

Session 4

The Fruit of Abiding

Mark 12:30; John 15:5; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Memory Verse

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul,
with all your mind, and with all your strength.”*

– MARK 12:30, CSB



The Fruit of Abiding

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Staying rooted in God's Word is a vital part of the Christian life.

CALL TO ACTION: Take one step forward in your commitment to God's Word this week.

Take a moment and think about your significant other or best friend.

What would that relationship look like if the only things you knew about that person were things that other people told you secondhand? Some of what you heard might be spot on. But inevitably, you wouldn't have a clear and accurate picture of them or their character, and what you had would certainly not be a relationship. We know that's not how relationships work. We don't get close to someone through secondhand learnings. We form close relationships by getting close to the source—to the person themselves.

Maybe you got to know them over years of companionship in your youth, through many classes, sports, activities, and shared experiences. Maybe you got to know them by sitting next to them in class in college, then finding ways to be together outside of it. Maybe you got to know them by staying up late bingeing your favorite TV show. Maybe you met as adults and got to know them by planning things together—coffee and lunch, and eventually dinner and movies and more. The most meaningful relationships in our lives always have two very important ingredients: time and intention. Both are necessary to build a healthy relationship.

This is true for our relationship with the Lord, too, and one of the ways that we can devote time and intention to the most important relationship we will ever have, is by diving into God's Word. In this time-honored spiritual discipline, we get to know God and His character directly at the source, and when we devote ourselves to this practice, the Lord transforms our lives.

? What relationship came to mind for you in this section? How did you get to know that person?

? When you think of how you invest in your relationship with the Lord, what comes to mind?

Session Summary

In Mark 12:30, Jesus commanded us to love God with our entire being, specifically calling out the fact that we should love God with our minds. One of the important ways we do this is by reading and studying His Word. All of the Bible is inspired by God and given to us on purpose. God uses it to teach us (and equip us to teach others), rebuke and correct us, and train us in right living so that we are equipped for whatever we might face in this life. When we study it, it helps us stay rooted in Christ.

1. All Your Mind (Mark 12:30)

? Why do you think Jesus called this the most important commandment?

? How do we love the Lord in these ways?

A scribe approached Jesus and asked Him what the most important commandment was. This was a common point of discussion for rabbis in Jesus's day. They had counted 613 commandments from the Old Testament law in the books of Moses and sorted these into categories by perceived severity.¹

In response, Jesus quoted from the Jewish Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. —Deuteronomy 6:5

The heart, soul, and strength are all mentioned in Deuteronomy, but Jesus added “mind” to His teaching in the book of Mark. Scholars believe that the original intent of this passage in Deuteronomy was to love God with the entirety of your being. When Moses originally recorded this teaching, it was believed that the heart was the source of decision-making in the body, but by the time Jesus taught in Mark, the Greeks had popularized the philosophical importance of the mind.² Jesus didn’t do anything by accident, so we know this important part of our being is worth specifically calling out.

? Do you love God? This isn’t a trick question. Reflect on it in the quiet of your own heart. How does this play out in your day-to-day?

According to this teaching from Jesus, we should love God with our entire being. With our hearts, souls, mind, and strength. Some of this seems easy and natural. Loving God with our hearts, our emotions, is logical, right? Much of our faith tends to be rooted in feelings, and we feel love toward God. Our favorite worship song makes us feel something. A sermon or Sunday school lesson makes us feel something, too. It makes sense.

Other parts of this command may come less naturally. In a world where faith and logic are sometimes pitted against each other, loving God with our minds, with our intelligence, may seem counterintuitive.

And yet, loving God with our minds is a vital component of the greatest commandment, according to Jesus. So, how do we do this? How do we show the love we have for God by using our minds? One vital way we do this is by taking time, and, with intention, studying His Word.

2. All Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

? How did Paul say Scripture benefits believers in this passage?



What does verse 17 teach about the purpose of Scripture in our lives?

We are commanded to love God with our minds, and a great way to do this is to read and study Scripture, but what makes this so useful? There are many benefits of establishing this practice in our lives.

God's Word contains truth, guidance on how we should live, helps us know God and His character more deeply, and is the primary vehicle God uses to speak to us. When we store up Scripture in our hearts, we build a strong foundation for the Holy Spirit to encourage us by bringing Scripture to mind when we need it. This is one of the most important and vital things we can do as believers.

Let's look at the attributes of Scripture Paul identified:

All Scripture: All Scripture—not some, or the fun to read parts, the parts that are easiest to understand, or the parts that we don't think are boring—has value for us.

Because all Scripture has value, we should read all of it (and this doesn't just apply to the vocational ministers in our lives . . . believers should all read God's Word). There isn't a timetable on this (there's no verse that says "thou shalt always do a Bible-in-a-year plan!"), but this is part of loving God with our minds. Dedicating ourselves to reading and studying His Word. It will take time. It will take intention. It will take dedicated hard work. And all of this is so very worth the investment (more on some of the benefits below).

Scripture is inspired by God: God used and equipped humans to do the task of writing down what we read in the Bible, and it was all inspired by Him. God doesn't do things on accident. What we read today is a translation of the original words inspired by God, but every word He placed in the Scriptures is there on purpose and for a purpose. Scripture is true and reliable.

Scripture is profitable: Scripture is "profitable," or "useful" (NIV) in several ways. Paul specifically listed:

Teaching: Scripture teaches. We learn about God, His heart, and His character in its pages. It teaches us and it helps us teach others. Scripture is useful for making disciples and helping others learn about Jesus, and this isn't just reserved for those of us who are called to teach in the church. Scripture is useful for teaching our children about God's goodness, and how they should live. Think about the Romans Road. Any of us can use Scripture to lead others to Jesus.

Rebuking and Correction: The Bible helps us understand how we should (and shouldn't) live as followers of Jesus, and when we are students of the Word, the Holy Spirit uses it to point out sin in our own lives that needs correction (and then help us kick it out of our lives). This is one of the ways God speaks to us through His Word!

Training in Righteousness: Have you ever received training at a new job? We don't just show up on the first day knowing all our new company's policies and how to log into the system. Likewise, as believers, we need training, and like careers that require continuing education, we don't ever stop learning! The training Paul referred to here is how to live according to God's design and will. And the handbook for this training is the Bible.

? Paul further said that the Bible equips us for every good work. How have you seen the connection between love for the Scriptures and good works in your life?

3. Grounded (John 15:5)

? What does it mean that Jesus is the vine and we are the branches?

? How do we remain in Him daily?

In the Old Testament, God used the imagery of the vineyard and vine to represent His people. Isaiah 5 describes an attentive vineyard owner who worked hard to care

for his vineyard but only received a bad harvest in return. That was the reality for God's people before Jesus came: They couldn't save themselves through the law, but it was never meant to be a permanent solution for bringing people into a right relationship with God—Jesus was.



Jesus said apart from Him we can do nothing. Did he mean this literally? What does it mean?

This is the last of Jesus's seven "I am" statements John recorded in His Gospel: "I am the vine" (v. 5). Have you ever witnessed the pruning of a vine in a garden? No matter how lush it once was, when you trim a branch from the vine, what happens? It withers. It can't exist away from the vine.

We, too, are wholly reliant on Jesus. Think of the failed vineyard in the Old Testament. The thousands of years of history in the Old Testament prove that we just can't do it alone. We need Jesus. And when we are plugged into relationship with Him, we have a chance to thrive and bear good fruit that glorifies the Father.

But how? A branch has the luxury of being physically attached to the vine, but we are not physically tied to Jesus in this way. We stay rooted in Christ by (metaphorically) walking with Him daily—staying in close relationship with Him. One important way that we do this is by staying rooted in His Word and what it teaches.

Conclusion

In Mark 12:30, Jesus specifically said we should love the Lord with our minds. He named this as a part of what He called the greatest, most important commandment. When many of us think of our faith, emotions and feelings come first. Worship music makes us feel good. An insightful sermon can give us motivation for loving God more deeply. Jesus mentioned loving God with our hearts and our souls, so we know these feelings are good and important, but they aren't the only way we are commanded to love God. We are also commanded to love Him with our intellect, our minds. For many, this takes more work and more intention.

And one vital way we do this is by reading and studying God's Word.

Scripture is one of God's greatest gifts to us. He has lovingly preserved His Word for millennia for us. All Scripture is useful, not just the parts we feel like are fun to read. Every word in Scripture is inspired by God and needed. God uses His Word to teach us (and equip us to teach others), rebuke and correct us, and train us in right living so we are equipped for whatever we might face in this life. If this isn't currently something in your daily rhythm, God doesn't condemn you, but He does desire for you to meet Him in this way. Pray and ask for His help as you seek to get started. Find a friend to read with. And if you're reading and having trouble understanding, check your Bible translation. Trying another translation may help with comprehension.

In His final "I am" statement recorded in the gospel of John, Jesus called Himself the vine and us the branches. He said we can "do nothing" without Him (v.5). In the Christian life, we must remain rooted in Christ.

How, exactly, can we do this? One of the primary ways we do this is by staying rooted in His Word and the teachings He has given us there.



How do you currently show God love using your mind? Why is Scripture necessarily involved in this?



How is reading and studying Scripture part of your current life rhythm? How could you give this more priority in your everyday life?



How does a growing love for and knowledge of Scripture give us more motivation to share the gospel with others?

Memorize

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with all your mind, and with all your strength.”*

- Mark 12:30, CSB

References

¹Ross H. McLaren, *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

²Douglas S. Huffman and Jamie N. Hausherr, “Shema, the,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).