

Matthew 22:36-40 36 “Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?” 37 Jesus said to him, “ *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.* 38 This is *the* first and great commandment. 39 And *the* second *is* like it: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Central idea – To love God with all my heart and soul and mind obviously means to love Him with all my being, with everything I have. To the degree that we live with an abiding sense of His love for us in Christ, to that degree will we love god with all our heart and soul and mind.

Developing the Discipline of Grace

1. Bridges contrasts “cruise control” obedience with “race car” obedience. What are some of the factors that you think typically keep believers from pursuing “race car” obedience?
2. Does your obedience tend to be more of the “cruise control” or “race car” variety? (Or do you spend a lot of time parked?) Why do you suppose this is the case?
3. Study Deuteronomy 6:1-0, which is the Old Testament context for the “greatest commandment” Jesus cites in Matthew 22:37. Note how words such as commands, decrees, and laws are prominent. How is obedience to these commands, decrees, and laws emphasized?
4. a. What are some innovative and effective ways of impressing God’s commands, decrees, and laws on ourselves and our children? (Instead of tying the Scriptures on your hands and foreheads or writing them on your doorframes and gates, what do you do?)

A post it with a pertinent verse of Scripture stuck on the bathroom mirror or the clock on my desk.

A 3x5” card with a Scripture for the day written on it that I carry in my shirt pocket and refer to throughout the day.

A card of Scripture taped on the dashboard or rearview mirror of my car.

I practice the discipline of Scripture memorization, with daily review and meditation

b. If you do not already have a habit of impressing Scripture on your mind, what approach appeals to you?

5. Equating obedience to God with love for God is a prominent feature of Deuteronomy. Without trying to be exhaustive, Bridges found six other passages in the book where love and obedience are tied together. To help us feel the impact of this strong repetitive emphasis, those scriptures are quoted below. In each instance, what is the relationship of love for God and obedience to God?

10:12-13 **12** “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, **13** *and* to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?

11:13 **13** ‘And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul,

11:22 **22** “For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do—to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him—

19:9 **9** because you carefully follow all these laws I command you today—to love the LORD your God and to walk always in his ways

30:6,8 **6** The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.... **8** You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am giving you today.

30:19-20 **19** This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live **20** and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

6. Without the motive of love, my apparent obedience may be self-serving. Without love, we are motivated to do good, but for all the wrong reasons. To illustrate how our deceitful hearts can lead us to do something good from some motive other than love to God, we've cited a few examples here. Can you think of any recent examples from your experience that illustrate these reasons?
- a. I may fear God will punish me, or at least withhold His blessing from me, because of some disobedience.
 - b. I may abstain from a particular sinful action out of fear I will be found out, not because I hate the sin that God hates.
 - c. I struggle against some temptation to avoid the guilt that follows, rather than out of love for God.
 - d. I may be seeking to earn God's blessing through some pious action—kneeling at prayer, having a daily quiet time, or something equally subtle or superstitious.
 - e. I may conform to a certain standard of conduct because I want to fit in with and be accepted by the Christian culture in which I live.
 - f. I might even obey outwardly because I have a compliant personality, and it is simply my "nature" to obey my parents, or my teacher, or civil authorities, or even God.
 - g. I may do something outstanding for God, but my obedience is tainted with self-righteous pride in my accomplishment.

7. The Puritan John Owen wrote that the greatest sorrow and burden we can lay on God the Father is not to believe that He loves us. Why is that a greater burden than committing some scandalous sin?

WHAT'S THE POINT OF ALL THIS?

As we turn our attention to the following sessions to the personal disciplines we need to practice in the pursuit of holiness, let us not put the gospel “on the shelf” of our lives. Let us review it daily, and in the joy that it brings, pursue these disciplines.