



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

God's Servant to Do Good to Others September 5-7th, 2020

Matthew 22:34-40

³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

1. *Incurvatus in se* refers to a person's life turned in and focused completely on itself. How have you seen that in our world?

Now more than ever we hear about self-love, self-help, and self-esteem. While all of those things can be wonderful blessings, the Bible speaks far more often about loving God, helping others, and giving esteem or praise to Jesus. We see the opposite in our own hearts, but also in television, newspapers, and magazines.

2. How did the Pharisees exhibit the soul curved inward? (Scan Matthew 23 for hints.)

They made God's law all about themselves. They bragged about it. They held it over others. They majored in minor points, and forgot about the whole purpose of the law. They looked at the law and did not see their sin, instead they saw ways to make themselves look good.

3. How might the Pharisee's question (v. 36) indicate self-centeredness?

If he could find the greatest commandment, then he could prove he was the greatest pharisee. That is how their arguments tended to go. If I know the best laws then I can keep them and improve my standing before God and men. The true reason for knowing God's law is so that we can see how much we need Jesus. It should show us the truth about ourselves so we can focus on Jesus—NOT focus on ourselves.

4. List a few things that would be different about your average day if you "loved the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."

If people are having difficulty...

- give them time to think. (count to 10 in silence)
- rephrase, by asking: "Jesus did this perfectly. How could your life be more like his?"

Everyone may have different answers. For most of us it would mean more attention on his word and promises, and less worry about our priorities and concerns.

If there is ever a divergence between what God wants and what I want, if I am loving God with all my being, I would choose what he wants.

5. Retell a few Bible stories where Jesus loves the Lord his God (and Father) with everything he's got.

- When the devil tempts Jesus to worship him, but Jesus refuses because he is only supposed to worship the Lord. (*Matthew 4:8-9*
⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹ "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."
¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'")
- When Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane and he chose what God wanted over what he wanted. (*Matthew 26:36-44*
³⁶ Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."
³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he

said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

³⁹ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. ⁴¹ “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

⁴² He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

⁴³ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.)

6. In general, you know what’s good for you. What are some things you do for yourself, which you could also do for your friends or family?

Answers will vary. If people are having difficulty...

- a) give them time to think. (count to 10 in silence)
- b) ask them about more specific categories.

- Family
- Friends
- Co-workers
- When you are very busy
- When someone offends you
- During a disagreement

7. What things would be different about your average day if you “loved your neighbor as yourself.”

You may get your way less often. You may also have more fulfillment. You may have more understanding and empathy. Practically it may mean taking more time with others, and taking their needs seriously.

8. Retell a few Bible stories where Jesus loves his neighbor as himself.

- When Jesus healed many people even though he was tired.

(Matthew 14:13-14 ¹³ When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.)

- When Jesus went to the cross for his enemies. (Luke 23:24 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.") (Romans 5:7-8 ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.)

9. Agree or disagree: A Pharisee (someone obsessed with God’s law) will be **BETTER** at keeping God’s law than a Christian (someone who trusts Jesus to forgive all our sins.)

Agree: A pharisee would certainly have a good working knowledge of what God expected. They memorize whole chunks of the Bible, and **KNOWING** what God wants is part of doing what God wants. That’s why husbands and wives ask one another how they can show love. You need to know, and pharisees knew **BETTER** than anyone else.

Disagree: God’s law was written for the heart. If you don’t love God and love your neighbor in your heart, you can’t keep any of God’s law. Even if the Pharisee obeyed every command outwardly, it means nothing without love (1 Corinthians 13). Christians have genuine love for God because they know how God loved them. Therefore, Christians keep God’s law better because they do it from the heart- even if it’s not perfect. Plus, Christians have the Holy Spirit which enables them to obey.

Resolution: While the Pharisee’s knowledge of God’s law is admirable their attitude is not. Both are necessary. We need to strive to know what God wants just as the pharisees, but do it with Christian motivation. In the end Christians are better at keeping God’s law because of Jesus’ love and power.

10. What’s one way you can put into practice Jesus’ commands this week?

Answers may vary. Use this as a review of all the previous

questions.