just three innings. Teammates feared Schilling's injury would end his season and their hopes to get to the World Series.

But in the sixth game against the Yankees, Schilling surprisingly took the mound again. Facing elimination if they lost, the Red Sox watched Schilling throw an amazing seven innings in which he only gave up four hits and one run. Every time the TV camera focused on Schilling's ankle, viewers could see blood seep through his sock. Doctors had stitched his ankle tendon into place to allow him to pitch. The Red Sox won the game, and afterwards a FOX Sports reporter asked him about his performance.

Schilling answered, "Seven years ago I became a Christian, and tonight God did something amazing for me. I tried to be as tough as I could, and do it my way Game 1, and I think we all saw how that turned out. Tonight it was all God. I knew that I wasn't going to be able to do this alone. And I prayed as hard as I could. I didn't pray to get a win or to make great pitches. I just prayed for the strength to go out there tonight and compete, and he gave me that. I can't explain to you what a feeling it was to be out there and to feel what I felt."

Not only is this story relevant as we are in the midst of another World Series, but it touches on our subject matter today.

II. Loving God with all my Strength

The primary passage for the first two-thirds of our vision statement is Mark 12:29-31, which reads, "*The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. 30 And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.'* 31 *The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'* No other commandment is greater than these." (NLT)

What does it mean to love God with all my strength?

I believe it primarily means two things. First, I believe it means we love God with our literal **bodies**. Second, I believe we are to love God with all our **energy**.

Today, I want to talk about the first – loving God with my body.

Now before I go any further, I need to share that this message holds an obvious conviction for me, and while God is working in me concerning how I view myself in relationship to my battles with being overweight, I want to be upfront and say that I am clearly in need of learning how to love God with my body.

Listen to what Paul writes to the Christians in the city of Corinth:

“Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! 16 And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, ‘The two are united into one.’ 17 But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. 18 Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. 19 Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, 20 for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:15-20, NLT)

Concerning our bodies and sexual sin, you can think of it in the following way [paper being torn example].

Think about it – you carry God around with you in your body! Do you really want God participating in all the things you do with your body?

While the context of this passage is sexual sin and the impact it has on us, I believe there are numerous ramifications when we understand that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Can you think of some? How can we honor God with our bodies?

Dallas Willard in his book *Renovation of the Heart* writes, “Spiritual transformation into Christlikeness...is the process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it takes on the character and being of Jesus himself. The result is that the ‘outer’ life of the individual increasingly becomes a natural expression of the inner reality of Jesus and of his teachings. Doing what he said and did increasingly becomes a part of who we are. But for this to happen *our body* must increasingly be poised to do what is good and refrain from what is evil...The body must come to serve us as a primary ally in Christlikeness.” (Page 159)

“God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. 4 Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor— 5 not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways...for the Lord avenges all such sins, as we have solemnly warned you before. 7 God has called us to live holy lives, not impure lives. 8 Therefore, anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human teaching but is rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, NLT)

Again Dallas Willard writes, “My body is the only body whose energy is directly accessible for my own use and satisfaction. I access it by choice...Therefore my body is the original and primary place of my dominion and my responsibility. It is only through it that I have a world in which to live.” (Page 161)

Problems arise, however, when I go beyond taking dominion over my own body and seek to have dominion over others.

We see this clearly in our children as they grow. I want mommy to do everything for me, I want my friend's toy, or I want everyone else to do what I will.

And how do we exercise this dominion? Through our bodies. We hit, we use words, we look at them a certain way.

As we grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ we need to bring our bodies into **subjection** to His will and purposes.

“For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way. 3 We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. 4 And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. 5 In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. 6 And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.” (James 3:2-6, NLT)

Let's look further at what Paul says about our bodies in Romans 6.

“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.” (Romans 6:11-14, NIV)

How can we offer the parts of our bodies to God as instruments of **righteousness**?

III. Application

Love the Lord your God with all your strength. Today I have likened that to loving God with our bodies.

Let me conclude by saying there are two extremes that people go to here.

The first is to consider anything of the body to be evil. The idea here is that nothing is to be enjoyed in this life. Sex in all cases is an evil act, only meant for procreation. We should only eat the plainest of foods, and constantly subject the body to rigorous fasting and even painful exercises to keep it in its proper place.

The other extreme is to throw all discipline to the wind. to eat and drink for tomorrow we die.

As with most things, I believe there is a balance. Our bodies are not inherently evil; as it says in Romans 6, we can offer our bodies to be used as instruments of wickedness or we can offer them to God as instruments of righteousness.

The tongue can bring life to others or we can use it to bring death.

Food can be enjoyed, but in healthy moderation.

Sex is a gift from God and is part of his design for relational intimacy between a man and a woman who are married, as well as for procreation.

All these things come from God, but Satan tries to turn them in on themselves. So we use food for comfort, we exercise dominion over others through physical violence, manipulative words, or we destroy ourselves and others through sexual immorality.

But let us focus on loving God with our bodies. Let us speak words that bring life. Let us build others up and lend them a helping hand.

Let us use our mouths and even our bodies to worship God. This is why you are encouraged to be free in how you express your worship.

Wave a flag, lift a hand (a sign of surrender), kneel down (a sign of humility), jump up and down (an indication of celebration), or dance.

“And David danced before the Lord with all his might, wearing a priestly garment. 15 So David and all the people of Israel brought up the Ark of the Lord with shouts of joy and the blowing of rams' horns.” (2 Samuel 6:14-15, NLT)