

Jeremy Brown

Sermon Title: **Loving God**

When my unit mobilized to Fort Carson, Colorado back in 2003 for a year-and-a-half, we spent a great deal of time working to support fellow troops and participating in training for the case scenario of possibly deploying to Iraq. As a military cook, I worked separately from my unit in a chow hall cooking and providing other services. On one particular occasion, my unit planned an outside training day for conducting field operational exercises and weapons qualification. Because I worked separately from my unit on a day-to-day basis, I was not present when the pre-execution checklist was provided. This pre-execution checklist included details regarding supplies and equipment needed for the training day scheduled during winter.

As the training day approached, it was bitterly cold outside, below freezing with wind gusts up to 50 miles per hour. Because I didn't follow a pre-execution checklist or utilize common sense as a young private, I did not pack a field jacket or any other form of protection from the cold weather. Needless to say, that was one of the coldest and longest days of my life. With my teeth chattering and body shaking almost to the point of convulsion, I was no longer fit for duty. Fearing that I would become a casualty of hypothermia, leaders from my unit ordered me to sit in one of the vehicles. Because I forgot to bring cold weather gear, I needlessly suffered and was not able to accomplish my training task. (Add personal story here about forgetting something important for others who would like to utilize this sermon format but get rid of my sermon. As I contemplated instances of forgetting important necessities during my lifetime, I realized how easy it can be to forget God. Forgetting God can have a negative impact on our lives

LOVING GOD MEANS PUTTING GOD FIRST

(Introduce the topic of loving God and putting Him first. Then share the scripture)
John 14:15 "If you love me, keep my commandments"

(So loving God means keeping His commandments but what are His commandments?)
Matt 22:36-40 "Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets

(Emphasize the loop hole that seems to be emphasized between the two scriptures. In order to understand these scriptures, we must go back to the language which the New Testament was written. Talk about how English only has one word to describe love and Greek has four ways. The three emphasized words for love are below)

Greek Translation:

- Eros: Generally known as physical love
- Phileo: is brotherly love
- Agape: is generally known as divine love

(In order to understand the type of love God commands us to practice in our lives, let us turn to an experience of Peter in the book of John)

John 21:15-17 "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, feed my lambs."

"He saith unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

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(So how does this experience of Peter help us understand God's command to love (agape) Him and others?)

1. Jesus' question was very personal

Christ didn't ask whether Israel or the world loved Him. He asked Peter directly, "Do you love me?" This question remains relevant today for each of us. We must ask ourselves on a daily basis: "Do I love Jesus Christ?"

Your family may love Christ. Your friends, people from church, acquaintances at work or in your community may love Christ, but what about us. How do we each answer this question individually?

2. Jesus' question was fundamental

(Taken from Matt Slick)

Jesus could have asked Peter about many things. He could have asked,

"Simon, Son of Jonah, have you made a credible profession of faith?"

Peter could have answered, "I know that you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Jesus could have inquired, "Simon, Son of Jonah, do you hold an important office in the church?"

Peter would have replied, "Yes Lord, you have ordained me as an apostle."

Christ might have asked, "Simon, Son of Jonah, have you had any extraordinary supernatural experiences?"

Peter could have responded, "Of course, I have walked on the sea, cast out devils, etc."

But Christ did not put any of these questions to Peter.

He simply asked, "Simon, Son of Jonah, do you love me?"

He asked this particular question because real love for Jesus Christ distinguishes true Christians from false Christians.

A hypocrite may have a good profession of faith, have been baptized, hold a church office, and a number of other external privileges.

But a hypocrite will not and cannot love Jesus Christ. "He will not delight in the Almighty," (Job 27:10).

On one hand, maybe you put your love into your work, your family, your hobbies, and put Jesus on hold and do not love Him as Lord.

On the other hand, perhaps you are overly confident in your church status, or your baptism, or your church affiliation. Or possibly you place high emphasis on your ability to "keep" commandments; forgetting that it is only through God that you were able to do anything in the first place.

Love for Jesus is central to the Christian life, for without it, nothing else matters.

3. Jesus' question called for action

The Lord was not satisfied with merely a profession of Peter's love; nor was the Lord concerned as much about how Peter felt or what Peter believed, He wanted to see the evidence of Peter's love. The Lord simply told Peter: "Peter, if you love me, feed my sheep." Although this type of love (agape) is not visible to the eye, its fruits are clearly seen. If we truly love God, we put Him first in our lives and obey his word.

Quickly review the three points and re-emphasize the take away point