

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this meditation and memorisation series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will meditate on the meaning of a Bible verse about one characteristic of a disciple of Jesus Christ and then memorise it together. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. In this fourth series God teaches that there are 5 important traits in the Christian character: Christlikeness, purity, love, faith and humility. The topic of today's meditation and memorisation is: A DISCIPLE DEVELOPS THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER OF LOVE.

(S) **POINT 1. MEDITATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE**

The new Bible that verse we will meditate and memorise is Mark 12:30-31. We will ask one another questions in order to help us to meditate on the truths written in the Bible. Let me read Mark 12:30-31 in its context, Mark 12:28-31. "One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

The memorisation verse is: Love. Mark 12:30-31. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." Mark 12:30-31.

(T) **First.** Let us meditate on verse 28-29. **The law according to the Jews and according to Christ.**

(S) **How did Jesus Christ regard the law?**

(T) The Jewish teachers are called *rabbis*. The rabbis elaborated God's law in the Bible to 613 laws. Of these 613 formulations of the law, 248 were commandments and 365 were prohibitions. While God's law in the Bible is authoritative, these human elaborations and formulations of the law are NOT authoritative! Moreover, the Jewish religious teachers were devoted to hair-splitting legalism. For them, not every commandment or prohibition of God's law was of equal significance. They carried on lengthy debates about God's commandments, arguing whether any particular commandment was great or small, heavy or light. In contrast to the Jewish religious teachers, the teaching of Jesus Christ about God's law was very far removed from their hair-splitting legalism.

One. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus said that he did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, that is, the Old Testament, but rather to fulfil it. While the Jewish religious teachers had buried God's laws under their human elaborations and hair-splitting distinctions, Jesus Christ clearly explained the real meaning of the laws. For example Matthew 5:27-28. While the Jewish teachers argued that a person is only guilty of committing adultery when he or she is *caught in the act* of adultery (cf. John 8:3), Jesus clearly taught that a person is already guilty of adultery when he has sexual immoral thoughts in his mind! Jesus restored the original and real intention of God with regard to the law, namely, to show every human being in the world that he or she is a sinner and needs God's forgiveness and righteousness.

Two. Because the religious teachers of the Jews made so many human elaborations of God's laws and had so many hair-splitting arguments about God's laws, they not only broke some of these laws themselves, but also taught other people to break these laws. In Matthew 5:19 Jesus Christ warned the Jews that anyone who breaks one of the least of these laws in the Bible and teaches others to do the same will be called the least in the kingdom of God.

The religious teachers of the Jews taught people that they would only be "righteous" if they kept all the 613 laws. According to Matthew 23:4, they laid the heavy load of the law on other people, but they did not keep these laws themselves! In Matthew 5:20 Jesus further warned that unless the righteousness of any people on earth surpasses the "righteousness" of the Pharisees and the Jewish teachers of the law, they would certainly NOT enter the kingdom of God. In Galatians 2:10-12 the apostle Paul later taught the same thing when he said that no human being will become righteous in God's eyes by trying to keep the law, simply because no human being can keep all the laws or keep the law perfectly!

Three. The Bible clearly teaches that the Old Testament ceremonial laws with regard to the priests, the temple, the sacrifices and the Sabbath, etc has been fulfilled at the first coming of Jesus Christ by his death and his resurrection. While the religious teachers of the Jews still taught people to approach God through prayer rituals three times a day, through fasting days twice a week, through pilgrim journeys to Jerusalem three times a year and through the bringing of three kinds of tithes to the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus clearly taught in John 4:23-24 that God now looks for people who approach him and worship him through the Spirit and truth!

Four. In Mark 12:29-31, Jesus teaches that there are not 613 laws to remember and practice, as the religious teachers of the Jews taught, but that there are only two commandments that are really important: Love God with your whole life and love your neighbour as you love yourself! Jesus summarised God's law in just two commandments and thus made it very easy for every person in the world to remember it and to practice it.

(S) **Second.** Let us meditate on verse 30. **The command to love God.**

The one and only God, who revealed himself through the prophets in the Old Testament and through Jesus Christ in the New Testament, demands to be loved! This is in complete harmony with the fact that he himself is a loving God. God loves us! John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Romans 8:31-32 says, "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" In return, God demands us to love him with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind and all our strength.

(T) **What is meant by loving God with your heart, your soul, your mind and your strength?**

(S) The *heart* is the mainspring or source of all our thoughts, words and deeds. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." Thus we must love God with the centre of our being, with our thoughts, words and deeds. The *soul* is a term for ourselves and here probably is meant the seat of our emotional activities. We must love God by expressing our love and also our pain, our joy and our sorrow, etc. The *mind* is the seat of our intellectual life, our natural tendencies (temperament), our motives and our attitudes. We must love God by understanding his truth, by utilising the best of our personality and by serving him freely, willingly and eagerly. The *strength* is the effort we make at every opportunity. We must love God with all our effort and at all times. The four words together simply express that we must love God with all the human faculties that God has given to us. And when God says, "all your heart", etc., then he wants us to love him wholeheartedly.

(T) **Third.** Let us meditate on verse 31. **The command to love your neighbour as yourself.**

In 1 John 4:19 we read, "We love because he first loved us." As God loves us, we begin to understand what love is and we personally experience the great benefits of his love for us. As we experience God's love for us, we begin to love God in return. God's love for us wins us to himself and causes us to love him in return! The love for our neighbour flows from our love for God. 1 John 4:20-21 says, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother." Moreover, God pours his love out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit living in us. Therefore, those who truly love God can also truly love their neighbour.

(S) **How do we love our neighbour as we love ourselves?**

(T) Matthew 7:12 says, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." Those who truly love themselves will not do anything that will harm themselves. They will only do things that will benefit themselves. Moreover, nobody would like others to harm them, cheat them or reject them. Everybody would like others to do good to them, to be honest and sincere to them and to accept them as somebody valuable. Everybody would like others to be patient with their weaknesses, to show them kindness and to forgive their wrongs. Jesus Christ therefore uses this fact as a rule to love your neighbour. Do to your neighbour what you would like him to do to you.

(S) **Who is my neighbour?**

(T) In the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37, Jesus gave his answer to this question. The Pharisees were asking the question, "Who is my neighbour?" They thus regarded some people as their neighbour and others not. For example, they excluded the Gentiles and Samaritans, the tax collectors and sinners from being their neighbours. However, Jesus taught that the correct question is rather, "*To whom am I a neighbour?*" God has sovereignly placed certain people in my path so that I should be a neighbour to them! God has placed Gentiles and Samaritans, tax collectors and sinners in my path so that I should show sympathy to them and help them, just like the Good Samaritan was a neighbour to the man who was placed in his path. Therefore, I should be a neighbour to all the people who God puts in my path. I should help them in their need, even though they may be enemies.

(S) **Fourth.** Let us meditate on verse 31. **Love is the greatest command.**

**Why are these two commandments the greatest commandments?** There are four reasons:

**One. Love is the greatest commandment, because love in its noblest expression follows the example of God.** In John 13:34-35 is written, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. And in Ephesians 4:32-5:2 is written, "Be kind and compassionate towards one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us." We

pattern our love on God and forgive others as he forgave us. We give ourselves to serve others as Christ gave himself to us. By following the example of God in Christ, we will express love in its noblest form.

(T) Two. Love is the greatest commandment, because it is the peg on which the whole Old Testament hangs. Matthew 22:40 says, "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." If that peg is removed, then everything in the Old Testament is lost. The entire Old Testament, with its commandments and covenants, prophecies and promises, history and types, points to the love of God. Jesus says, that if we try to understand the Old Testament without God's love as its basic message, then we will never understand the Old Testament!

(S) Three. Love is the greatest commandment, because it is greater than faith and hope. In 1 Corinthians 13:13 we read, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." Love is greater than faith and hope, because faith and hope *take*, but love *gives*. Faith *receives* the salvation that is given in Christ. And hope *accepts* the promise of the future inheritance. But love *gives self-sacrificially*. All the examples in 1 Corinthians 13 are examples of how love is giving yourself to others. And that kind of giving always costs effort, time and self-denial.

(T) Four. Love is the greatest commandment, because it includes all the other virtues.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 we read, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." All attitudes and actions that express love may be called Christian virtues. Love is the summary of all Christian virtues.

### (S) POINT 2. MEMORISATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE

Write the Bible verse on a card or in a notebook. The topic today is "Love" and the reference is Mark 12:30-31. Let us memorise the Bible verse together.

(T+S) Love. Mark 12:30-31. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. Mark 12:30-31.

(T) Love. Mark 12:30-31. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. Mark 12:30-31.

### (S) POINT 3. REVIEW OF THE LAST BIBLE VERSES YOU HAVE MEMORISED

Let us review the last 5 Bible verses that we have memorised without looking at our notebooks.

Series "Discipleship", verses 2-4, and series "Christian character", verses 1-2.

(T) Denial. Luke 9:23. Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23.

(S) Serving. Mark 10:45. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45.

(T) Giving. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7. Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.

(S) Christlikeness. 2 Corinthians 3:18. "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18.

(T) Purity. 1 Thessalonians 4:3. "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality." 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

### (S) POINT 4. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Daily review the last five memorised Bible verses once every day for 5 weeks.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www etc.

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".