

love

Jesus

HIS WORD

HIS CHURCH

Love Jesus, Love His Word, Love His Church

GMSA Teens – 2015

Our goal as Christians is to become more like Jesus Christ.

We can do that as we learn more about him, as we understand the gospel which tells us the good news about faith in him, and as we learn from His Word more how we ought to live.

In order to do that, we are going to focus on loving Jesus, loving His Word, and loving His Church.

Love Jesus

- Because He is fully God – *worship him*.
- Because He is our Savior – *believe on him*.
- Because He is our Lord – *obey him*.

What is God like?

What is the gospel?

How should I live?

Love His Word (Jesus' Word)

- Because it tells us about God – *hear it*.
- Because it tells us how to be right with God – *believe it*.
- Because it tells us how to please God – *obey it*.

What is God like?

What is the gospel?

How should I live?

Love His Church (Jesus' Body)

- Because God loves it – *thank God for it*.
- Because Jesus loves it – *thank Jesus for dying for it*.
- Because God's children love it – *love it like Jesus does*.

What is God like?

What is the gospel?

How should I live?

Love Jesus Because He Is God

GMSA Teens – 2015

Our goal as Christians is to become more like Jesus Christ. We are learning more about him, about the gospel, and about how we ought to live. We must love Jesus first and foremost because of who he is: God.

What is absolute authority (Matt 28:18)?

- Jesus' claim is audacious! To assert "all authority" (total sovereignty) is the claim of a king. To assert all authority "in heaven and on earth" (universal sovereignty) is the claim of God.
- *"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'"* (Abraham Kuyper, 1837–1920).
- If Jesus is God, and if he is the risen and ascended Lord, we must gladly acknowledge his authority.

What does this authority call us to do (Matt 28:19–20)?

- **Become his disciple:** submit to his lordship, acknowledge his deity, trust him as your Savior. Jesus is God, who has existed forever (John 1:1–3). But Jesus came to earth as a servant, to live among us—without sin, and to die for our sin (Phil 2:5–10). He took the death we deserved for our sin, and God will credit his righteousness to us if we turn in faith from our sin to Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:21). Believing in Jesus means gladly acknowledging him like Thomas did, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). All of the universe will one day submit to his lordship (Phil 2:10–11). No one will be able to resist his authority and carve out their own sovereignty next to Jesus'. But Jesus' disciples are those who have gladly acknowledged his sovereignty.
- **Obey his commands:** this flows out of his lordship—what he says we do, what we do should reflect his words and attitudes, and we are becoming like Jesus. If you are beautiful, Jesus says, "Mine." And we say, "Yours." If you are rich, smart, talented, athletic, Jesus says, "Mine." When we look at the hours and minutes before us in our day, when we look at the years and plans we have for the future, when we think about our relationships, friends, families, Jesus says, "Mine." And we say, "Yours."
- **Identify with his church:** Jesus promised to build his church "until the end of the age," a group of people who are his Body, for whom he died. If we love Jesus, we will love his church.

Love Jesus Because He Is Our Savior

GMSA Teens – 2015

Our goal as Christians is to become more like Jesus Christ. We are learning more about him, about the gospel, and about how we ought to live. We ought to love Jesus because he is God, and not just to have warm thoughts of him, but to worship him as God. Today, we are going to highlight another reason to love Jesus, and it flows from the first: He is our Savior.

Loving Jesus as Savior is Unnatural

- We were created by God to worship and serve him (Rev 4:11).
- We are sinners by birth and choice (Rom 5:12–14).
- We are condemned to eternal separation from God because of our sin (Rom 6:23).
- We naturally refuse to submit to Jesus as Lord (Rom 8:7–8).

Jesus Commands Us to Believe on Him

Truly believing in Christ, or saving faith, is the knowledge of, assent to, and unreserved trust in the accomplished redemption of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. It is made up of three aspects:

- Knowledge — the intellectual aspect. In order to exercise faith, one must have an understanding of truth, including a knowledge of who God is, who Jesus Christ is, what sin is, and what faith and repentance are as the Bible reveals them (Rom 10:8, 17).
- Assent — the emotional aspect. Saving faith accepts the intellectual content and applies that truth to himself (Matt 13:23; Rom 4:21; Heb 11:1; Jas 2:19).
- Trust — the volitional aspect. Faith surrenders completely to and embraces the gospel. This is what the Bible refers to when it says “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31; John 20:31; 1:12; 3:18).

We Love Him, Because He Loved Us First

- The gospel demonstrates God’s incredible love for us (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10).
- We should love Jesus because He is our Savior—we *must believe on him*.

To Discuss:

Briefly share your testimony of salvation, focusing less on the circumstances surrounding your conversion and more on what saving faith means to you.

- What do you believe about God, sin, and Jesus Christ?
- How do those facts apply to you?
- How does your belief in those things motivate you to respond?

Love Jesus Because He Is Our Lord

GMSA Teens – 2015

Our goal as Christians is to become more like Jesus Christ. We are learning more about him, about the gospel, and about how we ought to live. We must love and worship Jesus because he is God and we must love and believe in Jesus because he is our Savior. Finally, we ought to love and obey Jesus because he is our Lord.

Loving Jesus means we obey him.

- Jesus, as God, possesses universal authority. His disciples are those who are being taught to observe everything he commands (Matt 28:19).
- If we love Jesus, we will obey him (John 15:20; 14:15; 1 John 5:3). If we do not obey Jesus, we cannot claim to love him.

Loving Jesus means we follow his example.

- We must forgive like he forgave (Eph 4:32–5:1).
- We must serve like he served (Phil 2:5–10).
- We must suffer like he suffered (1 Pet 2:21–23; Heb 12:3).

To Discuss:

- Do you love Jesus as your Lord? What are some of the evidences in your life (your obedience to him)?
- What makes it difficult for you to forgive others? How does the sin God has forgiven you compare to the sins you are asked to forgive others?
- Are you known as a servant? What things are you unwilling to do for others? Why not?
- Have you ever suffered for Christ? How? Would you be willing to suffer?

Love the Bible Because It Tells Us About God

GMSA Teens – 2015

Our goal as Christians is to become more like Jesus Christ. We are learning more about him, about the gospel, and about how we ought to live. We must love Jesus—worship him because he is God, believe in him because he is our Savior, and obey him because he is our Lord. If we love Jesus, then we love the Bible, because it tells us about God whom we love, worship, and obey.

The Bible is the only way we can know God.

God is infinite and we are finite (Isa 55:8–9; 1 Tim 6:16). This creates a gap that cannot be breached, a fundamental distinction between the Creator and his creation that has always existed and will continue forever. The only way that man can know about God is through God's self-revelation. The human mind alone can never know God (Rom 8:7; 1 Cor 1:21).

The Bible is God's Word.

The Bible is the Word of God. The words of Scripture are given to us as God himself breathed them out (2 Tim 3:16–17). The writers of Scripture were being controlled by the Holy Spirit as they penned the words of the Bible (2 Pet 1:21).

All of the Bible is God's Word. God inspired the original words of Scripture, not just the thoughts. The whole process was guided and controlled by the Holy Spirit of God, who guided every word so that it was exactly what He wanted (Num 22:38; Jer 1:9; 1 Cor 2:13).

Because the Bible is God's Word...

It is **infallible**—incapable of error or mistake. Everything the Bible predicts will happen, everything it promises will hold true, and it will never be destroyed (John 10:35; Matt 5:18).

It is **inerrant**—without error. Everything the Bible says is true (Ps 12:6; John 17:17). The kind of Bible in which we believe is directly proportionate to the kind of God in whom we believe. God, who breathed out the Scriptures, is Truth (John 3:33; Rom 3:4; Tit 1:2). Jesus Christ is the truth (John 14:6), and the Holy Spirit, who is the agent in inspiration, is Truth (1 John 5:6). If we do not believe that the Bible is truthful, then we cannot believe in a God who is truthful.

It is **authoritative**—since the Bible is the Word of God, it carries his authority. It is as if God were physically speaking directly to us (cf. Luke 16:31).

To Discuss:

- Do you believe the Bible is God's Word? What evidence is there in your life that you believe this? How would someone know that you believe the Bible is the Word of God?
- If the Bible is God's Word, how do you treat it? How do you act when God's Word is taught or preached?
- Do you receive the Bible as it truly is, the Word of God (1 Thess 2:13)? Or do you think of it just as someone's ideas? How do you receive God's Word (Jas 1:21–22)?

Love the Bible Because It Tells Us How to Be Right with God

GMSA Teens – 2015

Our goal as Christians is to become more like Jesus Christ. We must love Jesus—worship him because he is God, believe in him because he is our Savior, and obey him because he is our Example. If we love Jesus, then we love the Bible, because it tells us about our God whom we love, worship, and obey. We also love the Bible because it tells us how we can be right with God (2 Tim 3:14–15).

The Bible tells us we are sinners, separated from God.

- Man's pride, his unwavering zeal for his own glory, flies in the face of God's righteousness, His unwavering zeal for His glory (Isa 48:11; Rom 1:25).
- Our pride pours contempt on God's glory (Rom 1:26–27).
- God's righteousness obligates him to pour wrath on man's pride (Rom 1:32; 3:19–20).

The Bible tells us God made a way to be right with him.

- This way to be right with God is not by human effort (Rom 3:21).
- This way to be right with God is by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:22–23).
- This way to be right with God is made possible by the atoning death of Jesus Christ (Rom 3:24–25a).
- This way to be right with God corresponds to his justice, both in forgiving sins under the old covenant (Rom 3:25b–26a) and declaring sinners “not guilty” (Rom 3:26b).

The Bible tells us how we can be right with him.

- Obedient faith (Rom 3:22) in the Person and work of Christ provides the only way to be right with God. We must turn from our sinful self-reliance and put our full trust in Jesus Christ's finished work.
- Because of the death of Jesus Christ, God's righteousness is vindicated and sinners who turn in faith to Christ are declared righteous (Rom 3:26).

To Discuss:

- How do you know that you are a sinner before God? Is there anything you can do by yourself to alleviate this condition? What have you tried?
- How do you know that God has declared you righteous? What confidence do you have?

Love the Bible Because It Tells Us How to Please God

GMSA Teens – 2015

Our goal as Christians is to become more like Jesus Christ. We are learning more about him, about the gospel, and about how we ought to live. We must love Jesus—worship him because he is God, believe in him because he is our Savior, and obey him because he is our Lord. If we love Jesus, then we love the Bible, because it tells us about God and how we can be right with him through faith in Jesus Christ. But the Bible also tells us how we ought to live.

The Bible tells us that our lives can please God.

- The Bible gives us instruction on how to live in a God-pleasing way (1 Thess 4:1–2).
- The Bible tells us how we can grow into mature disciples of Jesus Christ (2 Tim 3:17).

The Bible tells us how to please God.

- We can only please God because of Jesus Christ's finished work (Heb 13:20–21).
- We can please God by persevering in faith (Heb 11:5–6).
- We can please God by obeying his revealed Word (2 Cor 5:9; Eph 5:8b–10; Col 1:10; 1 Thess 4:1; 1 Tim 2:2–3; 2 Tim 2:4).
- We can please God by proclaiming the gospel (Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:4).
- We can please God by serving our brothers and sisters in Christ (Rom 15:1–3; 1 Cor 7:32–34; 1 Tim 5:4; Heb 13:16).

To Discuss:

- Do you see evidence in your heart and life that you desire to please God (Phil 2:13)? What kinds of things show that? How do you feel when you sin and displease God?
- How important is the Bible to you? Are you hungry for it, like a newborn baby is for milk (1 Pet 2:2)? What would that kind of hunger look like in your life?
- How willing are you to obey God's Word? What stands in the way of you obeying what you know God's Word commands you to do (Jas 1:21)? What things are more important to you than pleasing God?

Love Jesus' Church Because God Loves It

GMSA Teens – 2015

Our goal as Christians is to become more like Jesus Christ. We must love Jesus—worship him because he is God, believe in him because he is our Savior, and obey him because he is our Lord and Example. If we love Jesus, then we love the Bible, because it tells us about God, how we can be right with him, and how we ought to live. If we love Jesus, then we love his church.

The church is God's idea.

The church is not an idea that people have made up. “I wonder what we could do on Sundays?” “I wonder how we could get money from people?” God is the one who conceived the idea of the church, a spiritual body of believers in Jesus Christ, taken from every tribe, language, and people group (Eph 3:1–6). God was the one who chose those individuals in eternity past to be his children (Eph 1:3–5). The church is God's brainchild.

The church belongs to God.

The church does not belong to a group of investors, a corporation, or even to its members, as if it was “employee-owned.” It belongs to God (Acts 20:28). It is God's flock (1 Peter 5:2). It is God's field and God's building (1 Cor 3:9). It is God's temple (1 Cor 3:16). It belongs to God.

The church was bought at the cost of the life of God's Son.

Just as something we have personally sacrificed and paid for is precious to us, so the church is precious to God. He purchased it with the death of his Son (Acts 20:28). God loved the world so much he sent his Son (John 3:16). God's Son's death on the cross paid the cost to make the church God's own.

The church is protected by God himself.

God jealously protects his church because it is precious to him. It is a “holy temple,” or an exclusive dwelling, a special place for God and him alone (1 Cor 3:16–17). Those who would tear apart God's church or seek to use it for their own gain will face God's wrath (2 Pet 2:1–3), because if you love God, you love his precious possession, his church (1 Pet 2:9).

To Discuss:

- Why is it sometimes hard to remember that the church is God's idea? To whom do we sometimes think the church belongs? How does remembering that it is God's idea and that it belongs to God change your attitude toward his church?
- What is the most valuable thing you own? Why is it so special to you? What is the most precious thing to God? How valuable is the church to you? How does that show on Sundays?
- How do people destroy God's church? Do they always mean to hurt it? What are some ways we can make sure we are not guilty of harming God's church?

Love Jesus' Church Because Jesus Loves It

GMSA Teens – 2015

Our goal as Christians is to become more like Jesus Christ by learning more about him, the gospel, and how we ought to live. We must love Jesus—worship him because he is God, believe in him because he is our Savior, and obey him because he is our Lord and Example. If we love Jesus, then we love the Bible, because it tells us about God, how we can be right with him, and how we ought to live. If we love Jesus, then we love his church. We love it because God loves it—it belongs to him, he purchased it at the cost of his Son's life, and he protects it—and we love Jesus' church because Jesus himself loves it. He *died* for it.

Jesus loves his church.

When Paul exhorts Christian husbands to love their wives, he can think of no higher love to which he can call them than Christ's love for his church (Eph 5:25). The universe's ultimate love is that of Jesus Christ, for his Bride, the church.

Jesus died for his church.

Jesus' love for his church was played out in his sacrificial life and death for her. The church's praise will ring out eternally to Jesus Christ because "he was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). You and I are part of Jesus' church and will live eternally because *he died for us*.

Jesus builds his church.

Jesus did not simply die for his church and then abandon her. Jesus cares for his church, lovingly making her more holy through his Word (Eph 5:26). But even before the church came into existence, before Jesus had even gone to the cross, he promised, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). We may be concerned with attendance numbers, finances, auditorium size, or even spiritual growth in our church, but Jesus has promised to build his church (cf. 1 Cor 3:6–7).

Jesus protects his church.

What Jesus is building, he protects and oversees. In Revelation 1, John sees a vision of the ascended Jesus Christ, terrifyingly powerful in his glorified state. What was Jesus doing? He was walking among the lampstands, which represented the small, persecuted, struggling churches of Asia Minor (Rev 1:12, 20) and holding in his hand the messengers of those churches, saying, "Fear not..." (Rev 1:18). Our church may seem small, weak, and lacking in resources, but Jesus, the risen Lord of the Universe, holds us in his hand. He cares for his church.

To Discuss:

- How does your love for Jesus' church compare to his love for her? Could you ever love the church more than Jesus? What makes us realize we don't love the church like he does?
- How important is it that your church seems powerful, large, secure, or progressive? Where does church growth come from? Who makes that happen? How?

Love Jesus' Church Because God's Children Love It

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Our goal as Christians is to become more like Jesus Christ by learning more about him, the gospel, and how we ought to live. We must love Jesus—worship him because he is God, believe in him because he is our Savior, and obey him because he is our Lord and Example. If we love Jesus, then we love the Bible, because it tells us about God, how we can be right with him, and how we ought to live. If we love Jesus, then we love his church. We love it because God loves it, because Jesus himself loves it, and because God's children love the church. In fact, it's an identifying mark of God's children—they love Jesus' church!

God's children love God's children/Jesus' church (1 John 3-5).

- God has loved us and made us his children (3:1).
- We show we are God's children when we love God's children (3:10).
- The devil's children hate each other; God's children love each other (3:12-15).
- Jesus gave his life for his church; Jesus' followers give their lives for his church (3:16-18).
- We obey God when we love Jesus' church (3:23).
- Love characterizes God and his children (4:7-12).
- God's love for us motivates our love for each other (4:19).
- You cannot love God and hate God's children (4:20).
- If you love God, you love his children (5:1).
- We love our church by pursuing obedience (5:2).

To Discuss:

- What does it mean to love Jesus' church? How is that difficult sometimes?
- Does your attendance at the gatherings of Jesus' church show that you love the church? What about your attitude toward meeting with Jesus' church?
- Do you love Jesus' church by praying for it? What are some ways you can do a better job praying for your church? How can you pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- What are some ways you can put the spiritual needs of Jesus' church above your own preferences?

What does it mean to love the church?

We are commanded to “walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us” (Eph 5:2). In other words, we are to love the church just as Jesus does. The command to love Jesus’ church is the same as the oft-repeated New Testament command to “love one another” (e.g., Rom 12:10; 13:8; 1 Thess 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thess 1:3; 1 Pet 1:22; 4:8; 1 John 3:11; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 1:5). *So we love Jesus’ church when we love the brothers and sisters in our local assembly.*

And this is where it gets difficult. We may love our church’s beautiful building, we may be enraptured by our favorite preacher’s sermon series, or we may appreciate the array of ministries and opportunities our church offers, but loving these difficult, obnoxious, unkind, and sinful people is a different matter entirely! Jesus’ love for us is our example to love his church. What about the sinful people in my church? Jesus loved me while I was a sinner (Rom 5:6–8). What about the cantankerous or antagonistic people in my church? Jesus loved me while I was his enemy (Rom 5:10). What about the people who have weak consciences or unreasonable standards in my church? Jesus served others, not himself (Rom 15:3; Mark 10:45).

How can we love the church?

How then can we “walk in love” and serve one another through love (Gal 5:13)? Here are four practical ways.

Meet regularly with Jesus’ church. Don’t turn your back on Jesus’ church because you don’t like the facilities or prefer a different ministry emphasis. Don’t abandon Jesus’ church for something that is not the church. Jesus has promised his presence with his church until the end of the age (Matt 28:20). Jesus meets with his church—do you?

Pray for Jesus’ church. ~~If you see problems~~ When you see problems in your church, pray for your church. Are you concerned about your church? Remember Jesus loves his church—he died for her—and he cares for your church more than you ever could (Rev 1:12,20). We pray with confidence when we pray according to God’s will (1 John 5:14), and we know what God’s will is for the church—that she becomes like Jesus! This is what God is at work doing (Phil 1:6; 2:13). Pray the God-breathed prayers of the New Testament for your church (e.g., Eph 3:14–21; Phil 1:9–11; Rom 15:5–6; 1 Thess 5:23–24). Jesus prayed for his church (John 17:20–26)—do you?

Follow the spiritual leaders Jesus has placed over his church. If you don’t like or don’t “click with” your church leadership, you might be tempted to turn your back on Jesus’ church. In fact, disagreement with the teaching or ministry direction of our leaders is a very spiritual-sounding reason for abandoning the group of brothers and sisters to whom we have committed ourselves. But if Jesus was going to show us something new from his Word or to correct a misunderstanding we had about the Bible, how would he do that? Wouldn’t he use the leaders and teachers he has given to his church for that very purpose (Eph 4:11–14)? It seems the Chief Shepherd would use the shepherds he has set up over his church (1 Pet 5:4–5) to “keep watch over your soul” (Heb 13:17). Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, entrusted the church for which he died to your elders (Heb 13:20–21; Acts 20:28)—do you follow them?

Put the spiritual needs of Jesus’ church above your own preferences. Often our opinions about how the building should be decorated or the way in which the meetings or programs should be set up are more important to us than the spiritual needs of our brothers and sisters. If anyone could have lobbied for his own interests instead of giving himself for his church, it was Jesus (Phil 2:3–8). Jesus gave up his rights and reputation for his church—do you?

Next Lord’s Day, as you gather in Jesus’ name with that group of believers you call your brothers and sisters in Christ, look around and ask yourself this question: “Do I love this church like Jesus does?”