

## 11.1.15 Mark 12:28-34

### O. Intro:

\*Harold Bullock lost little girl Natalie...John Hawkins was in the room when she died.

\*They got on their knees next to her bed and cried out "We still trust you God."

**"Trust removes an enormous source of stress because it allows you to act with incomplete information"** John Gottman

**Mark 12:28 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?" 29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." 32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.**

\*This teacher of the law, we'll call him a "law professor" seems to have been genuinely impressed with the answer Jesus gave.

\*Maybe he was a true seeker embedded in the group of religious leaders.

\*He was looking for the key to understanding the law.

\*The rabbis counted 613 statutes in the law...365 negative, 248 positive.

\*They tried to classify them as "great" and "little" commandments.

\*They also searched the legal equivalent of the "TOE"...the great principle from which the rest of the law could be deduced.

\*One of the most famous Jewish leaders "Hillel" who died when Jesus was around 8 years old was the hero of all "legal" scholars in Jewish history.

\*He was once challenged by a Gentile..."I'll convert to Judaism if you can teach me the whole law while I stand on one foot."

\*Hillel replied, "What you hate for yourself, do not do to your neighbor: this is the whole law, the rest is commentary."

\*Notice that is the "golden rule of Jesus" (do to others as you would have them do to you) in reverse or in the negative..."Don't do to others what you don't want done to you."

\*In the passage our lawyer is asking Jesus the same basic question...he knows Hillel's answer...he also knows that Jesus has answered brilliantly before...perhaps Jesus can give us the "key" that will unlock the law...make the complex, simple.

\*Maybe he was checking to see if Jesus had a better idea than Hillel.

\*Jesus answers by quoting two OT passages: Deut. 6:4-5, Lev. 19:18

**1. Deut. 6:4-5 is a confession of faith that is recited by serious Jews every morning and evening to this day.**

\*It confirms two things: a. The supremacy of the Loving God b. Our right response to him

a. The supremacy of loving God: God is "one":

-God is the only true and living god. All other gods are false.

\*The original context for this statement was a people of God surrounded by a culture that worshipped many false gods.

\*So the point is that...God alone, as he has revealed himself in word, deed, and promise (covenant) is the true God.

\*There is one God...a single being who is the uncaused, cause of everything.

\*Now, this "One true God" the uncaused cause and rightful owner of all that exists deserves our love.

\*But wait a minute...does pre-existence and power alone mean that someone deserves love?

\*Fear, respect, submission, awe...maybe...but love?

\*There is more to this statement of faith than mere power...it was given in the context of covenant.

\*The covenants were the promises of God, the self-commitment of God in love to his people.

\*The one true God...who has committed himself to his people in love...deserves all of who we are in the loving committed response of our lives.

\*His power, his supremacy can demand our compliance...he holds our existence in his hands.

\*It is his love that we respond to in love.

**2. Jesus brought Lev. 19:18 together with Deut 6:5 to show that love of others is a natural and logical result of love of God.**

\*The two commandments belong to together, they can't be separated.

\*When you love God you will love whom God loves.

\*This is the normal flow of love...I love you, you love them, I will learn to love them as well.

\*So the lawyer asked for the most important commandment, Jesus gave him two.

\*He wanted simplicity, Jesus gave him reality...flip sides of a single coin.

\*For Jesus "neighbor" included anyone and everyone we come in contact with...all within our sphere of influence at any level.

**\*The Lawyer's response here:**

\*"Well said teacher"...again, he is impressed.

\*"Yes...To love God with your entire being and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

\*So the Lawyer thinks he is evaluating Jesus...gives him an "A" here.

\*And he quickly discovers that he is being evaluated by Jesus.

\*Jesus responds by giving him an "E" for effort..."You are getting warm, you are on the right track."

\*But the Lord is not pushy with the man...he answers in a way designed to stimulate and challenge him to further reflection and ultimately right action.

\*Then response of the other leaders to this dialogue is stunned silence.

\*They don't dare ask any more questions.

\*Jesus was not a smart aleck or a sarcastic communicator

\*Sarcasm has its place I suppose...but in very limited applications

\*Sarcasm has been called the "language of the devil"...I tend to agree.

\*I have known people who tried to emulate the style of Jesus without the character of Jesus...and instead of their questions being convicting and thought provoking they are simply annoying.

\*His objective was not to look superior or smart...he was superior and smart...his objective in all his speech was ultimately love.

\*Look at the difference in how he responded to this seeker's authentic question versus those who had agendas.

\*He didn't answer his question with a question...he simply gave him an answer.

\*The lawyer came to a right conclusion.

"If these commandments are primary, if this is what worshipping, loving, and serving God is all about...then all the Temple stands for...the daily, weekly, annual sacrifices are in the end unnecessary."

\*The Lord's response..."you are not far from God's kingdom."

\*You are track to understand the gospel.

**\*Notice that the lawyer asked for the greatest commandment...rule of law and life...what did he get? What was the answer?**

**LOVE...for God and others.**

\*How often in our culture is "Commandment" or "rule" equated to love?

\*Love is most often untethered to anything substantial...it is full of emotion and void of real content.

\*Its why people can be "in love" then "not love" anymore...love for many people is like the wind...can't tell when or where it will blow.

\*We are at its whims...and it is truly a whimsical thing.

\*But it is really?

\*Jesus said we are to Love God and People...and this love is at the heart of our purpose...is this really something whimsical...a wind that blows here and there regardless of our choices?

\*No of course...love is what we pursue, move into with intention.

**\*Let's discuss two important aspects of love...love distinguishes, then love excludes.**

**1. LOVE DISTINGUISHES:**

\*It is specific not generic.

**\*Love for God is specific to the God who exists in reality not in our imaginations.**

\*To "know" someone is to distinguish them from all others.

\*"I know Jim Lewis, he's right over there."

\*"That's not Jim, that's Rodney."

\*"What's the difference, they are both males, Caucasian, in this room."

\*Big difference...one is Jim the other is Rodney.

\*To know Jim you must first distinguished him all others.

- \*This should not need explaining but when it comes to God, the idea is that to know God you do not have to use this fundamental way of saying you "know" someone.
- \*"God is the ultimate, impersonal life force."
- \*"I am a God"
- \*"God is the universe"
- \*"God is a non-Trinitarian being who does not involve himself in human affairs"
- \*God is all of those without distinction.
- \*To love God, the God who actually exists...its important to understand that He must be distinguished from all the gods that people have imagined but do not actually exist.
- \*Otherwise you are not actually "knowing God."
- \*Clearly if you do not know him as he really exists you cannot love him.
- \*It's actually much worse than the Jim/Rodney example...they are both real people.
- \*This is more like, "I know Jim" and he is right here (an imaginary friend)...that's not Jim...that's not anybody.
- \*"Well, its 'my' Jim."
- \*The starting point for loving God is to know him...
- \*We could not know him unless he had made himself known...and he has.
- \*In hearts, history, creation.
- \*He is there and he has spoken.
- \*When you hear "it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere" or "all roads lead to one."
- \*You are hearing people trying to make you live in a two-story world.
- \*Downstairs the "really real world"
- \*Upstairs...a place you get to through an irrational leap of faith...is the "not really real world"
- \*Downstairs (in the really real world)...Is a place where sincerity will not make poison into Pepsi...so you carefully distinguish between the two before you take a drink.
- \*Downstairs (in the really real world)...If you try to walk into a strangers house, make a sandwich, take remote in hand, and make yourself at home to watch some football.
- \*You will cry "all roads lead to one" all way to jail for breaking and entering...why?

\*Because in the really, real world...all roads do not lead to home and you must carefully distinguish between the one that does and the one that doesn't.

\*Now...however, in the two-story world...what is true for every other part of reality is not true for God.

\*You must be careful to distinguish Pepsi from poison and your house from a strangers...but in the most important of all distinguishing..."Who is God" it doesn't matter...make him up as you please.

\*Nonsense.

\*God is the source of all that is really, real...and to love him we must know him (as he has revealed himself).

\*The real God must be carefully distinguished from the not-real god's of human design.

\*So Love for God begins with "The Lord our God is one"

\*The God who has ultimately revealed himself in the person of Lord Jesus is the one true God.

\*Love first distinguishes...then love excludes.

## **2. LOVE EXCLUDES**

\*Jesus said we are to include all people in the circle of our love..."love your neighbor as yourself."

\*But this inclusive love is founded on our primary "exclusive love."

\*Before that he said "Love God with **all** of your being....heart, soul, mind, strength."

\*How is it that "all" of our love reserved for God and yet we are to love "all" others as well?

\*Consider a marriage that is healthy and inclusive of others into their lives.

\*Before they could include others into their home...they had to form a home by an "exclusive commitment to one another."

\*As a partnership of two who became one through an exclusive commitment to each other...they are able enter into the world of others in a real, powerful impactful way.

\*The power of their relationship is in the exclusive nature of it...they share something that no one else can.

\*If they attempt to allow all comers into the inner circle...they throw away the exclusive nature of their relationship...relationship is lost as well as their ability to include others at any level.

\*Exclusivity is what allows inclusivity in relationships like this.

\*If Christy and I did not live with unique windows towards each other and walls around our relationship...we would have no basis to operate together as a team...we would have no team.

\*If I allowed any number of people to come into the place reserved for her...that would be the end of us.

\*The lack of exclusivity would destroy all possibility of including anyone in our relationship...there would be no relationship.

\*God is our foundational relationship...he has exclusive rights to our lives.

\*He has access to us, priority for us...above all others.

\*When we have an exclusive relationship with God (no one else has the place in our lives that he does).

\*Then we are positioned to properly include others in our lives:

-We are less likely to "use" others for own purposes.

-We derive our primary security and significance from him so we don't have to attempt to get it from others.

\*We need others in a secondary not a primary sense and we gain security and significant in a secondary not a primary sense.

\*The primacy of our exclusive relationship with God means that we have chosen to put him first and that decision impacts all other decisions.

\*My starting point for all human relationships is "Christy first"...from there, I am correctly positioned to begin including others.

\*But above that, my starting point for all relationships is "God first"...from there...I can navigate all other relationships...including my relationship with Christy.

\*People will mock this "God first" approach...often because they do not understand that everyone has a primary relationship...very often...the one in the center is them.

\*They have exclusive relationship with themselves..."me first" "ya'll second"

\*Jesus said..."God first" "others" including yourself "second"

**\*What does this look like?**

\*When I was a young boy...I was in church at a revival meeting(maybe 6th grade)...I don't remember much except the preacher used this verse and said I was to "love God above all others."

\*When they played the music and asked people to come forward...I went...convicted but confused.

\*I told the man, "I don't see how I can love God more than my family...I don't understand how that could happen."

\*He wisely told me, "Love your family, you are loving God."...that was enough for me at that time.

\*But what about when love for family and love for God seem incompatible?

\*Coming from a different religious background to faith in Christ against your family's will for instance.

\*Its not simple...it can be complex in understanding how to apply this reality in life.

\*But think about a marriage relationship...even when the commitment is clear and solid the application is complex.

\*For example:

\*The job requires leaving town or working late again, your spouse feels rejected, unloved, not primary...you choose to stay because it is the right thing to do on that day.

\*Did you violate your primary relationship or not? Did you put job over family or not?

\*Not a simple question... Maybe you did put your family first by staying late on that day...maybe you put your job first.

\*So it depends, doesn't it?

\*On what...mostly your heart, revealed by overall patterns of life.

**\*So the heart is the key to an exclusive love relationship with God that allows for healthy inclusion of others into your life.**

**\*Since the human/human analogy works so well in making sense of our relationship with God, we will keep it going.**

\*It works well (not perfectly) for several reasons:

1. We are persons and God is personal.
2. Relationships with people are part of our everyday lives...so we understand those principles
3. Principles transfer well to God.

\*I am going to borrow some ideas from a Jewish Psychologist named John Gottman to shape our application.

\*Gottman is an expert in marriage and I and many others have profited greatly from his work.

\*Gottman in his book "What Makes Love Last?" writes...

**"Betrayal is the secret that lies at the heart of every failing relationship--it is there even if the couple is unaware of it."**

\*When you hear betrayal...likely your mind goes to a physical affair.

\*But betrayal is simply putting anyone or anything (including self) ahead of the relationship.



\*Removing the exclusive nature of the relationship by allowing someone or something else to become primary.

\*He says that "Consistently putting career ahead of relationship, ongoing coldness, selfishness, unfairness...are evidence of disloyalty and can lead to consequences as equally devastating as adultery."

\*He goes on to say that the fundamental principle for making relationships work that serves as the antidote to unfaithfulness..."Trust".

\*When trust is not there, there is a lot of "sideways" energy.

\*Think about it, when trust is low or absent...every remark must be clear and perfectly defined and even then..."Have a nice day" turns into "What did he mean by that?"

\*The same is true for every action...so much energy is consumed dealing with the doubts...the lack of trust...it creates stress on us and the relationship.

\*Everything must be scrutinized and examined...so stressful.

\*Once trust is eroding...the whole mountain of relationship can begin to slip into the sea...simple things become so hard.

\*Now we know what Gottman means when he says...

**\*Gottman says "Trust removes an enormous source of stress because it allows you to act with incomplete information"**

\*Harold and Deborah did not understand all that God intended through the death of Natalie...but trust allowed them to act with incomplete information.

\*That is a very important idea.

\*Apply it to human relationships in your life.

\*Think of a time in the past week or month when someone in your inner circle...family or friend...did or said something that was confusing, or seemed wrong.

\*If there were high levels of trust...it was relatively minor in its impact on your relationship.

\*If there was low trust...it had a major negative impact.

\*We deem a friend or spouse trustworthy=when we believe they are willing to sacrifice for the relationship...they are committed to "us"

\*Trust and trustworthiness go together.

\*When friends or couples are trustworthy they send each other the message that they and the partnership are unique and irreplaceable.

**\*Here's the digression of lost trust:**

1. Secret keeping

\*Sometimes caused by a desire to not make things worse

\*Sometimes guilt or fear of rejection

2. Walls and Windows reversal

\*The one who is primary is moved to secondary and someone who is secondary is moved to primary.

\*In a marriage, a wall is erected between a spouse and window is opened to an outsider.

3. A focus on the negative

\*Often history is re-written...the good is forgotten or erased or overwritten.

4. Distrust sets in

\*My own actions and attitudes have caused the breach but the other person is seen as less trustworthy.

\*I have watched this happen many times over the years in human relationships:

**\*Let's apply this in principle to our relationship with God.**

1. Secret keeping

\*Of course we can't keep secrets from God, but it doesn't stop us from trying.

\*Ask Adam and Eve, or Annais and Saphira in the NT.

\*Most often we sin, we compromise...we begin the hide and slide.

\*Or its not sin...maybe we become confused, hurt, sad...and we try to keep part of our heart from God.

\*We stop being honest with him...our prayers become rote, unreal, insincere.

\*I've been there...you likely have as well.

2. Walls and Windows reversal

\*God is moved out of the center and someone else is moved in...Its called an idol.

\*Could be a person, or a idea...often its ourselves..."I want what I want"

\*Our hearts are idol makers...endless capacity for this.

\*A window to our heart is opened to an idol and a wall erected between us and God.

3. A focus on the negative

\*Look at all the "no's" in my life...

\*God is not sufficient, he is not trustworthy.

#### 4. Distrust sets in

\*I don't trust him...I will go my own way.

#### **\*Conclude:**

\*Jesus summed up the meaning of life..."Love God with our full selves."

-Live in an exclusive relationship with him.

\*It's why idolatry was and is so destructive...it opens a window to a false god and erects a wall between us and the true God.

\*These idols cannot help they can only hurt...and God is who we are designed for...he is our life.

\*From that exclusive and secure place...we can include others in our lives and our love.

\*This is life is built of trust...faith.

\*I trust God with my life, he is primary.

\*He could compel submission but he offers and desires Love.

\*Think of it...the greatest **Commandment** is Love.

\*How can you "Command" love?

\*Of course you can't.

\*That is why this all points to the gospel...the place where God demonstrated his love for us

\*The commandments point to relationship...God "revealed" his love in his actions.

**\*"Trust removes an enormous source of stress because it allows you to act with incomplete information"**

\*Are you under stress in your life because you simply cannot trust God with the many mysteries and unknowns?

\*He is not asking for a blind leap of faith...look at the cross...who and what do you see there?

**\*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13).**

\*This is a choice to trust based on the fact that Jesus has shown himself trustworthy.

\*He has demonstrated commitment.

**\*It is trust...**that allows us to act...to live...with incomplete information.

\*Faith does not require an irrational leap upstairs...we live by faith in the unknowns because he has demonstrated his love clearly in known ways.

\*Every relationship requires this kind of faith...trusting in the unknowns because of a continual focus on the knowns.

\*No one has demonstrated this level of trustworthiness like he has...so we can trust him.

**\*Exclude all others except Christ from the center of your heart...and you will have ever increasing room to include others in the circle of your life.**

**SMALL GROUP NOTES**  
**Mark 12:28-34**

**Intro:**

**"Trust removes an enormous source of stress because it allows you to act with incomplete information"** John Gottman

\*Discuss a situation in your life (work, family, friends, sports school) where you have experienced or seen this to be true. Or maybe where you have seen the opposite of this to be true.

**Read:**

**Mark 12:28 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?" 29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." 32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.**

**Discuss:**

**1. Love distinguishes:**

\*How is "distinguishing" the first step in "knowing?" (relationships, numbers, colors, food, etc.)

\*How is "knowing" crucial for "loving?"

\*What are some problems with the idea that "all roads lead to God" or "it doesn't matter what you believe if you are sincere?"

**2. Love Excludes:**

\*Discuss some examples of human organizations or relationships that require exclusivity in order to exist. (Military, citizenship, sports teams, etc.)

\*Excluding is sometimes seen as negative why is this?

\*When is being exclusive a positive?

\*What are God's exclusive claims on our lives?

\*What gives him the right to make these claims?

**3. Love cannot be demanded and is based on trust.**

\*When have you struggled with trusting God?

\*If you have worked through it, what helped you the most?

**4. How does having an exclusive relationship with God allow for us to effectively include others in our lives?**

**5. Gottman said that defines betrayal in a marriage as putting someone or something ahead of the relationship.**

\*He has seen this to be at the heart of every failing relationship.

\*How does this apply in principle to our relationship with God?

**6. Trust is foundational to human relationships...how is this true for relationships with God as well? What undermines our trust in God?**

**7. Think through the digression of lost trust in terms of our relationship with God. How have you seen or experienced this?**

**a. Secret keeping**

**b. Walls and windows reversal**

**c. A focus on the negative**

**4. Distrust sets in.**

**8. How might an ongoing reflection on the gospel impact your ability to trust God?**

**Apply:**

\*Have you began to erect a wall between your heart and God and at the same time opened a window to someone or something that threatens to take his place as the exclusive "first" place in your life?

\*If so...will you turn back to him today?

\*If not...do you know someone making that choice? Will you pray for them?

\*Contemplate the reasons in your own life that you have to trust God.

-How has he proven trustworthy?

**THE GOSPEL OF**

**MARK**



**Mark 12:28-34**

**“FOR EVEN THE  
SON OF MAN  
DID NOT COME  
TO BE SERVED,  
BUT TO SERVE,  
AND TO GIVE  
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RANSOM FOR  
MANY.”**

**MARK 10:45**

**J. STILL**

**"Trust removes an enormous source of stress because it allows you to act with incomplete information"**

**Gottman**



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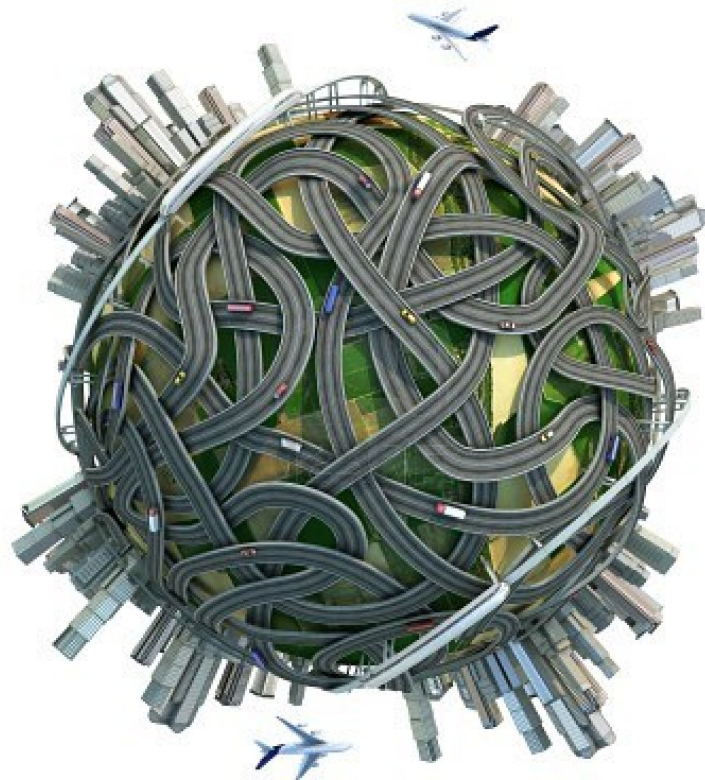
**1. The supremacy of a loving God**

**Deut. 6:4-5**

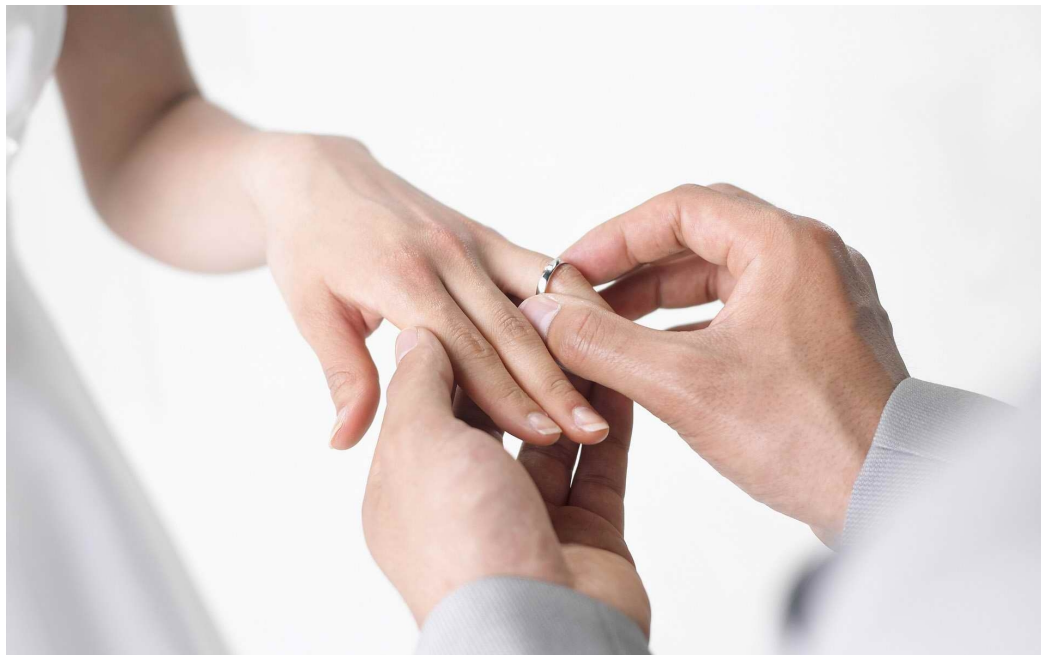
**2. The flow of love from God to others**

**Lev. 19:18**

# 1. Love Distinguishes



## 2. Love Excludes



**Love that distinguishes and excludes is  
positioned to include others in  
appropriate ways.**

**The heart is the key to an exclusive love relationship with God that allows for healthy inclusion of others into your life.**

**"Betrayal is the secret that lies at the heart of every failing relationship--it is there even if the couple is unaware of it."**

**Gottman**

**Trust**



**"Trust removes an enormous source of stress because it allows you to act with incomplete information."**

**Secret Keeping**



**Walls/Windows  
Reversal**



**Negative Focus**



**Distrust Sets In**

**Idol**



**God**



**"Trust removes an enormous source of stress because it allows you to act with incomplete information."**

**Gottman**

**"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."**

**Jesus**