

Read: Matthew 10:34-42

Jesus Teaches Us to Love him Above all Things

Matthew 10:37-39

“Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Silas runs down the hallway, bursts through a doorway, leaps into the air, and lands perfectly on his hands and feet—just like Spiderman would. Silas doesn't ever want to go to bed without his Spiderman pillow, blanket, and jammies either.

Mom comes in to turn on the night light for Silas and tuck him in tight like a spider in a web. “I love you to the moon and back, my dear. Have a good sleep.” Silas replied, “Mommy, I love you more than anything . . . more than AN-Y-THING . . . I love you more than anything in the whole wide world!”

Is Silas the most adorable mini superhero ever? Quite possibly. But is Silas talking the way Jesus would want us to talk? Not really.

This week we are going to spend some time thinking about how Christians want to put God first in their hearts. That might *sound* easy. “Of course I love God!” we say. But today Jesus speaks some very difficult words for us to understand. Jesus teaches us that if we truly have God first in our hearts, that means that we will love him more than our parents or grandparents, our children or grandchildren, our best friends, and yes, even more than Spiderman.

Does God want you to love your family and friends? Yes! He does! Does God want people like Silas and his mom to love each other so very much? Absolutely! But God does *not* want any of those people to come before him.

Take a moment to think about how God has put you first in his heart. All of us have sinned against God in so many ways. Yet God sent his Son Jesus to this world to suffer and die *for you*. Jesus set aside the glory of heaven for a while so that *you* could have the glory of heaven. How amazing that “God so loved the world” so much that he would allow us to become his dear children!

Jesus wants you to know that love. And when we know that love of God, what a joy it can be to love him *first* and *best* in our hearts. And you know what? When we love God with our whole heart, he will help us to love our family and friends in just the right way. Thank you, Lord for your love!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- Who are the people in this world that you love the most?
- What do you love about Jesus?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- When you are older, what might you be tempted to love more than God?
- Why do you think it is so difficult to love God more than everything else?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Evaluate this common statement by parents about their children: “I just love them so much—they are my whole world!”
- Explain why your parents, your best friends, your spouse, or your children are the ones Satan might tempt you the most to love more than God.

Closing Prayer:

Dear God, you have given me many special people in my life—family and friends. Help me to love them so much, but to love you the most. Amen.

Hymn: CW 391:1,2 – God Loved the World So that He Gave

God loved the world so that he gave His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe Should everlasting life receive.

Christ is the solid rock of faith, Who was made flesh and suffered death.
All who confide in him alone Are built on this chief cornerstone.