

Preface

These notes are to serve as a blessing and help to those studying the word with Pastor Neil Spencer. Pastor Neil does not claim to fully agree with all the thoughts, beliefs, writings, or teachings of every named source/person in these notes. The Bible is the ultimate authority & ALL believers are to be Bereans (Acts 17.10-11).

INTRODUCTION:

1. Opening Prayer *“Father, thank You for this morning and for this family of believers at the Gathering. Thank You that Your Word is living and active. Open our hearts to receive, our minds to understand, and our lives to obey. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*
2. Family & QR Code
 1. I want to quickly introduce you to my family. My wife Cece & I have 6 kids. They are our joy & a huge part of why I’m passionate about messages like this one.
 2. And for those who like to follow along, you can scan this QR code to access today’s notes — just listen without worrying about writing everything down.
3. Mark 12:28–31 (ESV) *And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall 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: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.*
4. This is Jesus answering one of the most important questions in life: ‘What matters most?’ And His answer is **LOVE** — love for **God**, love for **neighbor**, love for **self**.
 1. Now, I know for many believers, the phrase ‘love yourself’ feels off — because Jesus also calls us to deny ourselves and take up our cross.
 1. And that’s true.
 2. Christianity is not about ego — it’s about Christ at the center.
 2. But here’s the tension: if I don’t see myself the way God sees me in Christ, if I don’t understand my worth in Christ, my attempts to love others will always be distorted.
 3. It’s like the airplane announcement: ‘Put your oxygen mask on first before helping others.’ That’s not selfish, it’s wise — because if you can’t breathe, you can’t help anyone else.
5. Gathering — this heartbeat is the mission of this church.
 1. From the beginning, Gathering has been about seeing ppl come to faith, & then seeing that faith expressed in growth, community, ministry, & mission.
 2. That’s exactly what Jesus describes here — a love that transforms every direction of our lives.
6. So today, the title of my message is: **‘G.O.O. — Love — God Completely, Ourselves Correctly, & Others Compassionately.’**
7. Let’s start where Jesus starts: Love God Completely.

#1 Love GOD — Completely | Mk 12.30 & Eph 5.1-2

MK 12.30 *And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ — Ephesians 5.1-2* *Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.*

1. Some of us may feel like God is distant/cold, as if we have to work to earn His attention.
2. Others of us, may be looking to lesser loves—relationships, success, religious activity—to fill an ache inside — and none of it is working.
 1. The 17th-century philosopher Blaise Pascal once wrote that every person has “a God-shaped vacuum” in their soul—an emptiness that only God Himself can fill.

2. Long before him, Saint Augustine said it this way: *"You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in You."*
 1. We can chase distractions, crave approval, run harder, increase effort, & turn up the noise, but rest never comes.
 2. Greg Laurie says, *"Trying to live without God's love is like trying to drive a car without gas—it just doesn't work."*
3. Here's the real issue — We were made to be **fully known & fully loved**—and **ONLY** God can do that.
4. And until we surrender to His pursuing love, we'll keep spinning our wheels, serving Him without *knowing* Him, & wondering why we're still dry.
3. What is God's Love?
 1. God's love is His holy disposition to give Himself sacrificially & eternally for the good of others, regardless of their merit.
 1. His flows not from emotion/need, but from His nature—"God is love" 1Jn 4:8
 2. His love is active, self-giving, unchanging, and rooted in His character.
 3. God's love is not something you earn... it's something you receive.
 2. God's Love is:
 1. **Initiating** — *"We love because He first loved us."* (1Jn 4:19)
 2. **Intimate** — *"I have loved you with an everlasting love."* (Jer. 31:3)
 3. **Incomparable** — *"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Rom. 5:8)
 4. **Inseparable** — *"Nothing can separate us from the love of God..."* (Rom. 8:39)
 3. To love God completely is to respond to His grace w/ wholehearted surrender.
 1. Wiersbe: *"Love is not an emotion, it's a decision that leads to devotion."*
 2. Ken Boa, *"True spirituality begins w/ intimacy w/ God, not activity for Him."*
4. Jeremiah 2:13 says: *"My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken Me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns — broken cisterns that cannot hold water."*
 1. Imagine with me that you're standing right next to a crystal-clear spring, water bubbling up fresh and endless.
 1. But instead of drinking from it, you walk a few feet away and start digging a pit in the dirt — trying to make your own cistern.
 2. You sweat, you work, and you wait for water to gather. But the walls are cracked, the water seeps out, and you're still thirsty.
 2. That's what it looks like when we turn to anything but God to satisfy us.
 1. We leave the living spring and pour our energy into broken substitutes that never hold what our souls need.
 2. And God is still saying: *"Come to Me. I am the spring. You don't have to dig, you don't have to perform. Just drink. Just receive."*
5. What does it look like to Love God Completely?
 1. Not perfectly—but completely: with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.
 2. Three words from Mark 12:30 frame our response:
 1. Heart – Your affections. Give Him your desires, not just your duty.
 2. Mind – Your attention. Let Scripture renew how you think.
 3. Strength – Your energy. Let your time & talents reflect your treasure.
 3. I would encourage daily rhythms of intimacy:
 1. Time — Prioritize undistracted space with God this week.
 2. Thankfulness — Begin each morning declaring what God has done for you.
 3. Thoughtfulness — Ask throughout your day: *"What does it look like to love God in this moment?"*
6. Here's the reality, you will never love God completely until you are convinced He loves you completely.

1. Let His love fill what your performance never could.
2. Let His presence replace what your striving never satisfied.
3. Then... respond. — Not out of **guilt** — Not out of **grind** — But out of **grace**.

#2 Love Ourselves — Correctly | RM 12.3 & Eph 2.10

Romans 12.3 Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. **Ephesians 2.10** For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

1. It's all too easy to live with a warped view of ourselves:
 1. Culture says, "Look within." ... Shame says, "You'll never measure up."
 2. Pride says, "You're good enough on your own."
 3. But the Gospel says something different: You are not defined by your **performance**, your **past**, your **preferences**, nor **personality**—you're defined by Christ.
2. "Loving ourselves correctly means seeing ourselves as God sees us."
 1. This means that we reject the extremes of:
 1. **Worm** theology: "I'm worthless, I'm no good, I'll never amount to anything..."
 2. **Pride** theology: "I've got this. I don't need anyone. I am enough."
 2. Biblical grace holds both **dignity** + **depravity** together.
 1. You are more **sinful** than you realize, & more **loved** than you can imagine.
 2. In Christ:
 1. We are spiritually inadequate on our own (Phil. 3:3)
 2. We are God's workmanship (Eph. 2:10), not our own project
 3. Wiersbe, "The Christian life is not a changed life, but an exchanged life."
 1. You are not trying to become a better version of yourself.
 2. You are learning to live from who you already are in Christ.
 3. You are seeing yourself the way God sees you:
 1. Created in His image // Broken, but redeemed
 2. In process, but deeply loved
3. Illustration: Funhouse Mirror
 1. We often live by distorted images/mirrors of culture or even family expectations.
 2. But the cross is the clearest mirror—it tells us:
 1. "You are more sinful than you know."
 2. "You are more loved than you ever dared believe."
4. Application: Loving Ourselves Correctly — here's what it takes:
 1. **Tenderness** – Treat yourself like someone God loves.
 2. **Transparency** – Confess your weaknesses without shame.
 3. **Training** – Fill your mind with truth, not just thoughts
5. You are not what you've **done**—you are what Christ has **done** for you.

#3 Love Others — Compassionately | RM 12.9-10 & Eph 5 & 6

Romans 12.9-10: Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.

1. Paul gives practical love-lenses for our real relationships:
 1. Husbands & Wives \ \ Parents & Children
 2. Leaders & Followers \ \ Work & Church Life
2. Why do the people closest to us get the least grace from us? Sometimes strangers get patience, while our families get our leftovers.

3. But the truth is: Loved people love people — When God's love truly fills your heart, it begins to flow through your life.
4. To love others compassionately means:
 1. Being present, not distracted... Being patient, not defensive
 2. Being others-focused, not self-centered
5. Love is a bit like motor oil—silent, behind the scenes, but essential. Without it, everything grinds. With it, even friction is manageable.
6. Here's how this apply for us:
 1. Tough & Tender – Hold truth and grace together.
 2. Thankful – Speak life in your home and workplace.
 3. There – Show up emotionally and spiritually—not just physically.
7. People don't need your perfection. They need your presence.

CONCLUSION: Choose your G.O.O.

1. You've been loved by God — not in theory — but in reality. The question is — how will you respond? — Love **God Completely, Ourselves Correctly, Others Compassionately**
2. And here's how to walk this out — the 10 T's —

T	God	Self	Others
Time	Be still in His presence	Reflect with honesty	Be present with people
Treasure	Give Him your first & best	Steward your stuff	Live generously
Training	Feed on His Word	Renew your mind in truth	Invest in others' growth
Tools	Use your spiritual gifts	Cultivate your capacity	Equip others to flourish
Thoughtfulness	Meditate on His character	Know your design/needs	Consider others
Tough	Endure in grace	Don't quit in struggle	Show grace in difficulty
Tender	Draw near in affection	Be kind to your soul	Be gentle, not reactive
Thankful	Praise consistently	Practice gratitude	Express appreciation often
Transparent	Confess your need for Him	Honest re: your journey	Be real with others
There	Abide in Christ	Stay grounded in identity	Fully & faithfully

EXHORTATION + ENCOURAGEMENT:

1. So here's where this lands for us today. Jesus didn't give us 613 commandments to juggle
2. He summed it all up in two: Love God completely. Love others as yourself.
3. That's not theory — it's reality. The question is: how will you respond?
 1. God Completely
 1. Maybe today you realize you've been running on empty, chasing lesser loves to fill what only God can satisfy.
 2. It's time to come back to the spring of living water.
 2. Ourselves Correctly
 1. Maybe you've been carrying shame, or maybe pride.
 2. You don't have to work for God's attention — you already have His affection — see yourself through the Gospel, not guilt.

3. Others Compassionately
 1. Maybe God is nudging you re: someone you've w/held grace from.
 2. People don't need your perfection — they need your presence.
4. So here's my encouragement:
 1. Choose one relationship and one step this week.
 2. Take one of the "T's" — *Time, Thankfulness, Tenderness, Transparency*, walk it out.
 3. You'll begin to see transformation.
5. And this fits right into who you already are as a church.
 1. Gathering exists to see people come to faith in the Gospel and to see that faith expressed in growth, community, ministry, and mission.
 2. What better way to live that out than by being a people formed by love — loving God completely, ourselves correctly, and others compassionately.
6. Final Exhortation
 1. So as you go out this week, remember:
 1. Love isn't loud — it's faithful.
 2. Love isn't gooey — it's G.O.O.
 2. And a church marked by that kind of love will be a church that truly shines in Fort Walton Beach and beyond.
7. Let's pray — *"Lord, thank You for loving us with a love that transforms. Teach us to love You with our whole heart, to walk in the identity You've given us, and to extend compassion to those around us. Make us a GOO-formed people—deeply rooted in love. In Jesus' name, amen."*