

Do You Really Love God?

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Jesus said that the first and great commandment to men is to love the Lord with all one's heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27; Mat. 22:37-38). If all righteous human conduct is compressed into this simple statement, it becomes essential that we comprehend what it really means to love God. The Bible tells us three great standards by which a person may measure his love for God.

If we love God, we cannot love the world. John counsels, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Paul states that the secret of his surrendered life to Christ was that through the cross of Christ the world had been crucified (put to death) unto him and he unto the world (Gal. 6:14). James warns: "Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God" (Jam. 4:4). To love "the world" has nothing to do with admiring the beauties of nature. It rather means to be attracted by the sinful, carnal, materialistic conduct of the world so that our time, abilities, and money are devoted to them. One who loves the world is letting the world shape him, instead of trying to change the ungodly behavior of the world (Rom. 12:2).

If we love God, we will love one another. John teaches that a man who says he loves God, but hates his brother is a liar because it is impossible to hate his brother whom he has seen and at the same time love God whom he has not seen (1 John 4:20). This is especially written concerning the love that brethren in Christ must have for each other but should have a broader application to our love for all men. To love our fellow man does not mean that we like or approve of all that he does, but whether we **like** him or not, we will seek his best interest. This is the very nature of God's love for us: while we were living lives He didn't approve of, He loved us (John 3:16).

If we love God, we will obey Him. Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). John observed, "This is the love of God that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3). Commandment-keeping, rather than being a mark of legalism or spiritual immaturity, as some allege, is the ultimate test of one's love for God and Christ. By this simple test and the lip-servants, hollow hypocrites and pious pretenders are distinguished from true lovers of God.

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