

# “Love Integration Reboot”

Mark 11:17, Mark 12:28-34 & 41-44, Isaiah 29:13 & 1 John 4:19

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**Prayer for Understanding** Gracious God please help us understand and live your will. Open our hearts to love as you love. Amen

We are created in the image of God to love. God is love. God’s love is ever expanding. God created the cosmos to share love with us. Every fiber of our being is designed by a loving God to love.

In computer lay terms, our operating systems have crashed. In our current state, we are unable to perform as we are designed, to love God, love all people, love the cosmos, and love self perfectly. Sometimes we struggle to receive love. Sometimes our love gets twisted harming others. Sometimes our love gets distorted. Sometimes we love our self, or a certain group, more than loving all people completely, perfectly, and equally. Sometimes our love is suppressed by pain, disease, disorders, oppression, abuse. Sometimes our love is absent. All of us need a love integration reboot.

The law is designed to teach us how to love. In the Ten Commandments, the first four commandments teach us how to love God and the remaining six teach us how to love one another. Humanity was still struggling to love, so religions created long lists of detailed laws, rituals, practices, and obligations with the intent of helping us reboot our love. Sometimes religion helps us grow in love. Sometimes religion hampers our love, especially in regard to loving people that are different.

A scribe is a person who devoted their life to studying the law, which is studying how to love. **Mark 12:28-34 NRSV** “One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that Jesus answered them well, he asked Jesus, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Then the scribe said to Jesus, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘God is one, and besides God there is no other’; and ‘to love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.”

Jesus said: “**The Lord our God, the Lord is one.**” The scribe replied, “**God is one.**” God is also three, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. Each member’s love is perfect and complete. Each member of God loves the other two members and self equally forming one God. God is three distinct persons united as one God by love. This is the love God gives us. If we all were to love perfectly, then all aspects of our self, all people, and God will all be united forming one loving community.

John Shea wrote: “The first commandment, the one from which all others flow, concerns the one God. Divine oneness is absolute, the Creator of All. Therefore, creatures should imitate this oneness by bringing themselves into complete coordination with the One God. Heart, soul, mind, and strength should be united in loving communion with God. When this happens a second commandment arises. The one God makes all people one; the neighbor is loved as yourself. Although these are two, they are inseparable. Therefore, they form one commandment, the first. This twofold first commandment is engaged by an interior act of love. This establishes the proper flow, from the inside to the outside, from unitive consciousness to unitive acts. This is precisely what is threatened when believers are faced with many laws. They ask what the law is and what does the law entail, and how can they keep it. Their consciousness is outside, and the emphasis is on obedient behavior. The inner world that accompanies the behavior is overlooked. The law can be kept with a hard heart, a dark mind, a sick soul and only a minimum of strength. This causes a split between the inside and outside and fuels the conflict between the spirit and letter of the law. It also grounds one of God’s deepest laments: **Isaiah 29:13 NLT** “And so the Lord says, “These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. And their worship of me is nothing but human-made rules learned by rote.”

You can run a quick diagnostic of your love by checking for peace. Are you at peace with yourself? Are all your thoughts loving? Or do you think some thoughts of fear, hate, comparisons, and judgement? Is your heart, mind, soul, and strength at peace with each other? It is difficult to be at peace with God and others when one is struggling to be at peace with their self.

**1 John 4:19** “We love because God first loved us.” God fills us with love. When we receive God’s love, we are able to love our self, to be at peace with our self. This inside love flows outside enabling us to love God and love all people. Therefore, the first diagnostic is an inner peace checkup? If you are not at peace with yourself, then work on

yourself, receiving God's love and loving yourself. Those who have inner peace can now run the diagnostic of peace with God. Are you able to regularly perceive God? Do you tell God about your day? Are you listening to God? Do you fully trust that God's grace is forgiving your mistakes, completing every brokenness, and perfecting every imperfection? Do you fully believe that you are a unique, cherished, beloved member of God's family, that you are accepted, you belong? Those who have inner peace and are at peace with God are capable of loving others. Are you at peace with all people? Are you able to adamantly disagree with someone and still be at peace with them? Are you able to peacefully agree to disagree? Most of us are continually transforming in all three relations: self, God, and others. These are aspects of the peace Jesus repeatedly shared, over and over, peace be with you. These are aspects of the peace with which we greet one another. The peace of God be with you. Jesus explained that this peace will surpass all understanding. We will become one with our self, one with each other, one with our one God.

The scribe gets this and sees that law, practices, traditions, rituals, religions, customs, human made rules all are less important than the inner attitude of love that enables one to love God, all people and self. The scribe replies: **"You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'God is one, and besides God there is no other'; and 'to love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."** Jesus and the scribe are on the same page. The scribe is integrating love into all their thoughts and actions. The scribe is performing a love integration reboot.

**When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."** Scribes defined wisdom as hearing the Word of God and doing the will of God. The scribe heard Jesus' words, realized the priority of love over human made laws, and was striving to actively love all people, God, and their self. The scribe's active love for all moved him close to the kingdom of God. In God's kingdom all are one by love. Jesus praised the scribe not for his expertise of the law as was expected, rather for his love. Abide in God's love, nurturing inner love, embody love and love God, all people and self in all situations.

It is impossible to craft laws that tell us how to love in all situations. Every law can be twisted and misused. Love reveals the most excellent way.

An oncology nurse was trying to love a difficult patient that was experiencing many painful losses. The nurse tried many ways to facilitate a loving relationship with no success. Exasperated they went for a walk outside. The nurse saw a dead butterfly, picked it up and showed it to the patient. The patient burst into tears, he began to speak of his losses, a loving relationship began. I doubt that nursing school taught the nurse to show a dead butterfly to this patient. Love is inductive, creative, spontaneous, open to inspiration. Love enables one to be receptive to the movement of the Holy Spirit who often uses unforeseen ways to transform and heal. A consciousness that is one with God is alert to possibilities that no law can foresee. A consciousness that is one with God and takes loving action to bring people together as one.

Jesus is a human fully rebooted with love. The love of God makes Jesus' two natures, fully God and fully human one. Jesus is love fully integrated. Jesus is incarnate, that is permeated with love. Jesus embodies love and the commandment to love God, all people, and self. Jesus unmasks the religious elite who are failing to love. The scribes regularly recited the Shema: **"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might."** The scribes spent the majority of their life studying and teaching laws with the intent of helping people love God and love everyone. Unfortunately, their understanding of the law has not been received in their heart. The result is hypocrisy, pretense, and duplicity. They say love and arrogantly, knowingly, repeatedly, unrepentantly do unloving acts. The scribes lacked love for others.

There should be rhythm to love, love of self, and love of others. Some struggle with a lack of love for self. The scribes were the other extreme lacking love for others, especially for those they declared outsiders. Jesus points out their love for self, comfortable clothes, titles, and VIP seats. Jesus points out their lack of love for widows. **Mark 12:38-40 NRSV "As Jesus taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."** Notice that all scribes are convicted of the sin of lack of love for others. Jesus just spoke to one scribe who had rhythm of love for self and others however whenever the group, organization, church, religion, government, world that we are a part of fails to love, we all are guilty of the corporate failure to love. We are all to be one in love.

When a scribe disagreed with a law, teaching, or action they sat down opposite. **Mark 12:40 NRSV "Jesus sat down opposite the collection box in the Temple."** Jesus is unmasking failures to love. Jesus lovingly and convincingly sits down opposite of us whenever our love is lacking. **Mark 12:40-44 NRSV "Jesus sat down opposite the collection box in the Temple and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then Jesus called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you; this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the**

**treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."**

The widow represents the most vulnerable. The scribes went beyond failure to love the widow to oppression and abuse. They were charging the poor to become even richer. They were trying to drive a wedge between God and the poor. They were trying to keep the poor away, out of sight and out of mind. The scribes charged fees for the poor to come to the temple to pray, fees for their sins to be forgiven. The scribes were getting richer, and the poor were getting poorer. Jesus named the Temple **Mark 11:17 "a den of robbers."**

You and I, all citizens of the United States, are in a similar position to the scribes. By world standards we are rich. We have created laws, systems and policies that take from the poor and give to the rich both outside and within the United States. It matters not your political party; we are each corporately guilty of failure to love all people. I am assuming we could have a robust debate over how to equally share the abundance of the world. What would that look like? How can we do it? I do not have the answer. Perhaps, it is similar to the nurse that picked up the dead butterfly. Love is inductive, creative, spontaneous, open to inspiration. Love enables one to be receptive to the movement of the Holy Spirit who often uses unforeseen ways to transform and heal.

Perhaps, you are like that one scribe that Jesus praised, actively loving all and also you are part of a country that Jesus is opposed to our lack of love. Let us take this back one step before, how do we love all people equally, and share all resources equally, to the belief that all people should be equally loved. How are you doing on this matter? It is an enormous step to start thinking that all people should be one, that I will love all people equally. It is another enormous step for your heart to feel equal love for all people. It is another enormous step to put that love into active love for all people. Most of the scribes were unable to take the first step. They were so focused on the law and right living that they were blind to seeing people. Over the years this allowed them to reject one God, one people, to believe there are many people, that people should be divided, that some should get more and others less, that some people are out entirely. The scribes rejected the oneness of God.

If you peel back the layers to numerous issues, it appears that the foundational question is should these people, this person, be loved? It appears clear to me that the answer is yes. God lovingly created everyone to love. Scripture commands us to love everyone. The prophets tell us to love everyone. Jesus tells us to love everyone and loves everyone. The Holy Spirit is inspiring us to love everyone. And yet somehow in our mind most, if not all of us, are able to justify not loving some groups, some people.

We are called to be like Jesus unmasking lack of love, being opposed to every law, policy, system that divides, oppresses, discriminates, or abuses. We are called to be like Jesus advocating for the widow, poor, homeless, hungry, abused, oppressed, unemployed, immigrant, under educated, those without health care. We are to be like Jesus advocating for anyone who is loved less, for any reason.

As a church we strive for rhythm of love. We love this family of faith. We love the hungry by supporting the food shelf. We love the undereducated through Remember Niger. We love the homeless through House for Haiti. We love numerous people around the world through the mission of the Presbyterian church. Every month we love people through Hands-On Mission. The more we put our love into action, the more our love grows, enabling us to expand our thinking that all people should be loved, all people should be one, which fuels the love in our heart to love all people, which motivates us to put our love into action, which honors our one God, who is bringing us all together as one.

We all need a love integration reboot. Love that permeates every fiber of our being making as one with our self, one with all people and one with God. A common way that love is lacking is value discrepancy. For example, a person really does love their spouse with their head and heart. For the value of love to be fully integrated takes constant self-awareness, listening, and improvement. Being aware of patterns that lack love. Listening to discover their partner's feeling, hopes, concerns and dreams. Discovering their partner's love language. Treating their partner how they want to be treated. Love fully integrated learns how a person desires to be loved and constantly strives to improve.

Often, we fail to love by treating others how we want to be treated. One of the great aspects of Remember Niger is the organization partners with local educators, students, and each local community. Remember Niger listens to how they want to be treated, then constantly strives to provide resources to fulfill their dream for education.

We as a worldwide community have a long way to go to get to the kingdom of God, all people one in love. God is constantly pouring love into us. Jesus modeled how to love. The Holy Spirit is inspiring our love. God will unite us all together with love making all one. Amen

