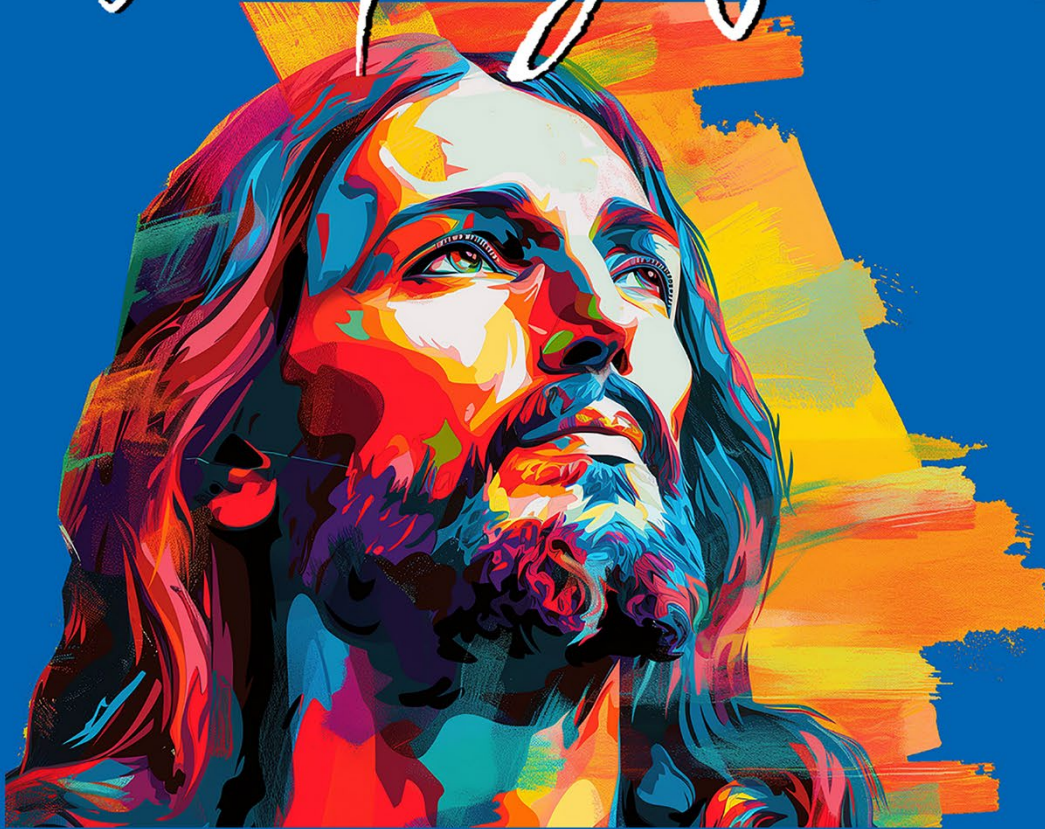


Finding Jesus



Embracing the Complete
Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.

Study Guide

CHARLES S. STUART

Let's Just Imagine!

Let's just imagine what might happen in our family, community, church, nation, and world if all believers **KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH!** helped usher in the

When people embrace their role in the Kingdom of God here on earth, their **EYES, EARS, MIND, HANDS, FEET & VOICE** will be used to reflect their faith.

They will use their **EYES** to look for needs that are unmet, and to watch over those in positions of authority.

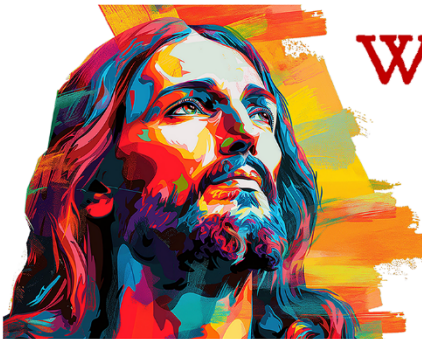
They will use their **EARS** to listen for the cries of those in pain, and to hear and address comments that demean those in need.

They will use their **MIND** to think of ways to get involved and to question for themselves what God would have them do for Him.

They will use their **HANDS** to do what is needed, remembering that it is through their hands that Jesus touches the "least of these."

They will use their **FEET** to go where needed...overseas, across the street or into the voting booth...to bring the Kingdom of God to those in need.

They will use their **VOICE** to speak up and out for those without a voice, and to hold those with power accountable to remember "the least of these" when making decisions.



**Wouldn't it be lovely to live
in a world like that!?!**

Charles Stuart

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About the Author.

Charlie Stuart was raised in the church by faithful, loving parents whose lives of service to “the others” inspired Charlie and his five siblings to purpose their lives to serve others, particularly the “least of these.”



Charlie has been active in the local church all his life serving as: Deacon, adult Bible study leader (20+ years), member of a pastor search committee and all the other committees in the local church.

Charlie graduated from the University of Florida in 1973 with an undergraduate degree in Marketing, with a focus on Economics. He worked in the family's office products company for 16 years and spent the following 20 years as a professional speaker, author, and consultant.

He also made time to volunteer for 25+ years with the YMCA as a local board member and on national task forces for the YMCA of the USA.

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THIRD FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH

Jesus Established 'Love God'
and 'Love Others' as a New
Priority for God's Law.

Foundational Truth.

III. Jesus Established ‘Love God’ and ‘Love Others’ as a New Priority for God’s Law.

Until Jesus, God had chosen to “speak” through those He appointed as prophets and others, like Abraham and Moses. With Jesus, however, humans for the first and only time, could talk with God face-to-face even though many did not understand what He said or who He really was.

Mosaic Law had been introduced almost 1,500 years before the birth of Jesus and had been codified by the ruling priests as the law for the basis of living for the Jews. When Jesus began teaching it had been over 400 years since the last prophet of the Old Testament.

400 years of silence.

WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

The Jewish religious ruling hierarchy believed, and enforced, the 613 laws and regulations of Mosaic Law. The Jewish people had been taught these laws for generations and their lives were supposed to be shaped around them.

Jesus’s mission was to move the focus from the “jot and tittle” legalism of the Mosaic Law to God’s law of love.

This message turned the religious world of the Jews upside down. And it still does today. His teachings and actions, particularly when He knowingly provoked the law and tradition, were what made Him dangerous to the Jewish leaders. It was for this that Jewish leadership challenged Him, provoked Him, and finally had Him killed.

III. Jesus Established ‘Love God’ and ‘Love Others’ as a New Priority for God’s Law.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Of the many profound statements Jesus made there is one that stands above all. The Gospel of Jesus, in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, give similar versions. In Matthew (v. 35) it starts with a question from a religious lawyer, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”

22 ³⁷ He (Jesus) said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.’ ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Matthew 22:37-40 ¹

Before these words of Jesus, the law and the teaching of the prophets were paramount. After them they became the basis for a new ordering of the commandments of the law. No more counting cumin*... it was now justice, mercy, and faith that matter more than religious legalism.

In effect, the traditional law would now be filtered through this new preamble, and if the law did not meet the filter of ‘love God and love others’ then it should be replaced with one that does. What, then, is this “love” that Jesus spoke about to the religious lawyer?

* “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others.” — Matthew 23:23

1 Additional scriptural background found at Matthew 22:34-40.
Other versions found at Mark 12:28-34 & Luke 10:25-28.

Foundational Truth.

“You shall love the Lord your God . . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus combined two elements of “love” using quotes from the era of Moses, the very beginning of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). The first element is the Shema (to listen, hark, hear and do), the central prayer in Judaism. It is a statement of belief in one God and describes how to “love the Lord your God.”

The second element Jesus includes in His new commandment is “love your neighbor as yourself,” which is also found in the Hebrew Bible. This new commandment can be expressed simply as “Love God. Love Others.”

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord is Our God, the Lord alone.”

The opening phrase of the Shema, found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, “Sh’ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Echad,” translated as...

6⁴Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. 5⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Deuteronomy 6:4-5

This prayer is the most important of the Jewish liturgy, said at least twice daily, and has a revered place during Yom Kipper, the holiest day of the year in Judaism. It defines that there is but one God.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

What follows in verse 5, though, is a commandment for His people to *“love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”*

This is an all-consuming, with everything we are, for all time, to show our love for Him by our acts of commitment to obey Him, to serve Him, and to worship Him. His love for us is perfect because He is “the

III. Jesus Established ‘Love God’ and ‘Love Others’ as a New Priority for God’s Law.

lord,” but we are not perfect, but He expects our full devotion and effort, remembering that in our imperfection we are, through His grace, forgiven and made righteous.

“You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself.”

The second element is quoted by Jesus from Leviticus 19:18b, “*you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” Interestingly, a few verses down, in Leviticus 19:34b is, “you shall love the alien as yourself.” Does this mean that “the alien” is your neighbor?

Loving your neighbor as yourself is an act of God’s love for you. We are to put ourselves second when dealing with others who are in distress, persecuted, outcast, oppressed, lonely — these are anathema to God’s love for us and we are to intercede when and where we can with sacrificial acts of love.

“Just as I Have Loved You, You Also Should Love One Another.”

The setting in John is very different. It’s in the upper room, supper is finished, and Judas has left. This is the last time He will spend extended time with His followers before the events leading to His death, and He begins what is known as the “Farewell Discourse” (John 13:31 to the end of chapter 17).

Jesus sets the tone for this final discourse by announcing, not for the first time, that He is leaving them.

13 ³³“Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’” John 13:33

Then Jesus gives them a “new commandment” that sounds familiar but raises the bar from the earlier answer He gave to the religious lawyer, from “love your neighbor as yourself” to “love as I have loved you.”

Foundational Truth.

13³⁴ "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

If anything is clear in the Gospel of Jesus, it is this...the priority of His Followers must be acts of His love in His name.

Full stop.

When churches stand for displaying the Ten Commandments and ignoring this New Commandment, they do so at the risk of hearing these words of Jesus, *"Woe to you...hypocrites!"*

The purpose of Jesus, our purpose as His Followers, is to love God and love others as Jesus taught in the Gospel of Jesus. This is the New Commandment.

Jesus came to show a better way. A way of love. Not a love defined by feelings or emotion. His love, God's love is defined by what His followers do for others.

It is not tough love, but a love that is tough. This "love that is tough" demands our very best, and the good news — what it looks like and sounds like — is written in the Gospel of Jesus.

"The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Jesus set an example for His priority of love over law by using the laws for observing the Sabbath. The Sabbath laws were the most important to the temple leaders and to the people on farms, in the villages, towns, and cities.

He chose two episodes to teach the concept of love over law first by reaping, winnowing, and eating wheat on the Sabbath; then He healed a withered hand, in a synagogue, on the Sabbath. Also, He did this openly,

III. Jesus Established ‘Love God’ and ‘Love Others’ as a New Priority for God’s Law.

in the presence of people who had gathered, His followers, and some of the Pharisees.

Harvesting Grain on the Sabbath.

Here’s how Matthew recorded the “grain harvesting violation.” Similar versions are found in Mark and Luke.

12 ¹At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ²When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath.” ³He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests. ⁵Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are guiltless? ⁶I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.”

Matthew 12:1-8 ²

A first thing to note in the story is the Pharisees’ claim, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” (v. 2). They use the only frame of reference they had, to enforce the “jot and tittle” of the law.

Jesus answered with a short history lesson about David receiving “the bread of Presence” from the altar in violation of tradition and reminded the Pharisees that the Law allowed priests to break the Sabbath without guilt.

² Other versions found at Mark 2:23-28 & Luke 6:1-5.

Foundational Truth.

Jesus claims that He is *"something greater than the temple,"* (v. 6). His use of "temple" represents not the building, but the totality of the religious structure: the Law, rules, tradition, and culture. The Pharisees and other religious leaders made the culture of legalism more important than seeing their role through God's prism of love for others.

"I tell you," (v. 6), echoes His prior claim, made in His first public appearance (Luke 4:16-21). He is the Son of God changing how the Law will be viewed in His Kingdom of God on Earth.

Jesus states clearly what He desires, *"mercy and not sacrifice"* over condemning the *"guiltless,"* (v. 7). He reminds those listening of something He said earlier in His ministry, just after calling Matthew.

9¹³ "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous but sinners." Matthew 9:13³

Eight hundred years earlier the prophet Hosea spoke for God when he said (Hosea 6:6), "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice; the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."

Isaiah, writing for God c. 600 BCE, challenged the people to turn away from displays of false piety by treating others through the genuine love for God. It's in Chapter 58. The first half (vv. 1-5) is an indictment by God on the people for their false piety. The second half (vv. 6-14) is what pleases God.

Jesus's statement makes it plain to any with ears to listen,

"For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

3 Other versions found at Mark 2:13-17 & Luke 5:27-32.

III. Jesus Established 'Love God' and 'Love Others' as a New Priority for God's Law.

Healing a Withered Hand on the Sabbath.

3¹ Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. 2 They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. 3 And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." 4 Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. 5 He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Mark 3:1-6⁴

Mark's story is straight forward. Jesus was in a synagogue, saw a man with a withered hand, and said, "*Come forward*" (v. 3). Then, He asked of those in the room, "*Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?*" (v. 4). This was not a rhetorical question, "But they were silent."

Then comes a look we don't want to ever see from Jesus, "*He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart...*" (v. 5).

Woe to those who anger and grieve the heart of Jesus.

In the face of Pharisaical resistance, Jesus continued to make the point that loving God and loving others overrules the religious rules and laws of the church.

⁴ Other versions found at Matthew 12:9-14 & Luke 6:6-11.

Foundational Truth.

CONCLUSION.



Jesus wants His Followers to love God and love others with wild, reckless abandon. It's what the world needs and we're the only ones who can make it so. This "love that is sacrificial" demands our very best.

Where do you stand?

How does Jesus saying that "love your God" and "love others" change the relationship with the Law and prophets of the Old Testament?

What does loving others with wild, reckless abandon look or sound like?

What makes loving others so hard?