



Links Players

Fundamentals - Lesson 1: Love God, Love Others

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:34-40, ESV)

No one is immune to "missional drift." Consequently, it is critically important that we regularly attend to our five fundamental convictions. Today, we begin with "L" — Loving God, Loving Others.

As it pertains to our standing before a holy God, the Greatest Commandment is the standard for acceptance with the Father. As it pertains to growth in grace, the Greatest Commandment is the goal to which we strive, empowered by his Spirit, with all our heart, soul, and mind.

It might surprise you to discover that Jesus' command to love God with every fiber of our being and to love our neighbors as ourselves is impossible. Jesus is ruling out the idea that moral effort could earn acceptance with God.

The commandments are given for multiple reasons. Chief among these reasons is to reveal the character of God. Another reason is to reveal our sinfulness. Yet a third reason is to provide guardrails for righteous living.

Suppose someone said to you, "I want you to go out and make eighteen birdies in a row." You might say, "That's impossible!" Practically speaking, it is. Technically speaking, it is not. However, it is highly improbable. Remember former PGA Tour player, Homero Blancas? Impressively, he once shot fifty-five.

Making eighteen birdies in a row, while unlikely, is not impossible. Reconciling ourselves to the infinitely holy God by obedience to the commandments is impossible—at least for us. Then, why is Jesus commanding us to do something that is impossible?

As scripture teaches elsewhere, "What is impossible with man is possible with God" (Matthew 19:26). So, while loving God perfectly is impossible to any creature born after the fall of Adam (Genesis 3), it is not impossible for the God-man — Jesus Christ.

Jesus loved the Father with all his heart, soul, and mind, and he loved his neighbor—you and me—perfectly. And that, my fellow golfers, is why salvation is available to us poor sinners.

How can we, who have failed to meet the standard, be forgiven and

accepted by God (Romans 3:23)? We are accepted because Jesus credits the gift of his perfect righteousness to the account of believers. (Philippians 3:7-9).

When any sinner places their faith in Jesus, the "great exchange" takes place — our sin is credited to Christ, and his perfect obedience is credited to us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

You might ask: Since no one other than Jesus can obey perfectly, does that mean we are "off the hook" as it relates to the commandments? Hardly!

Jesus supernaturally creates a new heart in believers—a heart that yearns to obey him, to grow in righteousness, and to love others (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

We cannot fulfill the Greatest Commandment perfectly, but by the empowerment of the Spirit it should characterize the pattern of our lives.

Links is committed to the good news that Christ not only offers forgiveness to those who trust him, but he also offers the believer a new heart (John 3:3), the gift of perfect righteousness (Philippians 3:7-9), and the power to love others (1 John 2:7-11)

READING - Matthew 22:34-40; Matthew 19:16-22; Galatians 3:1-6; Romans 4:1-8

OPENING QUESTIONS: Have you ever dreamt of the perfect round? Have you ever enjoyed a string of birdies? How many did you make in a row? Did you think you could keep going?

1. Was Jesus telling the Rich, Young Ruler he could have eternal life by observing the law?

Matthew 19:16-22 *Hint:* the law is a mirror to show us something.

2. Why does Paul tell the Galatians they are foolish? **Galatians 3:1-6.** *Hint:* how did they receive the Spirit—by faith in Jesus or obedience to the law?

3. What do we receive in addition to forgiveness when we place our faith in Jesus? **Galatians 3: 6; Romans 4:1-8; Philippians 3:7-9.** *Hint:* it's a gift.
