The first 3 lessons discussed our laying a foundation in Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. Now we will address His commands concerning the essential spiritual disciplines necessary in order to obey His commands. They combine our human efforts with the Holy Spirit‘s empowerment to help us be obedient Disciples.

Read the introduction to the subject and the scriptures. Consider the primary emphasis and the context in which it is presented. Then, answer the questions.

1) Jesus says the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. He also said to love our enemies and those who persecute us. The Greek word for God’s love, *agape (ah-ga-pay)* is used 226 times in the New Testament. Agape love is not an emotion; it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit demonstrated by our attitudes and actions.

***Mark 12:28-31, John 13:34-35, 15:9-17***

***Matthew 5:43-48, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7***

a) Why is this commandment the second greatest before all the other commands of Jesus?

b) Compare and contrast these verses describing “love” with how the word “love” is commonly used in our culture.

c) Loving myself sounds selfish. So, then, how do I love myself correctly?

d) I love some people, but what attitudes and opinions need transformation - so I can show agape love to everyone?

e) If agape love were a feeling, then I couldn’t be commanded to do it. If it is my choice, then how can I develop the discipline to choose to love, regardless?

2) If there is anything or anyone I desire, need or pursue more than Jesus, then that is my god. I have allowed it to become my idol.

***Matthew 10:37-39, John 12:24-26, Luke 16:13,***

a) These verses are difficult. What do they say to me?

b) List the people and things in my life that are really important to me.

c) How do these people and things influence my relationship with Jesus.

d) How do all the good things in my life compete with Jesus for my heart?

3) We are commanded to forgive. Like love, we choose to forgive as a decision of obedience. God has mercifully forgiven our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus when we didn’t deserve it. Therefore, our unforgiveness has serious personal consequences.

***Matthew 6:14-15, 18:21-35***

a) Do these Scriptures give me the liberty to not forgive someone who has wronged me?

b) Who benefits when I forgive someone who doesn’t deserve to be forgiven?

c) Why do I feel guilty about things I’ve done if Jesus has forgiven me?

4) What is one change I will commit to practice that will help me “love and forgive” –- so that Jesus is seen in me by others-and my life is more fruitful for His Kingdom?