

## THE ANSWER: THE MOTIVATING LOVE OF GOD

# LESSON THREE FAMILY DEVOTION

Every season, the television show *American Idol* dedicates one episode called “Idol Gives Back.” It’s their way of encouraging people to give to others in need. People flood the phone lines with monetary gifts to help those who can’t help themselves. In 2007, one of the receiving charities, Malaria No More, received enough money to prevent 1 million children from getting malaria. For most viewers, there is a human desire to help others and to be part of something bigger than what they feel they can accomplish on their own.

Tanya Walters, a 38-year-old widow and mother of a teenage son, is head of Godparents Youth Organization. As a school bus driver, Walters takes at-risk students on trips that she hopes will expand their views of life and themselves. “I want these kids to dream,” she says. “We want to help them believe that they can do anything and show them that despite their circumstances, there’s a life to live out there.” Like many people, Walters has a desire to love others despite their circumstances.

While there are many people who see the need to help others, loving others in the name of Christ goes beyond a one-time pledge of money. It’s an ongoing lifestyle of love that is shown in everyday circumstances.

If you could summarize what Christians are about in two short sentences, it would probably come down to: “Love God. Love people.” Easy to say. Not so easy to live out. The Gospel of Matthew describes how this conversation played out between Jesus and an expert of the Law in Matthew 22:34–40. Ask a family member to read the passage. As a master teacher of the Torah (or Law), this man would have been very familiar with the words that Jesus spoke. Verse 37 comes from Deuteronomy 6:5, which was part of the Shema. The Shema was used by all Jews in their daily prayers. In fact, all faithful Jews would place a copy of the Shema on their doors in a metal box called a mezuzah. Many Jewish families continue this tradition today. But rabbis liked to debate on what was the “most important”

of commandments, and this particular teacher was hoping to quiz Jesus and engage in a debate. While Jesus answered the teacher’s question, He made it clear that loving God would take one’s entire heart, soul, and mind. Then loving others would be the overflow of that love. If you truly love God, then you will truly love others.

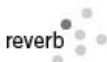
What do you love? More importantly—whom do you love? If this passage says to love God with all of your mind, then isn’t it reasonable to conclude that what you think about most is what you love? Is “who” you think about the same as “who you love? The way that you love others is a reflection of how you love God.

### CONNECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to love God on a daily basis? If you truly love God, how does that affect your worship?
2. If you were on trial for being a Christian, on what specific evidence would you be found guilty due to the way that you love others?
3. The love described in these verses is the Greek form of love (agapao). It is a Godly, unconditional love. It is a choice to love no matter what. How is this love different from how the world views love?
4. What is the difference between loving with your heart, loving with your soul, and loving with your mind?
5. Think of someone whom you have trouble loving. Why is that person so hard to love? How should your attitude toward him or her change?

[www.americanidol.com/idolgivesback/](http://www.americanidol.com/idolgivesback/)

[www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20061503,00.html](http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20061503,00.html)



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# LESSON FOUR VERTICAL WORSHIP

A great way for us to measure what people put their time and interest into the most is by seeing what they do on the Internet. Every year, the main search engines on the Internet publish the top searches for that period of time. Do you know what the top four searches were for people, places, or things? Yahoo reported that the number four search was Miley Cyrus, the number three search was Barack Obama, the number two search was WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment), and the number one search was Britney Spears. Those items are apparently on the minds of a large percentage of people in our world.

Consider how much time, energy, thought, and money we invest in things that are of interest to us. And the more that we invest in these things, the more we become committed to them. Most people wouldn't watch the first three months of a season of American Idol and then not watch the last few episodes. They would watch the final few weeks because they had already invested valuable time and interest into their entertainment. Typically, you will talk to others about the things that have your interest you most.

Our interest level in God will directly affect the level of our worship.

Grab a Bible and read Psalm 103:1–12. David worshiped God. David truly understood that God had forgiven him of all his sin and that he would not be held accountable for it. Because he had received God's forgiveness, he was totally committed, and all of his interest was focused on God. David praised and worshiped God because it was natural for him based upon his relationship with God. David is an encouragement to us today because we see his level of love for his God.

People's behavior is altered when their view of God changes from "transactional" to "transformational." When people move beyond seeing God only as the one who forgives them when they mess up to the one who gave up His Son's life so that they could have freedom from sin's death hold, it all changes!

Jesus came so that we might live life to the fullest every day. We can't have that complete feeling until we understand the incredible gift that He has given us in the form of forgiveness.

When you understand that Christ has completely forgiven you of all your sins by dying on the cross one time, it is only natural for you to worship Him.

### CONNECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are some things that have consumed most of your time recently? Look at your Internet browser history, checkbook, calendar, or e-mails to discover to what or whom you are giving most of your thoughts or time. How does this translate into a form of worship?
2. According to Hebrews 10:10, when Jesus died on the cross, how many of your sins did He die for?
3. How does a sense of awe play into your worship? What drives your worship?
4. How is worship more than singing songs or a weekly worship service?
5. How do you normally respond when you are given an "incredible" gift? What is incredible to you?

<http://www.inquistri.com/10336/top-searches-of-2008/>