

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church  
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*“The Never Alone Church”<sup>1</sup>*

**Lesson 8: Great Commandment Love Springs from Knowing God Intimately: Part 2**

**Goal:** *To become the “The Never Alone Church” by practicing the Great Commandment of Love with our community of believers, this will enable us to fulfill the mandate given in the Great Commission.*

**Objective:** To explain how the experience of knowing God intimately allows us to demonstrate the Great Commandment to love as Christ did.

**Introduction:**

For the past several months, lessons have been written on the topic; The Never Alone Church as it relates to God’s great commandment of love. The aim has been to effectively minister to the relational needs of others within the church. Within the total scheme of the Never Alone Church, this month’s theme, *Knowing God Intimately: Part 2*, is cast into God’s Great Commandment of love (Matthew 22: 37-40) still with a goal of meeting relational needs of others.

A general theme of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is *relationship*. The divine Trinity (the Godhead) is a divine community who enjoys perfect mutual love. Scripture says that God is love. We are instructed to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, and mind. Then, Jesus told us that we are to love one another, even as He has loved us. [John 13:34]

God created us in His image as relational beings. Our ultimate source of fulfillment and enjoyment should be found in fellowship and intimacy with God. This does not preclude the fulfillment that comes from relationships with one another. We know that God is concerned about relationships; not only with Him but with one another.

God made provision for the restoration of our vertical relationship with Him: Christ’s atonement. Jesus’ death on the cross was the basis for restoring our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationship with others.<sup>2</sup> Jesus went the greatest length to reclaim us as His children. We ought to be willing to do whatever it takes to help others experience that same divine love and fellowship with Christ.

**Discussion Point #1:** Why does our obedience demonstrate our love for God and enable our fulfillment of the Great Commandment love?

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<sup>1</sup> Ferguson, David, *The Never Alone Church*, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1998

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Boa: *Conformed to His Image*, Zondervan, 2001, 46

The integrity of our love for Christ is revealed through our commitment to obey His commandments. When we keep His commandments and abide in Him, we grow in relationship to Him. Then, we are divinely strengthened to love and rightly display the fruit of the Spirit toward one another. When we fail to keep His commandments we learn of His disapproval and the effects of what it means to be separated from His intimate presence.

The apostle Paul so identified with and loved Christ that he made an extraordinary statement that many may find difficult to understand and to fully embrace. He said in Philippians 3:10:

*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. [Philip. 3:10]*

### **Discussion Point #2: What did Paul mean?**

Our identification with Christ leads to and is the basis for our imitation of Christ. Paul already knew Christ as his Savior. But he wanted to know Him more intimately as his Lord. **To know** (v. 10) means “to know by experience” (gnōnai). That I may know Him: to know Him means to gain practical day-by-day acquaintance with Him in such an intimate way that the apostle himself would become more Christlike.

Moreover, Paul knew that preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ would make him a target for persecution. He understood that the Christian who is persecuted for his faith is a partner in the same kind of suffering that Jesus experienced.<sup>3</sup> When we suffer for doing what is right, particularly for the gospel, we partake of Christ’s suffering too.

### **Discussion Point #3: How do we come to know God Intimately?**

As we study and delve into the Word of God carefully, we learn of God. We learn about Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit. As we study the lives and events of others in Scripture we learn more about the character, expectations, desires, likes, and dislikes of God. Through prayers to God for ourselves and others we become more intimately acquainted with God, especially in daily time spent alone with Him. Worshiping God and praying without ceasing allows us to be in the presence of God with frequency. If we are awkward in the presence of God, we don’t know Him too well.

Paul desired to imitate Christ—even in His death. In other words, Paul wanted to be completely obedient to God the Father, just as Jesus was obedient to His Father’s will (Luke 22:42).<sup>4</sup> So ought we to seek to be obedient to God’s word and His will for our

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<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1 Peter 4:13 study note, 1947

<sup>4</sup>Radmacher, Earl D.; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1999, S. Php 3:10

lives. The only way to know his will is through the study of His word. God expects obedience from us and it is one way of testing our discipleship to Him. The more we take pleasure in loving and serving God, the greater will be our capacity to take pleasure in loving and serving people.

***“Partaking in the fellowship of His suffering”:***

Paul saw the value of participating in the persecutions or struggles that naturally accompany one who is in partnership (that is, fellowship, Philip.1:5) with Christ and His sufferings (James 1:2–4; 1 Pet. 2:21–24) He desired to participate with Christ, since he was one of His, in suffering for the sake of righteousness. Thereby, we, like Paul, can experience or know Christ intimately in this way.

*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him but to also suffer for His sake. [Philip. 1:29]*

Not only do we have precious promises from the Lord that we love to embrace, but Jesus, also, told us to take up our cross and follow him. In this sinful world, obedience to God’s commands to love others and to love and forgive our enemies make us vulnerable to pains of rejection, scorn, criticism, demands, betrayal, envy, jealousy, indifference, and misunderstandings. Jesus is fully acquainted with everything we suffer and more.

*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. [Hebrews 4:15]*

*Peter said to rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. [NKJV, 1Peter 4:13]*

**Discussion Point #4: How does obedience and partaking in the suffering of Christ benefit others?**

Our intimate relationship with God helps us to get through pain and suffering. Then, we are able to help others by ministering to them in such a way that they experience the comfort of God. When we see others suffering for righteousness sake, we can encourage them in the Lord. Peter understood this. He was forced to watch his wife crucified. It has been said that he stood there saying to her; “Remember the Lord. Remember the Lord.” Then, when he was crucified, he asked to be crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to be crucified as Jesus was.

Kenneth Boa summarizes it beautifully:

*“The closer our walk with God, the more we are empowered to manifest our love for Him through acts of love and service to others. When we understand that Christ’s resources are our resources, we can become secure enough to serve other people without expecting reciprocity. Loving Christ more than people increases our capacity to love, serve, forgive, and give ourselves away for people.”<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Boa: *Conformed to His Image*, Zondervan, 2001, 42

### ***The Great Commandment of Love:***

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” [Matthew 22:37-40]*

### ***The Great Commission:***

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age. [Matthew 28:19-20, NKJV]*

### **Monthly Biblical Exercises**

**December, 09 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Forgiveness***

**January, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Relevance for ‘The Never Alone Church***

**February, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *People Need God and One Another***

**March, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Responding to Vital Relational Needs***

**April, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Meeting Needs of Others with Scripture***

**May, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Ministering to Fallenness and Aloneness***

**June, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Ministering by Knowing God Intimately***

**October, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Ministering by Knowing God Intimately #2***