

LEADER GUIDE — FORMED BY THE GOSPEL

SESSION 1:3 | LOVE THE LORD GOD

Overview for Leaders

Jesus declares that the greatest thing a person can do with their life is to love the Lord their God with their whole being. Rather than affirming the heart as a trustworthy guide, Scripture reveals that the heart must be transformed, directed, and reshaped by loving God above all else. It is about seeing that Jesus loved the Father perfectly for us, fulfilling the Great Commandment on our behalf, and now, through the Spirit, forms that same love within us.

Big Idea

The greatest calling of our lives is to love the Lord our God with our whole being—a love made possible because Jesus loved the Father perfectly for us and now forms that love in us by His Spirit.

Your Role as Leader

participants distinguish between cultural ideas of love and biblical devotion. Keep the conversation centered on allegiance, formation, and gospel dependence, not guilt or moral pressure. Invite clarity without coercion. You are facilitating formation, not managing outcomes.

Session Flow – *Adjust as Needed*

- Icebreaker
- Scripture Engagement (reading + context)
- Discussion (10 questions) — 40–45 min
- Application Challenge — 5 min
- Prayer & Reflection — 10 min
- Announcements — 2 mins

Key Scriptures

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|---------------------|--------------------|
| • Matthew 22:35–40 | • Matthew 26:39 |
| • Deuteronomy 6:4–9 | • Genesis 1:26–27 |
| • John 6:38 | • Romans 8:3–4 |
| • John 14:31 | • Ezekiel 36:26–27 |

LEADER NOTES, GROUP QUESTIONS, & COMMENTARY

(Use these notes to frame discussion and connect themes)

Icebreaker (Choose One)

Purpose – Surface assumptions about love, desire, and direction. Keep it light. Affirm responses. Do not correct yet.

Suggested options:

- When you hear the phrase “follow your heart,” what comes to mind?
- What do others say is the most important thing to do with your life?
- Where do you feel the strongest pull competing for your devotion?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Greatest Question & Answer – Read: Matthew 22:35–40

Question: *Why do you think Jesus treats this as the defining command—not just one important command among many?*

Leader Insight: Jesus names the center of gravity of the entire Law.

Cue: Ask, “What changes if this really comes first?”

2. Whole-Being Devotion – Read: Matthew 22:37

Question: *What does it look like to love God with heart, soul, and mind as an integrated whole rather than a compartmentalized faith?*

Leader Insight: Jesus is describing total orientation, not partial devotion.

Cue: Draw out real-life examples of fragmented faith.

3. Expressive Individualism vs. Gospel-Formed Living – Read: Matthew 22:37 (supporting: Jeremiah 17:9)

Question: *How is “follow your heart” functionally different from “love the Lord your God”? What does each assume about the heart?*

Leader Insight: Culture treats the heart as trustworthy; Scripture treats it as formable.

Cue: Keep the focus personal, not culture-war.

4. Love Revealed Through Obedience – Read: John 6:38; John 14:31

Question: *How does Jesus demonstrate that love for God is expressed through obedience rather than feelings?*

Leader Insight: In Scripture, love is proven through allegiance.

Cue: Guard against obedience becoming performance.

5. The Shema and Undivided Devotion – Read: Deuteronomy 6:4–5

Question: *Why does the Shema begin with God's oneness, and how does that confront our divided loves?*

Leader Insight: An undivided God calls for undivided devotion.

Cue: Ask, "Where do you feel divided right now?"

6. Formation Through Daily Rhythm – Read: Deuteronomy 6:6–9

Question: *What do you notice about how God tells Israel to keep His commands close? What does this teach us about spiritual formation?*

Leader Insight: Formation happens through repetition and proximity, not moments.

Cue: Avoid turning this into productivity tips.

7. Trinity and Wholeness – Read: Genesis 1:26–27

Question: *How does God's relational unity help us understand why divided hearts distort love?*

Leader Insight: God's unity exposes our fragmentation.

Cue: Keep theology accessible, not technical.

8. Jesus Fulfilled the Command for Us – Read: Romans 8:3–4

Question: *Why is it essential that Jesus fulfilled the Great Commandment perfectly on our behalf?*

Leader Insight: Moralism dies here; the gospel breathes.

Cue: I Speak grace clearly if shame surfaces.

9. “For Us” and “In Us” – Read: Ezekiel 36:26–27

Question: *What does it mean that Jesus fulfills this command for us and now begins fulfilling it in us by His Spirit?*

Leader Insight: New love flows from a new heart.

Cue: Invite examples of changed desires.

10. Mezuzah Moment: Reminders vs. Heart Change – Read: Deuteronomy 6:6; Matthew 22:37

Question: *Why can reminders fail to produce love? What’s the difference between God’s words around us and God’s words written on our hearts?*

Leader Insight: Reminders are good servants, terrible saviors.

Cue: Transition toward application.

APPLICATION (Leader Version)

Application Focus:

This application is not about trying harder to love God, but about examining what currently holds our deepest affection and allegiance. The Great Commandment exposes what our lives are already organized around. Invite participants to notice where their desires, attention, trust, and energy naturally flow — especially in moments of pressure, freedom, or fatigue.

The goal is to help each person identify what is functionally shaping their heart and then intentionally re-aim their love toward God, trusting that real love grows as the Spirit forms our hearts around Jesus. Application here is about direction, not perfection, choosing to turn toward God in one concrete area as an act of trust and worship.

Leader Tip: “What do you find yourself loving most—especially when no one is watching?” Reinforce: We do not love God to earn life, we love Him because Christ gives life.

Examples:

- Desire: Letting God reshape what you want, not just what you do
- Attention: Reordering time, media, and focus toward God
- Obedience: Choosing faithfulness over comfort
- Identity: Releasing self-definition rooted in success or approval
- Formation: Practicing rhythms that aim the heart toward God

Group Prayer Time at End:

Pray over themes:

- Undivided hearts
- Trust in Jesus’ finished work
- Ongoing formation by the Spirit
- Renewed love for God

Close with: “Lord, form our hearts to love You with our whole being. Amen.”

Leader Follow-Up Afterwards

Encourage one heart-shaping practice this week. Affirm movement, not mastery. Remind the group: formation takes time