



Season 1, Episode 7: “Wholehearted Part 1”

In this 1st season of the Life-on-Life podcast, we are talking about *first-things-first*. So we're looking at some of the basic foundational things of our faith in Jesus and then what it looks like to practically walk it out with him. And today we're going to focus on *loving God wholeheartedly*. That's the way God wants us to love him. In fact, he commands it!

Hey, let me ask you this. What's the first and greatest commandment God has given us? Do you know it? Can you repeat it? We'll say it along with me if you do. It's Matthew 22:37-40 where Jesus is asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" And his reply is, "You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it. You're to love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments, hang all the law and the prophets."

What Jesus is saying is if you keep that *great commandment*, that *first-thing-first*, then every other command, every other thing that God has told us to obey in his word will fall in line under that command. It's like two hooks and everything hangs on those two hooks: Loving God and loving others.

We're going to focus on the priority *Love of God* today: God first. I really believe that every failure in life can be traced back to this. When we forget to remember to love God wholeheartedly, we are prone to fail.

That great commandment that Jesus talks about actually comes from Deuteronomy 6 in the old Testament. It's called the Shema. It's a word in Hebrew, S-H-E-M-A. That means *hear*. It actually means "to hear or listen with the intent to obey."

Listen to what the passage says in Deuteronomy 6 starting in verse 4. "Hear O Israel, the Lord, your God. The Lord is one, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength, and you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you're at home and when you're on the road, and when you're going to bed, and when you're getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

This passage that comes from Deuteronomy is part of Moses's final words and his commands to the nation of Israel before they cross over Jordan into the promised land.

There they will receive that land that God promised them, a land that is fully abundant with everything they could possibly want or need. And Moses reminds them over and over again, and with this command, this Shema prayer, he's saying, *Make these things a part of who you are and in every way that you live your life.* What God is describing here for us is this *lifestyle* of loving him first.

Essentially he's saying, "Do whatever it takes to remember to keep me first." And then he gives them all these ways to remember to keep him first. He says, "Repeat these things again and again to your children. Talk about them when you're at home and when you're on the road, when you're going to bed and when you're getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your foreheads as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." So all of these things are so that Israel will not forget the main thing: To love God first, most and best.

We talk about the things we love. We teach our children about the things we love by talking about the things we love. What do they hear us talking about? What do they hear us praying about? And what do they see as prioritizing in our lives? Are we teaching our kids to be popular or are we teaching them how to love God and be a disciple of Jesus? So Moses repeats it over and over. Remember, don't forget to remember. That word, "remember" is used 264 times in the Bible, y'all. 180 of those times are in the Old Testament and 24 times alone are just in the book of Deuteronomy.

He goes on to say in verse 10, "The Lord your God will soon bring you into the land he swore to give you when he made a vow to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is a land with large, prosperous cities that you did not build. The houses will be richly stocked with goods you did not produce. You will draw water from cisterns you did not dig, and you will eat from vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant. When you have eaten your fill in this land, be careful not to forget the Lord who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt. You must not worship any of the gods of the neighboring nations for the Lord your God who lives among you is a jealous God" (Deuteronomy 6:10-15).

What God said through Moses was this – it's not that any of those things that they'd experienced in the land of Canaan were bad things. He just said, "When you get there and you've got all this great and good stuff that I gave you, don't forget me. Don't forget to thank me and remember me when you enjoy it. Don't forget to praise me and remember me for your new life. Don't forget to remember me when you're comfortable, when you're happy and well, well dressed, when your houses are furnished and your garages are full. When there's food on your table and money in your bank accounts, and when your kids are happy and popular and healthy. And when all is well and fine and good, just don't forget to remember me."

Because falling in love with the creation is dangerous y'all. It's a snare that will capture our hearts and drag us away from our one true love. Listen again at how that passage ends. "Be careful not to forget the Lord who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt." It's a warning, y'all. Be careful not to forget the Lord.

Be careful. We usually say that when there's a possibility of someone we love heading into a dangerous situation. Well, there's imminent danger when we forget to remember to love God first, most and best, because y'all, there's a war going on out there. There's a war going on for the territory of our heart and it's raging 24/7 and it is a war of love and a battle over the control of the territory of your heart.

I believe that the Lord was emphatic and telling Israel over and over and over again this very thing because this is the number one way that we can keep from totally screwing up our lives. It's by loving God first. And y'all, Satan wants us. He's after us. He's got a threefold mission to kill, steal, and destroy. He knows that he can't take our salvation, but he can distract us with good things that steal our affection for God, that numb us out and kill our love for God and destroy the effectiveness of our witness and our ministry for God.

The Apostle John spells that warning out straight forward in his epistle. In 1 John 2, he says, "Warning, do not love the things of the world nor the things that it offers you. For when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see and the pride of our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from the world." Loving this world will prove to be dangerous because it causes us to forget and neglect, to overlook, to put aside and to lower the priority of God.

Y'all, we were made to crave God. There is a God-shaped void that nothing and no one can satisfy. If we're honest, we want the creation more than we want the creator. We seek his hand instead of his face, instead of His presence. I know I've said that a couple of times already this podcast season, but we replace the creator with his creation and those creations control our affections and they rule and lord over our hearts.

When we replace God with God's good things, when the desires of our heart and the object of our affections become the blessings of this life... It is dangerous, y'all. In our selfishness, which is wanting what we want and working to get it, our desires lead us to run after other gods. Other loves. The Bible calls them idols and an idol basically is something we love more than we love God. It's something we think about more than God. It takes the majority of our time, our money, our thoughts, and it rules and dominates and controls our heart. It's in competition for God over the throne of your heart and, *P.S. - It doesn't have to be ugly or evil to be an idol.*

Most of the time the very things we make idols out of are the answers to our prayers. They are blessings, y'all. The spouse we love. The home we worked hard to buy. The career we've been successful in. The children we've prayed for. Our alma maters, our sports teams, good food, grand vacations, beautiful clothes, an abundance of recreation, country clubs, toys and travel. The Bible calls them the "cares of this world, the lust of the eyes and the lure of the flesh." So what are we supposed to do? Because if we've made an idol out of food, we can't just stop eating completely. If we've made an idol out of our children, we can't give them away. (Although the thought has probably crossed your mind once or twice.) But what do we do? We've got to learn to live un-idolatrously, by recalibrating under the truth God has already established for us, which is, love God first.

Because y'all, we have a propensity for idols. We are idol factories. We are prone to love other things and wander away from the one true love of our lives. What is the controlling love of your heart?

Let's think about it this way.... Do this little equation:

Jesus + ____ = my satisfaction.

Jesus + ____ = my success.

Jesus + ____ = my security.

Jesus + ____ = my significance.

What would you put in that blank?

Because all of those things can be found only, truly, in loving God first, most and best. But we try to cram other things in there thinking that will be the thing that just does it for us and it never does. So don't forget, y'all. **Don't forget that Jesus + *nothing* = *everything*.**

What I want you to do over the next week is really think through those controlling loves in your heart. What is sitting on the throne of your heart? Let's be honest, y'all. And I will tell you this, like I said last week, there's grace for all of this. God knows how hard it is to live on this planet, to walk it out and to not be distracted. It's nearly impossible and there's grace for that, but I want to persevere. I want to press in and really learn to love God with all my heart. And as I've said before, it starts with praying, too. So we just continue and pray and ask Him because it is humanly impossible to love God the way he wants us to love Him. It has to be God in us that is helping us to love God that way. You know what I mean?

Think through that equation again. All of those little scenarios I gave you... Jesus + ____ = the thing you're looking for for satisfaction. Jesus + what is your success, your security, your significance? *Because truly nothing will satisfy us.* Nothing will bring us that feeling inside that we've been successful and purposeful and that we've mattered somehow. Nothing will make us feel secure and we cannot find our significance in any other way but Jesus.

What is it for you? Think about that over the next week. But remember this: The God who made you loves you and he knew exactly how he wired us. He knew what we would have a craving for and he knew that that thing would lead us in the other direction. But y'all, take a peek over your shoulder because his goodness and mercy is hunting you down. It is following you all the days of your life. And his relentless love is pursuing you to the end.

So just turn around and let him catch you. Just turn around and fall into His arms of love.

OK, that's that for that. And don't forget that you are greatly and dearly loved by The King!

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