

Sermon for January 6, 2019

BMZ Church

Series: "DARE..."

For Message: Matthew 22:34-40 6:33; 1 John 4:19; Deuteronomy 11:16; Romans 12:1; John 14:15, 21; Psalm 119:105; Philippians 4:8

Message Title: "DARE ... to FOLLOW"

Introduction: Good Morning BMZ! HAPPY NEW YEAR! Welcome to 2019 ... the last year of the TEENS. Time FLIES! TODAY, we are kicking off a brand-new SERIES as we kick off a brand-new YEAR! It's called, "*DARE...*", and here's WHY: If you DARE to STAND for JESUS in this WORLD ... IF you go after GREATNESS in GOD'S EYES in this LIFE; with the WAY the WORLD IS ... you are going to take a BEATING! It takes COURAGE and BRAVERY to STAND for GOD'S WORD! IF you TALK about GOD, that is NOT a problem. BUT, if you say you BELIEVE in *JESUS*, there very well could be a FIRESTORM COMING. If you TALK ABOUT and LIVE like *The BIBLE is TRUTH*; BRACE yourself.

My QUESTION, as we enter 2019, is: DO you DARE to FOLLOW, CARE, SERVE, GROW and GO the way JESUS CALLS US TO? If you TAKE the "*DARE*" over the next FEW WEEKS ... TWO (2) THINGS: 1) You will FACE a FIRESTORM of some sort; AND, 2) YOU will be considered GREAT in the EYES of GOD.

Here's HOW: Over the next FEW WEEKS, we are going to LOOK at THREE (3) FOUNDATIONAL Passages from the BIBLE, all of which JESUS called, "GREAT"! We are going to look at "*The Great Commandment*", "*The Great Compassion*" and "*The Great Commission*" and hopefully RECOGNIZE that LIVING THOSE "Great" STATEMENTS lead to a GREAT LIFE! Will YOU take the "*DARE*"?! Happy New Year Everyone!

GRAB your MESSAGE NOTES ... *If you haven't already, I invite you to take out your 3-HOLE PUNCHED MESSAGE NOTES and CONNECTION card. You will see that there are blanks to fill in ... Please take the time to do so. Grab a pen and write down whatever else you think is important to you and your faith journey. After worship, drop off your CONNECTION CARD and take your MESSAGE NOTES home. Please Re-read the Scripture and the notes to keep growing and learning. For those of you joining on-line, you can go to our website, www.bmzchurch.org / MESSAGES ... find the NOTES and the CONNECTION CARD and follow along ... LET'S PRAY (turn off marked lights during prayer)!*

TODAY, we are going to start with "*The GREAT COMMANDMENT*" as found in Matthew 22. In a couple of weeks, we will study "*The GREAT COMMISSION*" and, also, look at "*The GREAT COMPASSION*". BUT, for TODAY ... "*The GREAT COMMANDMENT*". Here we go ... Matthew 22:34-40 = ³⁴ *But when the Pharisees heard that he (JESUS) had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again.* ³⁵ *One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question:* ³⁶ *"Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?"* So, the Pharisees are trying to TRICK JESUS into saying something that will make JESUS look BAD. They are TRYING to find a FLAW in JESUS, because they've been WATCHING HIM for MONTHS and haven't found anything WRONG with HIM. BUT, their PROBLEM is Jesus is TEACHING people the FAITH without all the RELIGION. The Pharisees make their LIVING off the RELIGION part!

But, JESUS comes after them. He says there is ONE Commandment ABOVE ALL the others ... ³⁷ *Jesus replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.'* ³⁸ *This is the first and greatest commandment.* The Pharisees could NOT ARGUE with that. Those WORDS were taken directly from Deuteronomy 6:5 and it is known to those of the JEWISH FAITH as the "SHEMA". IOW, IF you want to be GREAT in God's

EYES, here's how: LOVE GOD with ALL your HEART, ALL your SOUL and ALL your MIND. That's what we are covering TODAY. Then, Jesus FINISHES with what we will talk about NEXT WEEK ... ³⁹ *A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*

⁴⁰ *The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.* ¹

Here's what JESUS said: He said, IT is ALL about LOVE! Love for GOD (1st part) and Love for NEIGHBOR (2nd part). TODAY ... LOVE for GOD ... and, in these VERSES, JESUS issues THREE CHALLENGES: To Love the Lord your God with all your HEART (the Center of our being), all your SOUL (what Guides your life) and all your MIND (what you Focus on). TODAY, I want us to EXPLORE these THREE Challenges of Jesus!

FIRST, I need to say something about this SERIES. This FIVE (5) WEEK Series is for CHRISTIANS! If you are a FOLLOWER of JESUS, BRACE YOURSELF, because we will be CHALLENGED by CHRIST! This is NOT for WIMPS. NOT for those who want to be PASSIVE about their FAITH. This is about FOLLOWERS going DEEP. So, Christians, get ready...

But, SOME of you might say, "*WAIT! I'm NOT a Christian.*" That's okay. We probably have a good 30% or so of people who ATTEND BMZ who are NOT. And, you are ALWAYS WELCOME HERE as you continue to FIGURE it OUT. So, here's what YOU are going to GET ... YOU get an INSIDE LOOK at what it MEANS to be a FOLLOWER of JESUS!

And, you might be asking, "*WHY is this SERIES only for Christians?*" Here's why: IF you are going to LOVE GOD with all your HEART, SOUL and MIND, it means you have ALREADY EXPERIENCED God's LOVE in YOUR LIFE. IOW, God does NOT expect us to LOVE Him BACK until WE KNOW how much HE LOVES US ... 1 John 4:19 = ¹⁹ *We love each other because he loved us first.* ²

Here we GO ... In your NOTES ... **HOW DO I KEEP THE GREAT COMMANDMENT?**

I want to show you HOW to LOVE GOD with all your HEART, SOUL and MIND...
#1 = To Love God With All My HEART ... I Give Him My WORSHIP

I GIVE Him my WORSHIP ... Why does Jesus START with the HEART? BECAUSE, the HEART is the CENTER of our BEING. Remember, Jesus is QUOTING from the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 6:5. The Old Testament was originally WRITTEN in HEBREW. The Hebrew word for "*HEART*" here is the word "*SPLATNAH*"! Great word! Let's say it together ... "*SPLATNAH*"! Okay ... the MEANING of "*SPLATNAH*" is the "*CENTER of our BEING*" ... HEART! Jesus is TEACHING, IF you are going to LIVE for GOD, you must make sure GOD is at the CENTER of your LIFE. THEREFORE, we should ASK ourselves a QUESTION: "*What is at the CENTER of MY LIFE?*" "*What am I LIVING FOR?*"

Because, whatever is at the CENTER of your LIFE is what you WORSHIP. This is IMPORTANT for us as Christians. Listen: "***You WORSHIP whatever is at the CENTER of your LIFE, and whatever is at the CENTER of your LIFE, you WORSHIP!***" Get it? And, WHAT we choose to WORSHIP MATTERS to God!

"*Well, Pastor Stan, my WORK is at the CENTER of my LIFE, but I don't WORSHIP it.*" Not TRUE! If WORK is at the CENTER of your LIFE, you WORSHIP your WORK! "*Pastor Stan, I understand the HUNTING is at the CENTER of my LIFE ... and EVERYONE I KNOW would AGREE with that, BUT, I don't WORSHIP HUNTING!*" YES, you DO!

If it's a PERSON ... you spend ALL your WAKING hours thinking about that PERSON, your LIFE is CENTERED on them and you WORSHIP them! That will be a problem...

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Mt 22:34-40). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

² Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (1 Jn 4:19). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Have you ever heard anyone say, “*I FEEL LIKE my LIFE is OFF CENTER*” or “*I need to get my LIFE CENTERED AGAIN*”? Do you know WHY? Because WE were CREATED to have SOMETHING at the CENTER of our LIVES! You were CREATED to WORSHIP. God DESIGNED you that way. God DESIGNED you with an EMPTINESS in the CENTER of your LIFE ... and SOMETHING is DESIGNED to BE at the CENTER of your LIFE. And, if you allow ANYTHING other than GOD to be at the CENTER of your LIFE, you will FEEL like you are OFF-CENTER! You will feel out of BALANCE and OFF-KILTER. Why? Because our CREATOR CREATED US that way!

Here’s our REMINDER from Deuteronomy ... Deuteronomy 11:16 = ¹⁶ “*But be careful. Don’t let your heart be deceived so that you turn away from the LORD and serve and worship other gods.*”³ Listen, if you ALLOW **POSESSIONS** to be at the CENTER of your LIFE, you will feel EMPTY. If you allow a **PERSON** to be at the CENTER, they will DISAPPOINT you and LET you DOWN ... it’s what we HUMANS DO! If you allow **PRIDE** to be at the CENTER and LIFE is ALL about YOU ... sooner or later the WHEELS are going to come OFF and you will be LONELY and EMPTY ... and that is NOT what GOD WANTS for YOU!

The BIBLE uses a very STRONG WORD for what you do IF you allow someone or something to be at the CENTER of your LIFE. The Bible calls it “*WORSHIPPING IDOLS*” and the Bible WARNS us NOT TO! “*IDOLATRY*” is listed in the 10 COMMANDMENTS, but most of us don’t have little GOLD or BRONZE or WOODEN IDOLS at home that we BOW TO ... so, we don’t THINK about IDOLATRY. BUT, let me give you a DEFINITION of “*Idolatry*” and then you can DECIDE if there’s a CONCERN ... Here it is: **“*Idolatry*” = Excessive devotion or love to someone or something other than God** (Repeat!)

We ALL tend to TURN away from GOD. We ALL have it! Here is way to ASK it ... “*IS there ANYTHING in MY LIFE you would be UNWILLING to GIVE UP if God asked you to?*”

OFTEN, it is the GOOD things in our lives that become IDOLS. We know we need to GIVE up the DRUGS and the DRUNKENNESS, but we have a HARDER time being WILLING to GIVE up some GOOD THINGS to keep GOD FIRST in our LIVES.

Let me start with FAMILY! Would you be WILLING to give up your FAMILY for GOD? I’m not SURE God will ASK you to, but God does SAY, “*LET me be FIRST!*” I want you to ENJOY your FAMILY but keep them SECOND! Make sure your FAMILY KNOWS that GOD comes FIRST. What good is it to keep your FAMILY FIRST in this LIFE if it causes them to MISS OUT on the NEXT LIFE?! If you keep your FAMILY FIRST, you will STRUGGLE to LEAD them to CHRIST! Don’t quit LOVING THEM, just let them be SECOND behind GOD!

Listen, do you have this feeling of being OFF-CENTER? Maybe God is trying to GET your ATTENTION! Beware of what you WORSHIP! Paul helps us in his Letter to the Church in Rome ... Romans 12:1 = *And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.*⁴

What better time to REMOVE some IDOLS from your life than the BEGINNING of the YEAR? What better time to CHOOSE GREATNESS in God’s Eyes and say, “*I’m going to love you with ALL my HEART and keep you at the CENTER of my WORSHIP!*”? #2 =

#2 = To Love God With All My SOUL ... I Give Him My OBEDIENCE

The SECOND Challenge Jesus gives us is to LOVE GOD with ALL MY SOUL! This means I GIVE HIM my OBEDIENCE. I want to try to BUILD THESE IN ORDER. HEART, then SOUL and then MIND. For EACH of us as FOLLOWERS of Jesus, we START with the

³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Dt 11:16). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁴ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Ro 12:1). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

HEART! Make sure God is at the CENTER of our BEING and WORSHIP! Seek FIRST the KINGDOM of Heaven... God is #1!

Then, LOVE GOD with your SOUL. This is asking the QUESTION: “*What will GUIDE my LIFE?*” In a SENSE, the word “SOUL” is what we might call our “CONSCIENCE”. What will GUIDE ME? Again, from Matthew we are reminded ... Matthew 22:37 = “*You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.*”⁵ Would you please CIRCLE the word “SOUL”? And, then WRITE in the MARGIN three (3) Letters: “GPS”.

How did we SURVIVE without GPS? Do you remember the days of UNFOLDING the MAP and trying to FIGURE out HOW to GET THERE? But, NOW, we can, while driving, have a VOICE GUIDE us to our DESTINATION, right?! That VOICE gives GUIDANCE and STEPS to GET to where you are GOING.

In the same way, WHAT are you going to ALLOW to GUIDE your LIFE? What VOICE will I LISTEN TO? As FOLLOWERS of JESUS, Jesus says we need to LEARN to LISTEN and OBEY the VOICE of GOD in your life ... John 14:15, 21 = ¹⁵ “*If you love me, obey my commandments.*”⁶ ²¹ “*Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.*”⁷ IOW – Jesus says, if you say, “*God, I LOVE YOU*”, BUT, you do NOT OBEY what He TELLS you to DO, you’re a LIAR! Like WORSHIP and CENTER ... “*You OBEY Who you LOVE and LOVE Who you OBEY*”.

We need to LEARN His VOICE and FOLLOW His DIRECTION / His WORD. And, did you CATCH what Jesus SAID at the END of those verses? He said He would LOVE US and REVEAL HIMSELF to US! “REVEAL” ... IOW, He will SPEAK to THEM and GUIDE them ... REVEAL Himself.

WE get OFF COURSE when we LISTEN to the WRONG VOICES! Have you EVER had your GPS send you to the WRONG PLACE? It happens here in SW Wisconsin. There seems to be SOME PLACES in these HILLS that SHE CAN’T FIND! “*You have ARRIVED!*”

Listen, we’ve ALL been there when we ALLOW the WRONG VOICE to GUIDE your LIFE! It’s EASY to listen to the WRONG VOICE in our world. If you listen to PHILOSOPHY, you can end up FAR from GOD. If you follow POP CULTURE, you end up ALL over the BOARD trying to SEEK APPROVAL and you end up FEELING EMPTY. I love Christian Counseling, but if you listen to PURE PSYCHOLOGY (I was a psychology major), you end up MORE HURT than where you STARTED! You listen to POLITICS ... over TIME, your SOUL feels EMPTY! NO Direction...

WHO will you ALLOW to GUIDE your LIFE? What VOICE will be your MORAL COMPASS? From WHOM will you FIND how to NAVAGATE this LIFE? There are MANY VOICES COMPETING for your SOUL. Who will you LISTEN TO?

Now, going into 2019, I was praying and thinking about WHAT I can DO as your Pastor to HELP you LOVE GOD with ALL your SOUL. How can I HELP? I’m kind of into GOALS around the BEGINNING of the YEAR, so, what about SETTING some FAITH GOALS? Faith GOALS are STATEMENTS of OBEDIENCE to GOD ...

So, we put it in YOUR NOTES ... Would you CONSIDER SETTING some FAITH GOALS for 2019? One, two or three ... and I gave you some HINTS in parenthesis.

My Faith Goals for 2019:

(e.g., baptism, growth group, giving, attendance, read through the Bible, pray daily, etc.)

⁵ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Mt 22:37). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁶ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Jn 14:15). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁷ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Jn 14:21). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Maybe you have recently GIVEN your LIFE to JESUS for the FIRST TIME (over 40 CARDS in December!). According to the Bible, your NEXT STEP as a Follower of Jesus is to be BAPTISED. Mark that as a GOAL! Maybe you need to SIGN-UP for a GG for the Spring Semester. Mark it down! Maybe you need to GET your GIVING more in LINE with what GOD says or you need to COMMIT to ATTEND worship MORE in 2019. What are your BIBLE READING GOALS for 2019? Do you have a PRAYER / DEVOTIONAL TIME set aside?

Listen, if you KNOW GOD is CHALLENGING you to something in 2019 ... Take a MOMENT right NOW and WRITE them down. Put ONE on the back of your CONNECTION CARD. Pray about signing up for a GG and put that on your CC! Set GOALS! Be obedient!

If we want GOD'S BLESSINGS in 2019, we DARE to go after GREATNESS in God's Eyes ... that includes OBEDIENCE to DO what GOD WANTS. Faith Goals! And, if you say, "Well, I'll get around to being obedient soon", that is DELAYED OBEDIENCE ... otherwise KNOWN as DISOBEDIENCE! If we truly LOVE Him, we will be OBEDIENT!

This is from the Sermon on the Mount ... Matthew 6:33 = ³³ *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.* ⁸ Would you please UNDERLINE "He will give you everything you need"? Remember, OBEDIENCE leads to BLESSING. Do you want EVERYTHING you NEED in 2019? TAKE the DARE to ALLOW God to be your GPS ... be OBEDIENT to HIS VOICE. Love the LORD with ALL your SOUL!

To love GOD with ALL my HEART, I give Him my WORSHIP. To love GOD with ALL my SOUL, I give Him my OBEDIENCE. Finally, as we follow the Great Commandment: **#3 = To Love God With All My MIND ... I Give Him My FOCUS**

My FOCUS... Why does GOD say to LOVE Him with all MY MIND? Because we so EASILY LOSE our FOCUS! We are so EASILY DISTRACTED, and we must be careful of DISTRACTIONS! Do you know WHY? Wait ... what was I saying?

A recent SCIENTIFIC STUDY shows the AVERAGE PERSON is DISTRACTED 6-10 TIMES / MINUTE! Like, you are DISTRACTED at LEAST once every 10 SECONDS! Wait! Did you HEAR what I said? NO! You were already DISTRACTED! It happens. It is so HARD to KEEP our ATTENTION!

We have repeated this SCRIPTURE a FEW TIMES, but here it is again ...

Matthew 22:37 = *'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.'* ⁹ Again, that is from Deuteronomy 6:5. Jesus was Jewish and all Children of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were required to MEMORIZE the "SHEMA". It was PART of JESUS and his LIFE. The DEVOUT Jews in Jesus' day and TODAY repeat the SHEMA SIX TIMES every DAY: "*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind...*" (repeat) WHY does GOD have them repeat it SIX TIMES / DAY? BECAUSE, we get DISTRACTED! We have to CONSTANTLY remind ourselves WHO is in FIRST PLACE in our lives. Heart = WORSHIP GOD FIRST! Soul = God is MY GPS. I will LISTEN to HIS VOICE for GUIDANCE! Mind = The greatest GIFT we can give GOD is your FOCUS ... "*I will NOT be DISTRACTED from YOU and what YOU want!*"

Think about how HARD it is to STAY FOCUSED during WORSHIP. Then, imagine what it's like when we get OUTSIDE the Church. Tomorrow? How about by Wednesday? This

⁸ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Mt 6:33). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
⁹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Mt 22:37). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

is why we CHALLENGE you to get in a GROUP ... twice a week FOCUSED on God. This is why we CHALLENGE you to MEMORIZE Scripture. It keeps our FOCUS on GOD!

Psalm 119:105 = ¹⁰⁵ *Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.* ¹⁰

This is why we give NEXT STEPS ... Reading the Bible gets us FOCUSED on GOD. Will we LOVE GOD with all our MINDS? God's WORD is GOD'S VOICE to GUIDE us in our SOULS and His WORD keeps us FOCUSED on HIM! Staying FOCUSED keeps us on the RIGHT / GODLY PATH! That's OBEDIENCE. That's WORSHIP. No wonder the Bible says ... Philippians 4:8 = ⁸ *And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.* ¹¹

What will you CHOOSE to FOCUS your MIND on in 2019? Choose to FIX your THOUGHTS on GOD! Choose to worship GOD with all your MIND! Loving God with your HEART, SOUL and MIND. No wonder Jesus called it the GREATEST COMMANDMENT!

You know, as we get into 2019, a NEW YEAR. I, as your pastor, want each of us to ONE DAY HEAR JESUS SAY, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Come into my Kingdom!" IF YOU want that, we have to take the CHALLENGE toward what our BIBLES / God's Word calls GREAT! Choose to be GREAT in God's Eyes!

One more time ... our MEMORY VERSE ... together ... Matthew 22:37-38 = ³⁷ *Jesus replied, 'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.'* ³⁸ *This is the first and greatest commandment.* ¹²

Let's PRAY!

Next Steps: *I will memorize Matthew 22:37-38*
 I will read Matthew 22
 I will Get Started on the Following Faith Goal ASAP: _____
 I will pray about signing up later this month for a Growth Group

AFTER OFFERING: SONG (Live) / PRAYER (Live)

"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."
Special thanks to Andy Stanley, Nelson Searcy, and R.A. Pegrum for outlines and ideas for this worship series.

¹⁰ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ps 119:105). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

¹¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Php 4:8). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

¹² Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Mt 22:37-38). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.