

Aug 29, 2010



Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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ESSENTIAL TRUTH Knowing Christ Personally

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lesson</u>	<u>Text</u>
08/01	Introduction	
08/08	Who is God	Exod 3:1-15
08/15	God Wants to Talk	Isa 6:1-10
08/22	Oaks120th Anniversary-No Class	
08/29	What God Expects Mk 12:28-34	
09/05	Bible is Important	Matt 4:1-11
09/12	Who is Jesus	Matt 16:13-20
09/19	Can I be Forgiven	John 3:1-17
09/26	Death	John 11:17-44
10/03	Lone Ranger	Acts 2:42-47
10/10	Keep it Real	Luke 11:37-54
10/17	Temptation	Gen 3:1-8
10/24	Meaningful Life	Luke 9:23-27
10/31	Holy Spirit	Acts 2:1-13
11/07	Grace	Eph 2:1-10
11/14	Summary and Review	

Session 3: What Does God Expect of Me? Mark 12:28-34

About Today's Lesson

God Expects Holiness

One of the greatest areas of differing opinions between various religious perspectives is what God expects of us. Before Judaism became prominent, most religions in the ancient world did not proclaim that the gods and goddesses had moral expectations of people. The main expectation was that people would pay them homage with sacrifices. Many Greek gods and goddesses were believed to behave in ways far from moral, even having sexual affairs with mortals. They engaged in acts of deception against each other. Egyptian gods and goddesses showed similar characteristics. The Canaanite fertility goddesses were worshiped by going in to cult prostitutes and having sex with them. The insemination of the prostitute was thought to encourage the "insemination" of the earth by the rains sent from the gods. It was in this context that Judaism proclaimed a God who demanded sexual fidelity, honesty, and integrity, radical thinking for the time!

Today's Divergent Views

This divergence persists today. Some New Age thinking would return us to these primitive perspectives where God is seen as demanding little of people ethically. Many of the Islamic faith believe that God expects His followers to be involved in "holy wars," while there is a strong contingent in the Christian church that says God expects us to be pacifists. Even within the Christian church there have been a variety of perspectives on what God expects of us in the areas of personal care (smoking, diet, drinking alcohol) and social issues (abortion, war, gun control).

God Has Revealed Himself

God has revealed Himself to us in the Bible both to show what He is like and to let us know what He expects of us. In the Old Testament, there was a greater emphasis on proclaiming what God expects through long lists of rules and regulations, things to do and actions to avoid. Over time these lists got longer and more complicated, through the interpretations of various rabbis. Because of that, concise summary statements of what God expects had great appeal. Such statements can be found in both the Old and New Testaments (see Micah 6:6-8 and James 1:27). Jesus, in the passage we will be studying today, gives the most important summary of what God expects of us. By looking at this passage we can better evaluate what others say about God's expectations of us.

Life Change Lesson

Develop and attitude of thanksgiving toward God by worshiping Him daily

What we can do: Worshiping God is not something we should do once a week, twice, or three times a week. It should be a regular part of our lifestyle.

Give of your financial resources to God through your Church

What we can do: If you love your spouse, you not only show it with words but with what you give him or her. You should do the same with God.

Express your love for people verbally

What we can do: Most people don't want to have to *assume* their loved ones care for them, they want to hear it. (see Rom. 1:8-9; 1 Cor. 1:4-7; Eph. 1:15-16; Phil. 1:3-8; and Col. 1:3-8).

(Adapted from Essential Truth: Knowing Christ Personally)

Food for Thought

We don't always have a choice of who our neighbor is. But we do have a choice in how we relate to our neighbors.

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Today's Lesson

One of the most consistent links made in the New Testament is the link between loving God and loving people around us. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus tells us the two greatest commandments (Matt. 22:40). Then in Matthew 25, Jesus teaches that showing love to "one of the least" of the people in need around us is the same as showing love to Him (Matt. 25:31-46). John also tells us a similar theme in 1 John 4:20. James tells us that it is inconsistent for the same mouth to bless God and curse people who were made in His image (James 3:9). What all of this says is that the cold-hearted, holier-than-thou person with Bible in hand and scowl on face, looking for people to judge and condemn, is clearly counter to what God expects of us. Let's look at our Scripture in Mark and see what it says. Jesus' response begins with the "Shema." (vs. 29) which essentially declares that the Lord is one (Deut 6:4). In the time before Israel's monotheism (the belief that there is only one God) gained a foothold, it was thought that each nation had its own separate god or gods. This polytheism (the belief that there are multiple gods) was part of the division between people.

Jesus goes on to give what He considered to be the greatest commandment: That we must love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength (Deut 6:5). This is a love that goes far beyond lip service. The command to love God in this way is inclusive of several Old Testament commands. People who love God will not put anything or anyone else above Him (Ex. 20:4-6); nor will they refer to God in a disrespectful way (Ex. 20:7). Loving God also means setting aside time each week to worship and praise Him (Ex. 20:8-11).

Jesus' second most important command was that we love our neighbor as ourself (Lev 19:18). This command assumes that a person loves himself or herself. That is not always the case, however. God calls us to value each life God has created as precious beyond compare, whether that life is our own or someone else's. The idea that we must love ourselves goes back at least as far as early Christian theologian Bernard of Clairvaux. In the thirteenth century he wrote that there are four stages of Christian maturity. The first is "love of self for self's sake." The second stage is "the love of God for self's sake." The third stage is "love of God for God's sake." This last stage is "love of self for God's sake." People who truly love their neighbor will honor their family and especially the parents who nurtured them (Ex. 20:12). They will not murder or do acts of violence (Ex. 20:15), or violate their sexual commitment to their spouse (Ex. 20:14), or take what belongs to their neighbor (Ex. 20:15), or lie to that neighbor (Ex. 20:16), or sit around resenting their neighbor's blessings (Ex. 20:17).

God is Himself the essence of love (1 John 4:8). God has provided for our failure by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, not only to love us, but to die to pay the penalty for our moral failures (1 John 4:10).

Preparation for the Next Session (09/05/10)

	READINGS	REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS
Monday	Deuteronomy 8:1-5	When we are feeling low, what would God have us focus on?
Tuesday	Matthew 4:1-4	Do you think Jesus was as hungry as we would be after 40 days without food? Why?
Wednesday	Psalms 91:9-13	What can we expect if we focus our hope on God?
Thursday	Matthew 4:5-7	How did Satan twist God's intention in providing us healing and comfort?
Friday	Exodus 17:1-7	God provided for His people and they wanted more. How do you test God?
Saturday	Matthew 4:8-11	Are you ever tempted to put something else in the place of God in your life? Why?
Sunday	Deuteronomy 6:13-19	Why is it sometimes difficult to trust God?

(Adapted from Essential Truth: Knowing Christ Personally)