Reflecting On Sunday’s Readings

The following series is free, downloadable small-group materials based on each week’s Mass readings and the seasons of the liturgical year. Each study provides an introductory reflection on some aspect of the readings or on personal spirituality. Each of the readings is provided along with a few questions designed to engage the heart and stimulate the group’s discussion. These small-group materials will be provided on a continuing basis in monthly segments.

We would suggest the following 60-to-90 minutes format for the small group:

1. Open with a moment of quiet reflection and prayer.

2. Discuss the introductory reflection with a question or comment like, “What do you feel is important for us to grasp in this introduction?” or “What stood out to you from these opening paragraphs?” As the facilitator of the discussion be ready to share one or two things which were important to you from the introduction.

3. Have someone read the First Reading and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions. Effective group-dynamic techniques should be used to further stimulate the discussion and affirm the participation. (The booklet A Facilitator’s Guide: is available from Emmaus Journey to provide additional practical training for leading lively and informative small-group discussions.)

4. The Responsorial Psalm provides a reflective transition from the First Reading to the Gospel Reading, so have the Psalm read aloud. You may do this without additional comment, or you may want to draw their attention to something you feel is pertinent.

5. You can either read this week’s Second Reading next and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions, or cover the Second Reading after you cover the Gospel Reading. The Second Reading does not always have a clear connection to the other Sunday Mass readings, so do not feel like you need to force a connection. However, you can provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to draw a connection by asking, “How do you see that this passage ties into the theme of the readings?”

6. Move on to the Gospel Reading, repeating the process by asking several people to share their answers to the reflection questions.

7. Approximately equal time for discussion should be given to each of the sections: Introduction, First Reading, Second Reading and the Gospel Reading. Obviously, if one section is especially stimulating, you should give some additional time to discussing it.

8. Close the discussion with group prayer, using various prayer formats.

We trust that God will use these materials to make His Word more meaningful to you, both within the small group environment and during Mass as you hear Scripture read and taught. We would appreciate knowing if you are using the Reflecting on Sunday’s Readings, and would welcome your feedback, either through the Emmaus Journey web page form, or by direct e-mail.

Sincerely,

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Introduction: Fertilizing, weeding and watering the garden was a nuisance I preferred to leave to others. However as a youngster it was a responsibility thrust on me, though a job which I unwillingly carried out with diligence, if not with a positive attitude. To my chagrin when guests visited, my Dad would take them down to show them his garden and share some of his vegetables with them. These occasions produced within me both a spirit of satisfaction and of disappointment; A spirit of satisfaction because my work had resulted in real fruitfulness, a spirit of disappointment because my Dad took all the glory.

The parable in this week’s Gospel reading deals with similar unfulfilled expectations, and with disappointments. It implies that God had expectations for the people of Israel, and that Israel’s response was disappointing. In this parable the landowner’s legitimate expectations for his tenant farmers were thwarted, even when he sent his son to see that they were carried out. Not unlike the treatment our Lord received, they responded with hostility resulting in the violent death of the householder’s son. In Jesus’ case the rejection of his rightful claim as Lord, first took subtle forms; behind the back conversations against him, hostile questioning, judgmentalism, and foot-dragging reticence to follow and respond to him. Eventually this hostility burst forth into overt opposition, conspiracy, and murder.

Does God have expectations for you and for me? Most of us today are concerned with our own expectations of others, and with avoiding disappointment. But perhaps we should expend our energies more fully on the opportunity we have to fulfill our Lord’s expectations. Will we be faithful stewards, tending the vineyards he has entrusted to us? When we reject him, either subtly by trying to avoid his claim on our lives, or overtly by resisting his will, we suffer by not fully sharing in his life and the good he has for us. Perhaps there can be no fuller joy than to hear Jesus, “Well done.”

As we labor in the vineyard, he entrusts to us, our heavenly Father wants to rejoice in the fruitfulness of our lives. He not only affirms us but also shares with us his glory, even though we know that it was he who worked and produced the results, and that we were only a willing tool in his hand.

“Gardening is the first job that Adam was given in the garden of Eden; it is the symbol of what everybody’s job is: shoveling manure to make the unfruitful fig tree (us) bloom. It will never bloom because of the manure, but God, touched by our persevering efforts and patient endurance, may make the thing blossom anyway—not because of our efforts and patience, but because of God’s most tender love for us.”1 Gardening requires both a spirit of diligence and faithfulness as we have discussed, but as the second reading points out it also involves the contrasting aspects of dependence and rest. We should faithfully do all we can to produce fruit, but ultimately, we must recognize that it is God who gives increase. Knowing this should enable us to relax and work peacefully leaving the outcome to him who works his will through us.

Perhaps it is time for us to get our hands dirty tending our Lord’s vineyard. When we do, we will experience growth in our lives and see fruitfulness in the lives of others.

1 From The Kingdom of God is Like. . . by Thomas Keating.

First Reading — Isaiah 5:1-7
1 Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. 2 He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. 3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. 4 What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?

And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. 6 I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry!

1. Explain the reasons for the disappointment that is expressed in this passage.
2. Why do you think Isaiah describes this account of the vineyard as a “love song”?

**Responsorial Reading — Psalms 80: 8, 11-15, 18-19 (9, 12-16, 19-20 NAB)**

8 Thou didst bring a vine out of Egypt; thou didst drive out the nations and plant it. ... 11 it sent out its branches to the sea, and its shoots to the River. 12 Why then hast thou broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit? 13 The boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it. 14 Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine, 15 the stock which thy right hand planted.

18 Then we will never turn back from thee; give us life, and we will call on thy name! 19 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts! let thy face shine, that we may be saved!

**Second Reading — Philippians 4:6-9**

6 Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

3. What advice from this passage can be applied to help overcome disappointment?

4. What conditions are stated for experiencing God’s promised peace?

**Gospel Reading — Matthew 21:33-43**

33 “Hear another parable. There was a householder who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country. 34 When the season of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants, to get his fruit; 35 and the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first; and they did the same to them. 37 Afterward he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ 39 And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40 When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?’ 41 They said to him, ‘He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.’

42 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures: ‘The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? 43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.

5. What aspect of tending the vineyard do you think God has entrusted to you?

6. What motivates people to reject God’s claims on their lives?

7. What is the primary lesson this parable teaches?
Introduction: “The Father requests the honor of your presence at the marriage supper of His Son, Jesus Christ, to be held in heaven. Only those will be admitted who come clothed in the Wedding Garment provided by the Father ‘He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.’” Isaiah 61:10

This beautifully calligraphy invitation hangs as a wall plaque in our home, a wedding gift from friends. It is a reminder of the wedding feast which is a future reality for all who believe. A wedding feast is a celebration of love, a celebration of commitment, a celebration of union. Why would someone, called to such a celebratory feast, refuse to attend?

In this week’s Gospel reading it is interesting to note the excuses that were given for not accepting the invitation. Most busy people would say that these excuses are reasonable, but in actuality none of the reasons were really necessary hindrances, just convenient excuses. And that is how the king viewed them; as illegitimate, showing frivolous disrespect for both the celebration and the ones celebrated. Their disingenuous excuses were believed only by the people giving the excuses.

Consequently, the king goes out into the city calling for anyone who will, to come to the feast. He provided an open invitation. None is excluded. The Kingdom of God is truly a classless society with people from every race, from every economic and social level receiving the same invitation. The Father invites all people to celebrate the love, commitment and union we can have with his Son. Consequently, we all will be accountable for how we respond. In fact, even now we all are responding, either voicing our “Yes” and moving toward the celebration, or silently voicing “No” through our unresponsiveness and disinterest.

It is both a cause of wonder and of praise to reflect on the fact that like the wedding banquet the gates of heaven have been opened to “both bad and good.” We wonder how can this be so? The answer, “By grace!” sends us to our knees in praise because, “Jesus Christ prepares us, as it were, for God’s presence and for each other’s company, so that we can sit down together at table. … He clothes himself so to speak, in the garment of our poverty, and in being taken up by him, we are able to be with God, we have gained access to God. We are washed through our willingness to yield to his love. The meaning of this love is that God accepts us without preconditions, even if we are unworthy of his love, incapable of relating to him, because he, Jesus Christ, transforms us and becomes a brother to us.”

The Father both calls us to the banquet and prepares and makes us acceptable, how can we refuse? Sometimes we ease our conscience by fabricating seemingly legitimate excuses, however the Father is not fooled, only we ourselves.

There are some who still do not know about the invitation and the Father is looking to us to make the invitation known to them. To help them “yield to his love.”

We who have responded with a resounding, “Yes!” look with eagerness to participation in the mystery of the union and enjoy, even now, the availability of communion with the Son. We are motivated knowing that the celebration begins here on earth, only to be continued in heaven. Why would someone, called to such a celebratory feast, refuse to attend? It’s unfathomable.

1 From God is Near Us, by Pope Benedict XVI, page 31.

First Reading — Isaiah 25:6-10

6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. 7 And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken.

9 It will be said on that day, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” 10 For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain, and Moab shall be trodden down in his place, as straw is trodden down in a dung-pit.

1. How do you celebrate and respond to the various feasts of Christ’s Church?
Responsorial Reading — Psalms 23:1-6
1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want; 2 he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; 3 he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Second Reading — Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20
12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. 13 I can do all things in him who strengthens me. 14 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. … 19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

2. What is the most helpful thing to remember when sharing in someone’s troubles? When sharing in someone’s joy?

Gospel Reading — Matthew 22:1-14
1 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 2 “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.’ 5 But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.’ 10 And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.
11 But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; 12 and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.’ 14 For many are called, but few are chosen.”

3. Why do you think Jesus uses the word “kingdom” to describe what his ministry is all about?

4. Where do you see yourself in this parable?

5. How would you evaluate the reasons given for not participating in the wedding celebration?

6. In what areas are you experiencing the invitation, or call of God?

Introduction: “Although all the Israelites left Egypt in effect, not all of them left it in affection, and hence in the wilderness many of them regretted their lack of onions and fleshpots of Egypt. In like manner, there are penitents who leave sin in effect, but do not leave it in affection.” (From Introduction to the Devout Life by Saint Francis De Sales)

In this week’s second reading we see a conversion experience which is the opposite of what Saint Francis De Sales is describing. Paul describes the Thessalonians’ conversion as a “work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope.” These three expressions name the areas of inner change experienced by the Thessalonians. Later in the same chapter, verses 9-10, Paul describes how these inner changes manifested themselves externally in the way the Thessalonians lived. Their work of faith caused them to “turn to God from idols.” Their labor of love caused them to “serve a living and true God.” Their steadfastness of hope caused them to “wait for his Son from heaven.”

Understanding these elements of conversion, (turning, serving, and steadfastness) is crucial to following God. We all choose to serve someone or something. Some actually serve real idols, while some serve idols of their own making, or some like us, choose to serve the living and true God. But it is unquestionably true that we all serve someone or something.

Who we serve affects the way we live, our priorities and our affections. When we struggle as Christians it is invariably a struggle about whether we will serve God by our decisions or serve someone or something else which is making “god-demands” on our life. The struggle we experience is positive inasmuch as it at least shows us that God is still important to us. However, it also shows us that we either never grasped or are currently forgetting the truth of the Gospel. When we clearly grasp who God is, and how much he loves us and how he has redeemed us through our Savior, that understanding evokes a radical shift; a radical shift of lifestyle, a radical shift of priorities, a radical shift of allegiance, i.e. conversion.

How do we minimize the struggle and serve with devotion? Just like the Thessalonians, by making a full turn, not a partial turn, from our previous loves. It is important that we not allow a spiritual vacuum to develop by remaining inactive. We will serve something or someone. The completeness and thoroughness of this radical decision to love and serve Christ does not imply that we will never need to reaffirm this commitment or never need to experience similar conversion in the future.

The Israelites, to which Saint Francis De Sales refers, made a major commitment when they put their lives on the line and followed Moses out of Egypt. Yet later during the journey in the wilderness they stopped serving God and turned their energies to serving a fictitious remembrance of life in Egypt. They needed to be reawakened to their call and relationship with the Living God. The reality of the Christian life is that the Holy Spirit will periodically call us afresh to re-conversion which is equally complete and thorough. So recognize the living and true God and throw yourself into his service. Then wait patiently for Jesus’ return. Jim Elliot, a 20th century martyr for Christ, puts all this in perspective for us, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.”

First Reading — Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

1 Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and ungird the loins of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: … 4 For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me. 5 I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I gird you, though you do not know me, 6 that men may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.

1. What does King Cyrus’ experience imply about God’s purposes?
Responsorial Reading — Psalms 96:1, 3-5, 7-10
1 O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! … 3 Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! 4 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. 5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols; but the LORD made the heavens. … 7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, 8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!
9 Worship the LORD in holy array; tremble before him, all the earth! 10 Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns! Yea, the world is established, it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.”

Second Reading — 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5
1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. 2 We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you; 5 for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.
2. What does it mean to be chosen by God?
3. Describe the difference which would exist if the Gospel came “only in word.”

Gospel Reading — Matthew 22:15-21
15 Then the Pharisees went and took counsel how to entangle him in his talk. 16 And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men. 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” 18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? 19 Show me the money for the tax.” And they brought him a coin. 20 And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” 21 They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”
4. Identify the people involved in this passage and try to surmise their motives.
5. What are some similar conflicts that Christians are faced with today?
6. What are some areas which should be “rendered” unto God?

Introduction: We humans are complex creatures. Our flesh (our physical existence), our mind (our intellect and reasoning faculties), and our soul (the affections, passions, and emotional attitudes which we hold dear), combine to make us who we are. Though each of these areas impacts the others, it is easy for us to live a life of dichotomy, disassociating one area of our life from the others. For example, though we may know something to be true we often have an emotional response which is contrary to what we know. We can possess a young mind in an aging body, or vice versa. We can express real rage while driving home from a meaningful time of devout worship. We are complex, frequently behaving in ways that contradict each other, and our lives are often unmanageable mysteries.

Therefore, to make sense of our mysteriously complex lives it is important to know how Jesus answered the simple question that appears in this week’s Gospel reading; “What is the greatest commandment?” He does not simply say to love God, but qualifies his response by saying we are to love God with all of our heart, with all of our mind, and with all of our soul, thus recognizing the possibility of living a life of dichotomy. To Jesus, a half-hearted, unreasoned, lukewarm response to God is unacceptable, and a contrary response to what the greatest commandment calls forth. Jesus’ explanation calls forth from us a complete abandonment to God in love, a total giving of ourselves, heart, mind and soul.

For all of us, this total giving of ourselves in love is a constant challenge, for both our nature and the world offer alternatives for our affections. At every turn our minds are confronted with supposedly enlightened knowledge that purports to refute the wisdom of God. Additionally, our physical beings resist the discipline of dedication and cry out for the comfort of complacency. Invariably we must periodically renew our vow of love and commitment, through major acts of devotion, lest we discover that our love has grown cold. The seasons of the liturgical year call forth and provide opportunities for the renewal of our love. In addition, these vows of love and commitment to God need to be nourished daily by quiet acts of devotion like Scripture reading and prayer. When either major or quiet acts of devotion is abandoned for any length of time our love for God may quietly, steadily grow dormant.

Francis De Sales, writing in the days of mechanical clocks, truly captures the essence of spiritual maintenance: “There is no clock, no matter how good it may be, that doesn’t need resetting and rewinding twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. In addition, at least once a year it must be taken apart to remove the dirt clogging it, straighten out bent parts, and repair those worn out. In like manner, every morning and evening a man who really takes care of his heart must rewind it for God’s service . . . Finally, at least once a year he must take it apart and examine every piece in detail, that is every affection and passion in order to repair what ever defect there may be.” (From Introduction to the Devout Life)

Now is a good time for your soul’s annual spiritual check-up and maintenance, as we approach the end of the liturgical year.

First Reading — Exodus 22:21-27 (20-26 NAB)
21 “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 22 You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. 23 If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry; 24 and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.
25 “If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor, and you shall not exact interest from him. 26 If ever you take your neighbor’s garment in pledge, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; 27 for that is his only covering, it is his mantle for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

1. What are the values the Holy Spirit is emphasizing through this passage?

2. What kind of conflicted opinions do people have about the poor and strangers (immigrants)?
**Responsorial Reading — Psalms 18:1-3, 46, 50 (2-4, 47, 51 NAB)**

1. I love thee, O LORD, my strength. 2. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. 3. I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. …

46. The LORD lives; and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation, …

50. Great triumphs he gives to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his descendants for ever.

**Second Reading — 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10**

…5 for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit; 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.

9. For they themselves report concerning us what a welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, 10. and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

3. Whose example of faith would you like to imitate? Why?

4. What in your faith life would you like to have others imitate?

**Gospel Reading — Matthew 22:34-40**

34. But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. 35. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, to test him. 36. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” 37. And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38. This is the great and first commandment. 39. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.”

5. Explain what it means to love God with all your heart.

6. What is the opposite of loving God with all your soul?

7. How can someone increase their ability to love God with all their mind? …all their heart? …all their soul?

8. How is our ability to love our neighbor both affected, and expressed, by our love for God?