

# LoveWell Ministries Bible Study

## Love God Above All Else (and a look at idolatry)

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I. Take some time to invite the Holy Spirit in to guide your thoughts and feelings as you go through this Bible study. Ask the Lord to reveal areas of your life that you may be more devoted to than you are to Him.

II. Answer the following:

- What people, things, and/or activities do you love the most?

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- What three things do you spend the majority of your time doing?

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III. Read Mark 12:30-31 and Genesis 1:26 – 2:25

- As we dive into what it means to love God above all else, let's start with referring to the Great Commandment given to us by Jesus Christ. In short, we are to love God and love others. We were made for relationship with God and others, and it happens in that order. It's the order instituted by God at creation in the Garden of Eden. God created man and had a relationship with him before there was anyone else. He created Adam and put him in the garden to work it and keep it. He gave Adam his work and his purpose. Then God said, "It's not good for man to be alone," and He created Eve for us to be in relationship with others. So, if our love and relationship is just between us and God, and never reaches outside of that, it's not good. We were created for relationship with others, as well. But the order matters. The order has significance. And we shouldn't get it flipped.

IV. Read Exodus 20:2-6 and answer the following questions:

- What do these verses say about how we are to love God?

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- The verses refer to loving people, places, and things above God as idolatry. What comes to mind when you think of idolatry?

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V. When we genuinely love God, He should be the most important thing in our lives. We are to love God above all else. But what happens when ‘all else’ includes the significant things in our lives like family, work, sports, or anything else that’s seemingly good? How do we know if there are idols in our lives?

In the Biblical sense, idolatry is valuing a person, place, or thing higher than God. An idol is any person, place, or thing we place our trust in and depend on to supply what only God can give; anything we value higher than God.

In the third chapter of the Book of Daniel, we see King Nebuchadnezzar demand that everyone bow down to a ninety-foot statue of himself. To build a giant statue of oneself, or to bow down to a statue, is obviously idolatry. In this instance, it *seems* easy to apply what God is commanding to our lives, as we don’t usually go around bowing down to or serving statues.

However, it gets tricky with the things in our lives that are seemingly good and innocent. For instance, suppose someone is a long-distance runner. Running is a good activity for their health, but it becomes a problem when they start prioritizing it above spending time with God. If someone starts to build life around a training schedule, never missing a workout, and becomes willing to skip time with God, their priorities may be skewed. This is just one example of how idolatry can quite easily creep into our lives, without us even realizing it.

The story of Abraham’s faith being tested on the mountain of the LORD with his son Isaac offers another look at idolatry. Abraham’s family, specifically his son, Isaac, who represented Abraham’s purpose and God’s promise and blessing, had become more important to him than God, the Promisor and Blessor who gave him his purpose. We should take note, because all too often, without meaning to, we also elevate purpose above the Giver of purpose, promises above the Promisor, and blessings above the Blessor. So, God tested Abraham’s heart to see if he loved Him above all else; to see if he loved Him with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. Through his willingness to sacrifice his son, Abraham passed the test. Abraham demonstrated that neither his family nor his purpose were more important than the Giver of those gifts.

VI. Read **Mark 12:30** and answer the following question:

- What does it mean to love someone or something with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?

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