



“On Course”

Matthew 22, Mark 11

Small Group Plan

The history of religion provides a great deal of evidence of people who, albeit unconsciously, love and serve God out of sheer self-interest. They are not bad or malicious people. They simply are attached to the consolations and comforts of religion ... The question is, do I worship God or do I worship my experience of God? Do I worship God or do I worship my idea of him? If I am to avoid a narcotic approach to religion that forces me to stagger from experience to experience hoping for bigger and better things, I must know what I believe.

— From **Soul Making** by Alan Jones

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- If God is the center of worship, how should worship flow? What should it look like?
- What causes worship to drift from God to our experiences and preferences?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— THE CENTER OF WORSHIP —

Matthew 22:35-38

³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.

- Take each dimension of the human person and discuss them one by one: What does it mean to love God with our heart? Our soul? Our mind?
- Why is this the “greatest” command?
- How is it connected to the Ten Commandments?
- What other current world-views compete with “love God?”

— THE EFFECT OF WORSHIP —

Matthew 22:39-40

³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

- Why did Jesus offer a "second" command — he was not asked for one?
- How does our love for people naturally flow out of our love for God?
- What is wrong when love for God doesn't flow into love for people?
- How is this command connected to the Ten Commandments?
- What does it mean to love self?
- Why is love for self a component of loving people?
- What happens when love for self is not governed by love for God?

— THE CHOICE OF WORSHIP —

Mark 11:15-17

¹⁵ On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, ¹⁶ and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. ¹⁷ And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: "'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

- What is the significance of Jesus words, "a house of prayer for all nations" (v. 17)?
- What were the temple merchants doing that angered Jesus?
- How has Christianity been commercialized today?
- Why are problems often more difficult to see when they occur in a religious setting?
- What did Jesus see that others had simply gotten used to?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Look at the three love relationships mentioned by Jesus — Loving God, loving people and loving self — Which is your strongest area? Which is your weakest area?
- What is your clearest way of showing love for God?
- How do you connect your personal worship with our public worship?
- How do we make our worship all about God instead of about our experience?
- Close by asking God to fill our worship with His presence and power.