

# GOD'S CALL

## Major themes in the Scriptures

### Quality of being (9)

#### Quality of being and relationships

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The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, "Quality of being", the ninth message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures.

A short summary of today's message:

Relationships are a primary aspect of what God concentrates on in His purposes for mankind. The meaningfulness of relationships is critically dependent on the quality of being, which will determine the direction and outcome of the relationships.

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

Generally, we are familiar with the two great commandments that the Lord Jesus spoke on, and if we ponder over these two great commandments, it will become reasonably clear to us that these two great commandments concentrate on relationships, with the emphasis on love, which is the primary aspect in quality of being.

In the two great commandments, God wants us to develop proper and meaningful relationships, and this can come about only when there is quality in the love in our hearts.

So these two aspects are primary in terms of what God wants to bring about in our lives: character of quality, that is, quality in our being, and quality in relationships as we relate with God and with one another.

Let us look at **Matthew 22: 33-40**.

**Matthew 22: 33-40**

- 33 When the crowds heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching.
- 34 But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together.
- 35 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing 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 foremost commandment.
- 39 "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'
- 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Usually, when we hear the word "love", we tend to think of it as something very positive – love is a good thing, and we should all learn to love.

In the context of **Matthew 22**, that is true: love is a good thing, and God intends it to be that way.

But love is not always a good thing, and we need to be very careful to ensure that the love that is in our heart is the right kind of love.

Whether love is good or not good will depend on what we love or whom we love, why we love, and how we love.

It is possible for us to love what is not good. It is possible for us to love with the wrong motive. It is possible for us to love in the wrong way. We will look at this further as we look at various situations, examples, in the Scriptures.

But first, let us ponder over why it is that the Lord Jesus said that there are these two great commandments. Why not combine them into one commandment? Is it possible for us to say, "You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbour"? Why did the Lord Jesus separate them into two in this way? Why did God in the Old Testament command in that way?

Or is it possible for us to qualify in a different way? Why not say, "You shall love the Lord your God as yourself", or "You shall love your neighbour with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind"? Why is there a difference in these two commandments?

When we look at the context, and ponder over God's intention, we should be able to appreciate that it is because there is a difference in emphasis. There is a difference in degree and quality and meaning.

But there are general aspects that are similar. And that is why the Lord Jesus said, "The second is like it". The first and foremost commandment is "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND". The second is like it: "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF". They are similar and yet they can be quite different.

So, it is good for us to seek to appreciate what it is that God intends by these two commandments.

In the context, we see that one of the Pharisees who was a lawyer asked the Lord Jesus a question, testing Him. And he said, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

At the end of what the Lord Jesus said, He made this comment, “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets”. So the Lord Jesus was seeking to communicate what was at the heart of what God brought across to the people of Israel in the Old Testament – the law and the prophets represented God’s communication in the Old Testament.

As we ponder over what God said in the Old Testament, it may become clearer to us that there is a difference in emphasis in these two commandments.

‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND’ concentrates on our appreciation of God, our recognition of His perfection, our worship of Him, our love for Him in the sense of our devotion to Him, our preparedness to follow Him, obey Him, to give our lives to Him, to live for Him. It has that emphasis and direction.

So we see that in terms of loving God, there is an emphasis and a concentration on the moral perfection of God, arising from which we love Him, we are devoted to Him, we want to follow Him.

But, if we look at the Old Testament, God’s commandments with regard to our neighbour are not in the same direction. We are to love our neighbour but we see that the commandments centre on being kind to your neighbour, being compassionate, being just, with the attitude of seeking the well-being of our neighbour, concerned for them, seeking to help them, to contribute to their lives.

And so, we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind – He is worthy of our love in the sense of our devotion, our appreciation, and therefore our giving of ourselves to Him.

On the other hand, our neighbour can be a very negative person. Our neighbour may not be morally good. There may be many negative traits in our neighbour but we are to love our neighbour. We are to love our neighbour as ourselves.

We too have various negative traits, areas of deficiencies, problems, and difficulties. Do we love ourselves in the sense that we care for our well-being, we want to develop to become a better person, we want to find meaning in life?

If we do, we should also love our neighbour in that kind of sense. We should be concerned for our neighbour. We should want to contribute to their lives, so that they will grow in the quality of their being, they will find meaning in life, that there will be a positive direction. So even though they may not be good, we can contribute in that direction so that they can become good.

So it is helpful for us to appreciate that there are different aspects of the meaning of love and in different parts of the Scriptures, the emphasis may vary.

If we do not differentiate them, we may misapply, and as a result, we may live our lives in the wrong way. We need to understand what God wants us to tell us, and how we are to respond.

So there are two major aspects that we can concentrate on in terms of the meaning of love, and in various of these places, both meanings can be intended, but with different degree of emphasis.

The first aspect of the meaning, we can say, is in the direction of appreciating the value of what is loved. We appreciate something, we value something; we love that thing or that person. It is important to recognize that it may be morally good or bad values.

We can love God, and that is good. We can love the world, and that is bad. So, love can be good or bad depending on what we appreciate, what we value. If we value God because He is morally good, then our love is good. If we love the world, and value the world, and pursue after the world, then our love is bad; it will lead to destruction in our lives.

How do we love? What do we love? Why do we love? So, in order to develop quality in our love, we need to be careful as to what it is that we love, why we love, and how we love.

**John 12: 42-43**

42 Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;

43 for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

Here we are told that many, even among the rulers, believed in the Lord Jesus – they recognized who He was, they knew that He was the Messiah, and they could recognize what was correct – but because of the Pharisees, they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue.

They were afraid of the Pharisees if they were to confess their faith in the Lord Jesus, and the reason here given therefore is: “for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God”. They valued the approval of men more than the approval of God. They were more concerned about what the world could give to them than what God could bestow upon them.

The Amplified Bible translates **John 12: 43** in this way; it says:

**John 12: 43 (AMP)** For they loved the approval and the praise and the glory that come from men [*instead of and*] more than the glory that comes from God. [*They valued their credit with men more than their credit with God.*]

So in this context, it has to do with the values. What do we value? What do we pursue? What do we love? If we love the wrong things, it will destroy our being and it will destroy relationships.

Some people think that the word translated as “love”, where we say we should love God, they think that the word that is translated as “love”, which comes from the Greek word, “*agapao*” as a verb, or “*agape*” as a noun, that this refers to divine love, and that this word always means divine love.

In the Scriptures, this is not so. The word that is translated here as “they loved the approval of men”, is also “*agapao*”. While it is true that in various places it refers to divine love but it need not do so.

So we need to be careful to look at the context, the meaning, the direction of it. What God is seeking to tell us is we must be careful what kind of love it is. So here love has the meaning of appreciation of something, you love something, you value something – it can be good; it can be bad. It can be very good; it can also be very bad.

So sometimes, we may laugh when someone says, “I love ice-cream”, but in reality there is such a thing. People can love ice-cream so much that it matters so much to them... so too, with many others things in life. It can be so important to them – they love it, they value it. Some people love their reputation. Some people love their job. Some people love the status that they have. It means so much to them.

Well, the word “love” also has another aspect to it in terms of like. You can say you like the ice-cream, it is also true, but they tend to come together – not always, but they can bear a relationship: So, when we want something, we value something, we may grow to like it and enjoy it; the other way round, when something is pleasant, we enjoy it, we begin to value it and so this will lead us in the wrong direction.

Let us look at another passage that illustrates the meaning of love – of the right kind, or of the wrong kind.

**2 Samuel 19: 5-6**

- 5 Then Joab came into the house to the king and said, "Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your servants, who today have saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives, and the lives of your concubines,
- 6 by loving those who hate you, and by hating those who love you. For you have shown today that princes and servants are nothing to you; for I know this day that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased.

This was a context in which Absalom the son of David had rebelled and sought to establish a kingdom for himself. And in this context, Absalom sought to destroy David and his army.

Joab together with the people managed to kill Absalom and defeat him. David, when he knew of it, was very sad. He lamented, he cried, he wept with a loud voice, calling for Absalom, as a result of which, the people who had fought for him felt no sense of joy in the victory and they were ashamed.

In that context, Joab, the commander of the army, came into the house to the king and said, “Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your servants, who today have saved your life and the lives of all those that you love, by loving those who hate you, and by hating those who love you.”



So here, Joab was telling David: “You are wrong! Your attachment to Absalom is emotional. On the basis of values, now, because of your emotions you are in fact valuing Absalom more than all these people who have sacrificed their lives for you. For you have shown today that princes and servants are nothing to you; for I know this day that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased. So Absalom is more important to you, is more valuable to you than all of us. So if all us were dead, but he were alive, you will be pleased. So you love the one who hated you and you are hating those who love you – these people who care for you, who stood by you, who fought for you with their lives. Now you are making them ashamed, disappointed, embarrassed.”

And he told David, “If you continue this way, all of them will leave you.” David was humble enough to listen, and so he sat at the gate, and when the people saw him, they were encouraged.

That does not mean that David was very negative in his values. David was a man after God’s own heart; he had right desires, but at this point of time, he was emotionally affected by Absalom’s death, as a result of which, his values were placed in the wrong place.

So it is possible for us to love in the wrong way.

If our values are right, we should concentrate on loving what is worthy to be loved. We should concentrate on valuing that which is most precious and good and not what is not of value.

The second aspect of the meaning of love emphasizes the seeking of the benefit of the one who is loved; we are seeking to bring benefit to the person who is loved, and this again may be morally good or morally bad.

If someone who is a criminal has done us a favour by helping us in a certain situation when we are in need, we may love that criminal and seek to help him in his activities. We can say it is gratitude. In so doing, when we love such a person, it is a wrong kind of love. We are seeking to bring benefit to this person who is negative in character. We are contributing to something negative by this love. This kind of love is negative.

There are other kinds of love that may not be so very negative, but it is still not pure and good.

There are many people who love because of the gain that they can get out of it: "If you love me, and you can do good to me and help me I will love you in return, but the moment you cannot help me anymore, I will not love you anymore."

And this is the kind of relationship that is very common. Love is very often still very much self-centred. We love those who love us, who can help us, who can contribute to us, who can do something that we like, that we want, but when they do not do that anymore, or when they are not in the position to do that, we do not love anymore.

**Matthew 5: 43-46**

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'

44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"

Here the Lord Jesus was explaining what kind of love we ought to have.

The Lord Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'" God says, "... love your neighbor as yourself" but there are those who put it this way, "... love your neighbor, and hate your enemy".

The Lord Jesus said, "I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you". What is He referring to?

Here, He is talking about an attitude, an attitude of compassion, of love, of concern, for the well-being of others: Love your enemies, even those who have antagonized you, those who have sought you harm; your attitude can still be positive towards them.

"Pray for those who persecute you", and in this context, the Lord Jesus says how God, who is in heaven, He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. He then says, "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" The tax collectors who were unscrupulous, who were dishonest, they would still love those who love them, those who could help them, who could contribute to them, who could bring benefit to them; they would also seek to bring benefit to those who loved them.

Is this the kind of love that we have, calculative, concerned about what we can get, so we love those who love us in this kind of sense - we can benefit from what they can give to us and so we love them? But the Lord says, "Love your enemies" not because of what the enemies can do for you.

Some people say, "I want to pray for my parents because they are very difficult to get along with. If they were to become Christians, I would have a much easier life."

Is this the kind of love that we have?

So what is it that we are concerned about? When we love somebody, and we want to do them good, bring benefit to them, what is our motive? Why do we do it? Why do we love?

Let us then consider how we should love.

If we love in the wrong way, then our character will degenerate. Similarly, if our character is negative, we will love in the wrong way. The manner in which we love comes forth from our being, and the more we exercise love in the wrong way, the more our character will degenerate.

So, the two need to be healthily nurtured.

So when God gave these two commandments, His intention is to help us to develop quality in our being, in our character; and in exercising ourselves in the right way in terms of relationships, this will build up our character: We will develop greater quality in our being. But we need to understand how to approach this correctly.

So I want to concentrate on loving in a situation where there is quality in our being. When there is quality in our being, our love will be positive and good, but when there is poor quality in our moral being, our love will be self-seeking and based on the wrong values.

So then, when it is morally positive and good, how do we appreciate those who are morally good? If our hearts are positive, then our values are good: We love what is morally good.

If that is the case, then our love in terms of the values that we hold, in terms of what and whom we appreciate, it will be what is morally good. We will appreciate those who are morally good, and we will be glad to be close to them.

This aspect of love requires that the persons involved are morally good. We love in the sense of appreciation; we value them in terms of what they are.

So in this context, we see, **Matthew 22: 37**, the Lord Jesus said: 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

We can love God in this way because He is morally perfect. So if we truly love what is good, if our values are right, then we will love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind.

If we find that we do not love God in this way, it tells us there is something wrong with us, there is something wrong with our heart, there is something wrong with our values. If you really value that which is morally good and perfect, you surely will value God, you surely will appreciate Him, and you will love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Why is it so many people find it so difficult to love God with all their heart?

That is because they have wrong values, they have wrong treasures; their heart is captured by many things in this world, by the things that others can offer to them in this world. And so it is very difficult to love God in this way.

But if we make the choice and the commitment to concentrate on that which is truly morally good, we will not find it so difficult to love God because we know that God is perfect and so we would appreciate Him and we would want to be close to Him.

This aspect of love has this element of wanting to be close, to have fellowship, to be one with – to develop meaningful fellowship and relationship.

In this aspect of appreciating those who are morally good, it can also apply in some way to those who are not yet morally good but they have the potential to become morally good. They can grow to be more so.

So we appreciate them in terms of the potential that is in them, but not appreciate them in terms of what they are.

So, we can love those who are not yet good with the desire to help them to become good: We value them with regard to what they can become.

When God first created us, we were morally neutral, we were not yet good. God loved us, He valued us, and so He sought to help us, to teach us His ways, to provide for us whatever is good.

When we went astray, we sinned against Him, God still loved us; He still valued us because of the potential that we can still repent and become good, and so He was prepared to go to the cross on our behalf, for our sake, so that He can redeem us, He can help us to become good.

But the love that God has for us is not the same as the way He values other aspects of His creation. God does not love a tree in the way that He loves us because a tree does not have the potential to become morally good.

God can appreciate a tree that is beautiful but He does not love the tree in this kind of sense we are talking about.

Likewise, God does not love a horse or a cow in the same way as He loves us because they do not develop that kind of moral quality, but God is kind towards them, He treats them properly, not like some people who can abuse the animals. So God is kind towards them but He does not love them in this sense of appreciation of moral goodness.

But we have the potential to develop to become people whom God can truly love, appreciate us, and say, "I love you, you are precious to Me, and I appreciate fellowship with you." That is something that is so wonderful, that God has created us with the potential, in spite of the fact that we have sinned, we have failed, we have dishonoured Him, and yet He continues to seek to help us.

Let us look at another passage that refers to this aspect of love:

**John 14: 21-24**

- 21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."
- 22 Judas (not Iscariot) \*said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?"
- 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."
- 24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me."

This passage is very clear, that while it is true God loves all mankind, the meaning of love in this context is not quite the same in its emphasis.

Here the Lord Jesus makes it very clear He will love those who love Him, He will love those who obey Him, He will love those, basically you can say, who are good. Those who are given to the path of goodness, those who are prepared to follow Him, who are prepared to live by what is morally good, He will love him, God will love Him.

So this kind of love is dependent upon whether we are good or not: If we are good, God will love us more, He will treasure us more.

That is the reason why Daniel was called a man of preciousness, a man of high esteem. Daniel was precious to God because of his moral goodness. He loved God, he was loyal to God, he was faithful to God; he would not compromise in the midst of temptation and pressures from this world.

So the Lord Jesus says, "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me".

He is talking about love in reality, not talking about love as an emotion, love as an idea, love as a desire. "He who has My commandments and keeps them": There is practical response. We live by what we profess in our love for Him. We say we love Him, and we live by it.

So He says, "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him".

So it is to these people the Lord will love and disclose Himself to them. He says, "I will love him, My Father will love him."

So the meaning is: If we do not keep His commandments, if we do not follow Him, He is not going to love us in this way.

Let us not misquote and say, "God is love; He will always love me no matter what I do" in this kind of sense.

In the sense of God valuing us, appreciating us, wanting us to be close to Him, it is dependent on our response, the quality of our being.



And so, "Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him" (he was surprised by what the Lord Jesus said; it seemed to be discriminatory; He seemed to be selective, He seemed to be willing to disclose Himself to some and not to others; is this what He meant?); he said, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" Why is there this differentiation? Why does the Lord choose to disclose Himself to some and not to others?

And so, Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me."

The Lord Jesus did not explain further. He basically repeated what He said. The meaning is there. It is clear enough: "I will disclose Myself to him. Why? Because he loves Me; he keeps My word, therefore it is worthwhile for Me and it is meaningful for Me to want to share with him, to be close to him, to disclose Myself to him. It is meaningful and appropriate. God wants to have fellowship with those who love what is good. But he who does not love Me does not keep My words. So why would I want to be close to him, why would I want to share so much with him?"

So this is an aspect that we need to take heed. God loves us, but we must understand: What kind of love? What is the meaning of that love?

I will come to that now: The second aspect of that love when it is positive.

God does love us, but what is the meaning of that love?

**John 3: 16**, we are all familiar with this: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life...”

So here, we see that God loved the world.

This kind of love, this aspect of love, does not require us to be good, but the potential is there.

“For God so loved the world”, and we know that the world had rejected God, and gone their own way, that many people were in fact disobeying God to varying degrees of seriousness, but the Scriptures tell us that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.

God demonstrated His love for us, in that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.

So here the emphasis is on compassion, kindness, seeking to do us good. God is seeking to do good to help us to become what we ought to be.

So this second aspect of meaning concentrates on seeking to do good to those we love for their well-being whereas the first aspect concentrates on appreciating those who are morally good.

The difference is very important.

While we are to love all mankind, whether good or bad, and with a spirit of being willing to help contribute to their well-being, we are not called upon to be close to those whose hearts are not right, who are moving in the wrong direction, whose values are opposed to God. God does not want us to be close to them.

In fact, the apostle Paul told the Corinthians: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Do not get too close in relationships with those whose hearts are not right. What fellowship is there between light and darkness, between those who love God and those who are opposed to Him?”

So we need to differentiate: While we love in the sense of caring for the well-being of others, being prepared even to suffer inconvenience, pain and suffering in order to help those who can benefit, yet we cannot be close unless and until they respond positively.

When they begin to love God and love what is good, that is the time when we can draw nearer and the more they love God the deeper the fellowship can become.

So the differentiation between these two is very important for us in understanding how God wants us to obey Him.

So the first commandment - we are to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind - refers to our deep appreciation of God, our wanting to be close to Him, our wanting to develop a deep fellowship with Him, and to do that, we must give everything for that because it is worthwhile, because it is good, because we want the right values.

We should love our neighbour as ourselves concentrates on seeking to do good to our neighbour, just like a good Samaritan when he saw this person in need he had compassion on him, he loved him, he cared for him, he sought to help him, but it was not because he was very close to him, or he wanted to be very close to him.

So too, we can help strangers, we can help our enemies, we can contribute to the well-being of people who can be opposed to us, but we also need to take care that the way that we help will be based on what would ultimately be meaningful before God.

While our spirit is positive, we care for all, we want to do them good, but we need to be prayerful, to understand what is the way in which we are to care for others and to do them good.

The way we go about it varies with different people.

So, for example, we see the Lord Jesus showed compassion for the tax collectors, for the prostitutes: Those who recognized that they were wrong, but there was no one around who could really help them. The Lord Jesus loved them, He cared for them, He showed compassion for them; He showed kindness towards them. And there were some who responded – not all, but there were those like Zacchaeus who responded, who were very grateful – and Zacchaeus changed, and so he became a good man.

On the other hand, the Lord Jesus also loved the Pharisees. He wanted to do them good but He could not love them in terms of appreciation of them. They were hypocritical; they were causing harm to other people. And so the Lord Jesus denounced them, He rebuked them; He took His stand against them. He spoke against them so as to diminish their influence – they were leading people astray.

Likewise, we see the apostle Paul warning the Roman Christians about those who would lead them astray, whose motives were wrong.

So we need to see that on the one hand, we can love even those who are not good, but we also need to be wise in the manner in which we respond to different people.

What about our response to God if we love God? Do we seek to do Him good? Are we compassionate towards Him?

God does not need our help; God does not need our compassion. But does it mean we can do nothing for Him?

The answer is: "Certainly we can do much for Him!"

The greatest thing that we can do for God is to bring joy to His heart. And that is something that God values very much.

We can bring joy to the heart of God when we love what is good, when we respond well to Him, when we learn to deny ourselves, to take our cross and to follow the Lord Jesus. When we learn to deal with the self-life, when we recognize the things that are wrong in us and we are prepared to be corrected, to change and to do what is right, it brings great joy to the Lord.

That is why the Lord Jesus says, "There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents." God is very happy when He sees us being transformed to become good.

Sometimes we may think we cannot do much for God, we cannot do anything for Him, we can only receive from Him but we cannot give to Him. But that is wrong, it is not true.

We can see that God can be very sad; He can also be very happy depending on the way we respond.

God was so sad when He saw the Israelites going astray in the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus wept for Jerusalem when He saw them hardening their hearts. And God is so glad when He sees someone positive like Joseph, or Moses, or Daniel: When there is a positive direction in life, God is very glad.

Do we really want to bring joy to God? Well, that is a great privilege on our part, but it is not easy to do so.

To bring some joy to God, yes, it is not too difficult. Every time we make a positive choice based on what is good, God will be pleased, He will be happy, but to bring deep and lasting joy to God requires that we deal with our lives fully and totally, that we are prepared to give up anything that is not good, to deal with the self-life totally so that we can be fully identified with Him, so that we can properly walk with Him and live for Him.

The Lord willing, we will consider further the positive kind of love and relationship, what this means and how it is expressed, how it works out in life situations, our relationship with God, our relationship with others.

It is something that we can ponder over as to how we want to live our lives.

All the time as we live in this world, we are relating with God and we are relating with our neighbour. The question is: How do we go about it?

We can ignore God, and say, "God doesn't exist. I don't care!" You can do that, but that is a relationship. It is a relationship of ignoring Him, of not heeding what He has to say, and there will be consequences.

With regard to our neighbour, we can also ignore them, we can also love them; we can also be very preoccupied with them.

All this will affect us in the development of our character and in the quality of relationships.

How do we relate with people?

Do we relate with people based on blood ties, based on circumstances, based on our emotional inclinations, based on the benefits that we can get?

Or do we relate with people based on what is truly good in the eyes of God, what is meaningful to Him?

These are issues which the Scriptures address, and if we look to the Lord, they can become clearer to us, and it can help us in our daily lives to approach life in the right way.

Otherwise, we can waste away our lives; we can think that we are doing something good when actually it is not. So we need to learn to look at these issues objectively, in the way that God intends for us to work out our lives.

Our time on earth is a very short time. It will pass away, but the quality of our being will carry on for eternity and the kind of relationships that we establish as a result of our approach and the attitude of our hearts will have bearing for eternal issues.

So today, I have sought to basically consider with you why quality in our being bears a significant relationship with our relationships with people and with God.

If there is poor quality in our being, this will be expressed in the poor kind of relationships that we have. If there is quality in our heart, it will also be expressed in the quality of relationships that can be developed. And the more we pursue the right path in relationships, the more it will help us and develop our character, and the more we pursue the wrong path in our relationships, the more it will affect our character negatively.

So if we treat people with kindness, we will develop greater quality of kindness in our hearts. If we treat people with the spirit of jealousy and seeking to take advantage, then there will grow in us a more significant degree of self-centredness in our being.

So we need to identify with God, what is in His heart, what is valuable, what is important, how to love God in the right way, and how to love our neighbour in the right way.

And it is because God so loved us that He provided the cross to help us. On our part, we can also learn to love God and in so doing, as we appreciate what is of true value, we also learn how to love others in the right way.

Let us then come before the Lord and ask Him to help us to understand these issues more clearly and let us ask Him to search our hearts to help us understand ourselves.

Are we relating in the right way? Are we nurturing the right spirit in our hearts?

If there is anything amiss, let us ask Him to help us to correct them.

If we have been learning what is positive and good, let us ask Him to help us deepen, develop greater quality so that our time on earth will be well spent and we will be better equipped for eternity.