

The purpose of the church is threefold: To love God, to love one another in the “household of faith”, and to love the world.

1. To Love God (i.e. Worship God) Our highest purpose in life is to love God. The SHEMA was the great confession of the Israelites. The Shema is the oldest and central prayer in Judaism. It is recited in the morning and evening prayers, and as the climactic prayer during the day of atonement known as Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. The Shema was traditionally recited on a person’s deathbed. It consists of three sections, all of which- except for one verse – come straight from three different OT passages. The Shema is a pledge, prayer, and praise. The first verse of the Shema was the most essential declaration of faith among the Israelites in the OT and still is today among observant Jews.

The first section of the Shema comes from Deut. 6:5-9. It begins with these words:

“Hear O’ Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

There it is. The summary statement of the will of God for mankind. Jesus Himself stated that this was the greatest commandment and the foundation for all the other commandments. But how do we love God? It should be obvious that we don’t love God in the same way that we love our spouses or our children, or our neighbors.

How God’s people are to love Him is expounded upon in the remainder of the first section and in the second section of the Shema which comes from Deuteronomy 11:13-21.

Immediately following the command to love God with our whole being, we read, *“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart...”* The person who loves God will treasure and respect God’s word.

In the second section, in Deut. 10:14 we read:

“And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul...”

Love for God entails obedience to God. It entails service unto God from the heart and soul. It is not a compulsory service but a glad service. In verse 16 we read:

“Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them...” Love for God entails making Him the exclusive object of our religious worship and devotion.

Jesus took the truth in the Shema about the relationship between love for God and obedience to God and applied it to Himself when He said,

“The one who has my commands and keeps them, that’s the one who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and I will reveal myself to him.” - [John 14:21](#)

We love God by worshipping God. To worship God is to honor and bring glory to God. Worship takes the form of verbal and non-verbal expressions of praise and thanksgiving to God. We tend to focus on the former and don’t give enough attention to the importance of the latter; non-verbal expressions. It is important to express love to God with words and songs of praise and adoration. But love must go beyond verbal expressions.

In Romans 12:1 Paul wrote, **“I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship”**

We worship God by living our lives in a manner that honors and pleases Him. In Ephesians 1 Paul wrote about how God has poured out his grace on us by choosing us; adopting us; purchasing our freedom from the tyranny of sin and Satan. In addition, he has guaranteed us an incomparable, eternal,

inheritance when he gave us His Holy Spirit. And then Paul tells them, “God’s purpose in redeeming us Jews, was for the praise of his glory! God’s purpose in redeeming you Gentiles so you could become his children, was for the praise of His glory. Two times we find that wonderful little phrase, “the praise of His glory.” Calvary, the ultimate purpose behind God’s creation of His church, was so that we would praise and glorify Him.

We love God by worshipping God. Sincere, authentic worship is expressed through respect for His word, through verbal expressions of praise and adoration, and by our obedience to His will and a willingness to sacrifice what would please us for that which honors God.

2. To Love One Another

The second purpose of the church is to love God’s family members. When my sons love one another, I feel like they are loving me. If you treat my boys well, you treat my wife well. If you mess with my wife’s boys, I pray for mercy for you!

*“Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, **so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.**” Eph. 4:15-16*

How do we love one another? We don’t demonstrate our love for people in the same way we demonstrate our love for God. The NT letters are full of “one another” sayings which serve as descriptive phrases for what loving one another looks like: Be devoted to one another, honor one another, accept one another, encourage one another, serve one another, bear with one another, be kind to one another, forgive one another, submit to one another, offer hospitality to one another, provide counsel to one another, motivate one another to good works, speak truth to one another, pray for one another, confess your sins to one another. Although it is not technically a “one

another” saying, love seeks to turn a brother away from sin and back to God. There are some “one another” sayings that teach is what love doesn’t look like. Don’t lie to one another, don’t slander one another, don’t complain about one another, don’t envy one another.

3. To Love the World

In Jesus prayer to His Father concerning His disciples, He said, *“Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.”*

After Jesus’ resurrection he gathered his disciples together and told them, *“As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.”*

How did the Father send Jesus? “For God so loved the world...” The Father sent Jesus motivated by love for a world that was in rebellion against its creator. Jesus sends us with the same motivation. Jesus was sent as an expression of the Father’s love for the world. We are sent as an expression of Jesus love for the world.

Jesus’ people, His church, is sent out to the world to continue the mission of Jesus, motivated by the heart of Jesus. Paul understood this when he wrote that God, through Jesus Christ has made a way for rebellious mankind to be reconciled to his creator. He wrote that now we have been sent with that message of reconciliation. He wrote, God is now making His appeal through us, offering people the hope of being reconciled to God. God - Father, Son and Spirit – affect reconciliation, but we are sent as carriers of the Spirit of reconciliation and the message of reconciliation.

How do we love the world? Galatians 6:10 – *“Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone.”* We love the world through doing good works that bless them.

Jesus said, *“Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! Jesus also said, “Bless those who curse you.”* Just in case his disciples might have thought to themselves, *“Alright, I will pray for my enemies; I’ll pray Psalm 35 over them:*

“Let them be like chaff before the wind, With the angel of the LORD driving them on. Let their way be dark and slippery, With the angel of the LORD pursuing them. Let destruction come upon him unawares; And let the net which he hid catch himself; Into that very destruction let him fall.”

Paul said, *“I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some”.* We love people by making an effort to persuade them to come to Christ.

Love those outside the church.

1. Pray for God to bless them.
2. Do good to them.
3. Make an effort to persuade or influence them to embrace Jesus as their Lord and Savior.