

## A Love That Serves Luke 10:25-28

There are many things that I have never done.  
 I have never wrestled an alligator.  
 I have never gone scuba diving.  
 I have never gone sky diving.  
 I have never ridden in a hot air balloon.  
 I have never run with the bulls.  
 I have never swum with sharks, at least not knowingly.  
 I have never written a book, recorded a song or been on television.  
 I have never been on an African safari or climbed Mt. Everest.  
 I have never driven 100 miles per hour.  
 I have never been to the Grand Canyon or the Nile.  
 And I have never preached the kind of message I am going to today.

It's a message that I had hoped to give back in March but then the whole shut down thing happened.  
 It's specifically directed to Pastor Jim, but has merit and application for every one of us.

On January 29 of this year, we held a special business meeting for the purpose of calling Pastor Jim as an associate pastor. He and Liz have been a part of our fellowship for several years and have been immersed into the life and spiritual health of our congregation. We have welcomed them with open arms as part of FBC after retiring full time from CEF, although they have continued to serve in various capacities with both the State and International ministry. Pastor Jim has stepped into leadership roles as a teacher and Board member.

In his capacity as associate pastor, responsibilities include visiting regular attendees for encouragement and prayer  
 Assisting in creating, editing, and proofing policies and documents, which for the time being we have completed  
 Assisting in preaching and teaching when necessary  
 He will be involved in missions related work by  
 Communicating monthly with our missionaries and mission outreaches (He created a FB forum for the

missionaries to connect with each other for prayer and praise items)

Assisting with Sunday's Missions Moments and prayer notes for Prayer meeting (He keeps our bulletin updated with prayer needs related to our missions) and

Sitting in as an ex-officio member of the missions ministry team

Not on the list of responsibilities but something he took over last year was putting together the announcement PowerPoint slides for each Sunday.

Also not noted but is understood is serving as an all-around good guy.

During the months of the lock down, it's been a challenge to connect personally but he has reached out with some creative ways sharing verses or a thought from a well-respected pastor/teacher through email. Once things begin to open up more, we hope he can gain some traction.

We have come to appreciate his very gentle and humble spirit, his compassion and care for people and his love and commitment to the Lord. If you have had any time in conversation with him, you know that he speaks with wisdom and models well Paul's admonition to the church at Colossae to always speak words full of grace, words that are seasoned with salt in order to know how to answer everyone (**Colossians 4:4-6**).

We can call it a commissioning or installation service, whatever is the case, this is our challenge to him as he serves our church and you, God's people. Let me begin by reading several passages of challenge.

**II Timothy 2:1-5; 15-16; 22-26**

**I Corinthians 4:1-5**

**Luke 14:25-35**

Each of these passages has a common thread and it is a characteristic that should be a mark of every Christian whether you are called to be in some kind of full or part time ministry whether paid or volunteer. It is to be a characteristic of the believer who works on an assembly line punching a clock every day or pushing paper behind a desk. Every

mother and father and child should exemplify this trait. From household chores to daily work responsibilities, it is required of stewards to be found faithful (NIV) or trustworthy (ESV).

A steward is simply someone who has been given responsibility for something. We have been seeing that in the life of Joseph.

He was a steward sent with the responsibility of finding out how his brothers and the flocks were doing.

He was steward of Potiphar's home overseeing the other servants and all the business affairs.

He was steward of the prison responsible for the other prisoners and their productivity.

David is steward of his room.

He is steward of giving the dogs fresh water each day.

He is a steward when it comes to schoolwork.

Robyn is steward over two dialysis centers that includes the personnel, the operations and the patients.

She is steward over our finances and meals.

You are stewards of your home, your family, your housework, and if you are still working you are steward over those responsibilities as well.

Paul says that a steward is to be found faithful. That word means to be dependable or reliable, to be trusted with it and implies carefully fulfilling all those responsibilities. Jesus told a story about a man who gave three servants a certain portion of money to steward or be responsible for. Whatever the duties we have been given, we are to carry them out with great care so that nothing is left undone. I also believe that the word faithful implies doing it to the best of our ability.

Now, while the word **"faithful"** intrigues me, I find that what precedes it to be of importance. It's the word **"found"** or **"prove"** depending on your translation.

The word **"found"** implies that someone comes up to you while you are doing a task and sees you completely engaged and focused giving the job your full attention. It's as if you are so involved in what

you are doing that you are oblivious to their presence, and as they come to where you are working they find you faithfully dispensing the duties assigned.

The word **"prove"** on the other hand, gives me the impression of determining your value in what you are doing. It's like testing or proving the value of gold or silver. You prove your value because you are faithful. However you take that word to mean, the key is your faithfulness.

Theologian Charles Hodge correctly stated that **"the great requisite for the discharge of the office of a steward is fidelity" or faithfulness. He continues by saying that "...he must be faithful to his Master. The application of this to the case of ministers is plain. Fidelity to Christ as servants. Fidelity to the truths which God has revealed, not mixing those truths with their own speculations, much less substituting for those doctrines human knowledge or wisdom."**

Faithfulness requires three key characteristics. They are dedication, determination, and discipline.

In Nelson's Minister's Manual, the author suggests several keys to being found faithful.

**First**, he says that to be found faithful we must go. Jonah had a call to go to Nineveh and was at first reluctant and fearful.

Isaiah heard the call to go and responded with **"Here I am, send me."**

Instead of taking your retirement years lying down you have chosen to invest your time and talent to continue to serve the Lord by going. You could say you have done your bit for King and kingdom and pass the baton on to someone else, but you have heard a call to go.

**Second**, he says that to be found faithful we must give of time, talent, tithe and testimony. By seeking to give rather than seeking to get implies that we are doing so with a cheerful heart. It's not just in our tithes that God loves a cheerful giver, but in the exercise of our talents, time, and in how we live for Christ in the testimony of our words and actions.

A **third** way we are to be found faithful is in growing. We do this through various ways.  
 We grow through memorization.  
 We grow through meditation.  
 We grow through study.  
 We grow through sharing what we have learned with others.

Nelson suggests that “dwarfed development contributes to Christian worker casualties...Growth in one’s Christian experience is never an accident, but the result of careful attention to God’s prescribed plan.”

It’s not a surprise that throughout both the Old and New Testaments we are told to grow. We cannot help someone grow in their faith if we ourselves are not growing in Christ with regard to our own. Take to heart the admonition to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Fourth**, to be found faithful we must be on guard. There are a lot of false teachers and false testimonies that want to reshape our theology. So how vital that the principle that precedes standing guard is to grow. That was Paul’s encouragement to Timothy so that he would not be blown about by every wind of doctrine. Take seriously the need for sound doctrine in order to stand guard.

**Lastly**, to be found faithful we must glorify God. That was Paul’s advice to Corinth when he exhorted them to give God glory in all they did (**I Corinthians 10:31**). The application is obvious.

But there is something even more fundamental to all this than merely being found faithful. There is one crucial ingredient necessary for faithfulness without which all we do is merely out of duty or obligation and certainly without cheerfulness. We cannot go, give, grow, guard or even glorify God without this key component. It’s a principle found in both the Old and New Testament.

We have the Great Commission in **Matthew 28:19-20** telling us to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

There is the Great Commitment found in **Luke 9:23** to deny self, take up our cross and follow Christ.

One other passage is even foundational to our going for Christ and following only Christ.

It has been called the Great Commandment and is the summation of the 10 commandments, condensed into two. Jesus referred to it at least twice. Once He was asked what the greatest commandment was and then in our passage He was asked about eternal life, essentially giving the same answer in both situations.

It’s recorded in each of the four gospels accounts. Matthew leaves out one part. We’ll look at it in Luke’s account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Luke 10:25-28**

Everything I said up to this point can only happen if what I just read is happening. Our faithfulness, our denying of self and following Christ, our going with the gospel to others can only happen if we are loving God with all we have and loving others as ourselves.

Most of us are old enough to remember the Gong Show. People would perform some act before a panel of celebrity judges and if one of them didn’t like it they would get up and gong the gong. That meant the contestant was done. Paul says if we don’t have love then it doesn’t matter how well we speak or how well we perform our duties, it’s just a bunch of noise. No matter what I do or say, without love, Paul’s challenge states that we are nothing.

So, Jesus tells us how vital it is for us to love God with everything we have – all our heart, soul, strength and mind. In sports, a commentator will sometimes say of an athlete that they left it all on the field. They put everything into their effort. They could have done nothing else. That’s how we are to love God – with every ounce of energy.

The context of the passage is familiar but let me provide a synopsis.

An expert in the law came to Jesus with a question. That he was an expert in the law coming to Jesus with a question raises some red flags right away. If he was an expert in the law, he should have known the answer. But we are given a clue to his real motive in the verse. He came to test Jesus. In other

words, he wanted to trap Jesus into saying something that might show everyone that Jesus was really a charlatan, a phony. The reason wasn't because he sincerely sought to know the truth of the matter. He had only one reason for asking Jesus this question and it was for the wrong reason.

When I was in High school, we had a substitute teacher who was an itinerant preacher. During study hall several of my classmates would ask him questions about the Bible. He would pull out his Bible and answer their question. Then they would go and tell the principle on him. They didn't care what the Bible said, they only wanted to get him in trouble.

That is the intent of the expert in the law. Now understand that the question being asked is a good one, but the purpose behind it was bad. **“What must I do to inherit eternal life.”** It was a good question with a bad motive. The simple answer is that I can't do anything. This was a question that was often debated by Rabbis who dealt with questions of theology in public. But it was a question that every Jew knew the answer to because they believed that if you were a Jew you had a guaranteed spot in heaven, no questions asked.

Jesus, however, in Jesus fashion, turned the question around and asked the law expert. If you are an expert in the law, what does the law say?

Imagine for a moment a worm on a hook squirming around to get free, because that's how I imagine this guy. It's like the famed double-dog dare you move. He now has to answer his own question and he better get it right and after his answer, Jesus gave him the thumbs up that he was correct.

Last week someone posted a riddle on FB. This isn't the riddle verbatim, but you'll get the gist of it. You walk into a room and there are 7 dogs, 4 cats, two cows and a giraffe on a bed, 3 ducks are flying around a chair. How many legs are on the floor? People gave all kinds of answers. I gave mine and got a response back that I was correct. I feel so proud.

What must you do to have eternal life? The law says to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and love your neighbor as yourself, but from a human perspective that's impossible and you would be correct. No one can keep the law to that degree. It's impossible to love God that way all day, every day. Jesus sent the man back to the law, not because the law saves but because it shows us that no one can keep the law to that degree but instead shows us that we are all sinners who need to be saved (**Galatians 2:16, 21; 3:21**).

**Romans 3:20** tells us that the law convicts of sin.

The lawyer gave the right answer but didn't apply it to himself. Instead of saying “I want to love God in that way, with everything I have, but I can't so what else must be done?” he sought to justify himself, to make himself look righteous. So Jesus told him a story about a man who was robbed, beaten and left for dead. Religious leaders who knew better and should have set an example of compassion, passed on by so that they would not become ceremonially defiled. But a hated Samaritan took the personal responsibility to care and provide for the man. I find it interesting that we don't know whether the man was a Jew or Gentile. By loving the man as himself, the Samaritan was demonstrating that he loved God with everything he had.

Alexander MacLaren calls it “the genius of love.”

Out of this passage and from **verse 27** in particular, I see three truths about how to love God in that way. They would be my encouragement to you today.

Love God with your heart

Love God with your head

Love God with your hands

## I. LOVE GOD WITH YOUR HEART

A note in one of my study Bibles says this kind of love emanates from faith in God. I love God because I have faith in Him. Let's face it, if I don't love someone as I should, if there is an element of doubt about that person, then I won't trust that person, and it will be hard to have faith in that person. That's essentially what happened to Eve in the garden. Satan got her to doubt God which is the

same as not trusting Him and therefore she couldn't love Him with everything she had.

The Bible says that the heart is desperately wicked. In the perfect environment of heaven, it was a heart issue that caused Lucifer to sin. So if we are to love God with all our heart, then our heart has to change and only He can effectually make such a change because, try as I may, it will never happen by my efforts. God brings about change in the heart by giving us a new one. The heart is the core of our being and the Bible tells us how important it is to keep our heart. Our memory verse this month from **Proverbs 4:23** says **“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”**

In order for a person to be changed, in order for a person to love God with everything he or she has, the heart must be changed and only God can do that. Effectual change won't take place unless first the heart is changed. The heart takes precedence.

**Psalm 37:4** is a verse that tells us how to love God with all our heart. **“Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.”**

**Psalm 40:8** **“I delight to do Your will, Oh, my God.”**

Loving God, doing His will, and reading His Word is a desire, a delight, and a joy.

And then we read in **Psalm 1:2** that if we love the Lord then our delight will be in His Word and we will meditate on it day and night.

**Psalm 119:16** **“I will delight in Your statutes.”** a thought repeated half a dozen times in that chapter.

**How do we show that we love God with all our heart?** Simply two things: talk to Him and listen to Him.

You would question the reality of my love for Robyn if I told you I spend very little time listening to her or talking with her. And you would be right. Yet how many say they love God but spend very little time with Him in prayer or Bible study? Love God with all your heart.

Our passage provides a second command. Love God with your head.

## II. LOVE GOD WITH YOUR HEAD

I am going to combine both the mind and the soul here, but I want you to understand that they are two separate things, but they do both relate to the head. The mind often refers to a person's understanding, his views or opinions. In a literal sense, the compound Greek word means meditation or reflection. Simply put, we can say that the mind is the inner being or the sum total of our emotional, mental and spiritual faculties.

We see it in **Romans 12:2** which speaks about renewing the mind, a mind that can know Christ. That verse tells us that the mind can be renewed through a transformation that comes through the Word of God and when we take into consideration **verse 1**, we are compelled to think that love for God that has a transformed mind takes place after a person has summarily cast himself on the mercies of God and offered himself as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to God. So if we want to consider what it is to love God with our mind it includes giving up our will and placing ourselves on the alter to serve Him totally and completely without reservation. That, Paul says, is our spiritual act of worship. So mind here, as I believe it is in **Luke 10:27** is both our thoughts and our will given wholly or totally to God. Only then can we say that we love Him with our mind because we are now willing to do what God wants because we love Him that much. It goes back to **Psalm 40:8** where we delight to do the will of God.

The soul on the other hand, isn't as well defined in Scripture, although it is differentiated from both the mind and spirit. **As one author notes “The human soul is the part of a person that is not physical. It is the part of every human being that lasts eternally after the body experiences death.”** It is central to our personhood as a human and makes us unique or distinct over all other created things. An animal and a plant do not have a soul. Some call it consciousness.

George MacDonald puts it this way, “You don’t have a soul, you are a soul. You have a body.” Your personhood isn’t based on having a body. A soul is required.”

We read that the soul which sins will die and in **Leviticus 17:11** that the soul needs atonement. It is with our intellect, emotions and will that we are also to love God. In essence, love God with our head.

Finally, we learn that we are to love God with your hands.

### III. LOVE GOD WITH YOUR HANDS

Our passage says to love God with all our strength. Put everything we have into loving God. We are told that whatever our hands find to do, do it with all our might. Strength isn’t power, it’s a different word in the Greek and refers to one’s ability and actions. It means to love God with everything we have, in everything we do give it our all, our best.

Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind and your neighbor as yourself.

**John 13:34-35** says that if we love the Lord in this way, we demonstrate to others that we are a follower of Christ.

**Philippians 2:5** tells us to let the mind of Christ be in us and follows on the footsteps of humbly putting others before ourselves, which is then demonstrated in how Christ, out of humility, thought enough of us to become like us and die for us.

Jim, your whole ministry has been devoted to helping others answer the very question asked by the expert in the law. Your ministry with us will be a continuation of that endeavor, to point people to loving God with all they have. The answer here of loving God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind isn’t intended to focus on the individual aspects of our being and what it means to love God in such a way, but to show that such a love for God encompasses our total being, it is all inclusive.

Matthew Henry simply says “We must prize Him.”

Here is my closing challenge to you as we think

about the days ahead of us in your service to the Lord and the people of this church. They are things you are already doing, and reminders to us all of how we should love God with everything we are.

1. **Be a person of passion** – delight in the Lord and seek Him with all your heart.
2. **Be a person of purpose** – serve the Lord with gladness and serve Him by doing good works so that others will see them and glorify God.
3. **Be a person of prayer** – take Elijah as your example to seek God in earnest and effective prayer (**James 5:17**). Learn from Jesus to go to those places of solitude to pray.
4. **Be a person of praise** – We are told in **Psalm 100:4** to “**enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise, give thanks to Him and praise His name.**”
5. **Be a person of peace** – *First*, we are to let the peace of Christ rule our heart and we learn from **Philippians 4:6-7** that peace comes to the heart and mind when we pray with thanksgiving. *Second*, **James 3:18** tells us that Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. *Third*, the author of **Hebrews (12:14)** tells us to “**Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy.**”
6. **Be a person of preaching** – We know from **II Timothy 3:16-17** that all Scripture is profitable to equip the believer. As you teach, and I’m sure you do already, but heed the words of Paul in **II Timothy 2:15** which gives the admonition to any who would read and study God’s Word, but especially for those of us who teach it, to handle in accurately as you prepare and as you preach.

Let me close with the admonition from Paul to the Ephesians about God’s gift to the church and how I see our roles in helping these people grow in faith.

### **Ephesians 4:11-16**

It really all comes back to the priority we place on how much we love the Lord.

It is a delight to have you as part of our fellowship and ministry team and we look forward to your continued service to bring glory to God and good to His people.