

We Must Love God

The Challenges We Face Today

The challenge that many followers of Jesus face is being able to love God according to His standard.

- We feel like we love the Lord, especially during worship service, but unless we are obeying His Son, we do not really love Him.
- We tend to love the things of this world more than we love the Lord and we may not even be aware of it.
- We may agree with the Lord's commandment to love Him, but we really don't know how to live it.
- We sing love songs to the Lord on Sunday and feel good after we attend church, but He gets very little of our attention the rest of the week.

A disciple of Jesus must learn how to love the Lord consistently according to His standard.

Lesson Truth

Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. There are many who profess the name of Jesus, but do not love God according to His standard. We must learn to love Him as He has commanded.

Lesson Goal

The goal for this lesson is for you to clearly understand what it means to love God according to His standard and to begin loving Him in this way.

Lesson Discussion

God's Standard



Matthew 22:37-40 ESV “And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.’”

In the previous lesson we defined love as: *“to tenderly and passionately devote myself completely to someone and treat them as if they are an important part of my life.”*

We also discussed unconditional love which means to love others regardless of how they behave or what they do. We must love God unconditionally, whether or not God is doing what we think He should or whether or not we agree or disagree with how He is running the universe.

In Matthew 22 we see that God has set a standard that we are to love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind. This standard of love goes well beyond anything that our culture currently accepts or regards as love.

It is very clear from this verse that to love God wholeheartedly is the first and greatest thing that God demands from us above anything else we might do for Him in service to Him or others.

There are many reasons people serve God and others. Much of the service we offer is not out of devotion and love for God, but out of obligation, guilt, or to please ourselves, all the time thinking we are doing it out of love for God.

The most common reason for this is that we have not been taught how to love God like He

deserves and expects to be loved, and so we fall into the common trap of thinking that doing more for God is what He wants most from us. We substitute doing more to compensate for our inability or refusal to love Him according to His standard.

To love God according to Matthew 22 means we are to tenderly and passionately devote ourselves by an act of the will to love Him with all our affections and all our understanding.

It means that nothing else in our lives can occupy that place in our affections. It means loving Him with intensity, devotion, loyalty, and sincerity above anyone and anything else in our lives.



Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ESV “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 might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

To love God in this way means that our entire life must be devoted to Him and we put His will first above all other pursuits, desires, wants, ministries, or missions of life. We must love Him above all others and see to it that He gets all of our life before we give our lives to minister to the needs of others.

Discipleship is first and foremost about relationship with Jesus Christ before we are empowered to minister to others. We must establish our love relationship with Him through discipleship before we can disciple others.

When we are saved, we have the tendency to want to run out and serve the Lord and save the

world, but we must first let Him disciple us before we can disciple others.

Our love for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit must be consistent and must overshadow all other relationships and activities including our families, our ministry to others, our jobs and all our personal pursuits.

Since God has set the standard for loving Him, we must learn how to love Him according to His standard. Anything short of loving Him according to His standard is disobedience. As disciples of Jesus, we must obey everything Jesus taught.

Understanding the Standard

God’s standard is for us to love Him fervently and faithfully above everything else in our lives. Many who name the name of Christ know that this is the standard, but few actually live this truth.



Deuteronomy 11:1 ESV “You shall therefore love the LORD your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always.”

What is it that hinders us from faithfully loving God according to His command? Could it be that somehow we think because we are involved in church and worship Him through song and prayer, that we are meeting His standard?

Could it be because we are trying to live right and are involved in ministry and other Christian activities, that we think we are meeting His standard? Do we even know what it looks like in the life of a disciple to love God according to His standard?

If we do not even know what it looks like to love the Lord according to His standard, how can we ever walk in obedience? How can we hold ourselves accountable to obey the greatest

of God's commandments if we do not know whether or not we are living it?

If we can understand what it looks like to love God according to His standard, we can know if we are living His standard. We will no longer fool ourselves into thinking that we love God according to His standard when we do not.

We know that love is more than a feeling. We may have a feeling of love for God when we pray or when we worship Him, and still not really love Him. Love is first and foremost an action. Something we do.

The standard of God's love means passionate devotion and obedience to Him. Our devotion and obedience to God must be constant and consistent. From the time we awake in the morning to the time we go to sleep at night, God must be the focus and reason for all that we say, do and think.

This simply means that we live to please Him and Him only. All our thinking and resulting behavior is the result of a fervent and sincere desire to please Him. We please Him when our faith in Him results in obedience to everything He commands us.



John 14:23-24 ESV "Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me."

Put another way, to love God is to please God through our obedience to Him. If we believe we love Him, but are not walking in obedience to Him, we do not really love Him. We are deceived. Jesus said if you love Me you will obey what I command.

Also, when you truly love someone, you want to be with them as much as you can because your love for them draws you to them. You spend

time with them and build a love relationship with them through communication, respect, trust, and simply learning to enjoy them.

How We Can Love God

Love is a choice. A choice is simply choosing one thing over other things. We will never love God according to His standard if we do not choose to love Him and intend to obey everything He commanded.

The problem today is that life gets in the way and we habitually choose the things of this life over the things of God. Our relationship with the world and the things in this world are often more important than our relationship with the Son and the things of the Spirit.

To love God according to His standard, we must discipline ourselves to choose differently. This is no easy task because of the years of habitual worldly living that we must overcome. Difficult or not, as a disciple of Jesus, there is absolutely no other way.

When you are born again of the Spirit, you receive the divine nature of Jesus into your life. You now have the power to obey God and live a holy and godly life. But you must still intend to and choose to begin living in the power of this new life.

As you begin to choose to love God, you are moving Him up in the priorities of your life. Many think that God is first in their life, but when you look at their daily choices and actions, you can easily see that He is not really the first priority in their lives.

This ability of the human mind to think that something is true when it is not, or to believe we are something we are not, can give Satan a great advantage over us. When we think that God is the most important thing in our life, but our choices and behavior indicate otherwise, we are deceived and have believed a lie.



Deuteronomy 30:19-20 ESV “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

We make God important in our lives through our daily choices and we demonstrate our love for Him daily through those same choices. It is then and only then that we can say that God is first in our lives and that we love Him above all other things.

What are some of these choices or behaviors that demonstrate our love for God and that He is the most important thing in our lives? If we identify some specific areas in our own personal lives that we can begin to change, we can begin living the truth of this lesson.

The first step is to be honest with ourselves and God that we really do not love Him according to His standard and that we are not living our lives as if He is the most important thing in our lives. If we are not willing to confess our disobedience to God about this, we will never have the relationship with Him that He desires.

After we have repented, we must acknowledge that, as His disciple, we must love God according to His standard and must begin making Him first in our lives above anything else. Then we can know we are beginning to live this truth.

Satan does not want you to get free from the hold of this world on your life. He intends to see to it that the cares of this life continue to get in your way of loving God as He has commanded.

The Way of Love



Deuteronomy 11:13-15 ESV “And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. And he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full.”

Love for God is foremost demonstrated by our obedience to His Word – his commands and teachings. We are commanded to pray, to trust Him, to stay in His Word, to abide in Him, to love others, and to make disciples, to name a few.

As we set out to love the Lord fervently, we will receive the blessings and promises that come as a result of that obedience. There are blessings and promises in the Bible that are conditional. This means we only experience them when we have met the condition.

We must develop a passion for God and He must become our first passion. When we have a passion for something, it consumes our thinking, our behavior, our choices, and our decisions. People are passionate about a lot of different things in this life. God must be our first passion.

We must shift our passion from whatever it is today, to Jesus. We must make Him the passion of our lives, first and foremost above any other passion for anything else in our lives. A passion for Jesus is a passion to obey everything He taught and commanded.

A passion for Jesus is a passion for His Word, a passion to spend time with Him, a passion to disciple others, and a passion to love others. As this passion within us develops and grows, we will find ourselves loving God according to

His standard and putting Him first in everything.

Subordinating all other passions to a single passion for Jesus is the hardest thing you will ever do. But it will also be the most rewarding and life transforming thing you ever do. You will find that Christ is being formed in you as you develop a passion for Jesus.

Passion for His Word

Many professed Christians do not read the Word regularly. A disciple must be in the Word consistently or else they will stop following their Master. The Word of Jesus is our spiritual bread of life. We will starve spiritually without regular, thoughtful consumption and study of His Word.

First and foremost we must be reading the gospels and the letters every day. Start reading a chapter a day in these books in the New Testament. If you want to read the Old Testament in addition to these, that is great. But you must stay in the teachings of your Master every day.



Psalm 119:105 ESV “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

If your excuse is that you do not have time or are too busy, or that your job requires too much of your time, or that time with your family keeps you from reading the word, or any other excuse, you have been deceived and have believed a lie.

That lie will significantly hinder the formation of Christ in you. You must put aside the excuses and take time away from those other things to show God that He is the most important thing in your life. You will never find time to read the Word; therefore, you must take time from something else.

You must take time away from your job, or your family, or your personal pursuits, or whatever it is that is your excuse. By your deliberate choice to put God ahead of your own life, you

demonstrate to God that He has priority in your life.

Remember, you have been bought with a price. Your life is no longer your own to do as you please. Stop living your life as if it is your own. God commands you to be in His Word, so get in His Word. He must become first in your life in everything.

Don't say you are His disciple, or that you are Christian, or that you love God, or that God is first in your life if you are not in His Word consistently and regularly. Don't think that God understands and will let you off the hook. He will never reduce His standard for us and we will experience the consequences of our disobedience like everyone else.

Start today. Begin to develop the discipline of spending more and more time in the Word throughout your day. The Word is your spiritual sword to defend against any attack of the enemy through unbelief and spiritual lies.

Demonstrate your obedience by staying in the Word and developing a passion for His Word. His Word has the power to transform us into His image as we receive it, believe it, and obey it.

Passion for Prayer

Prayer is simply personal communication with the Lord. When we pray sincerely and according to His will, He hears us and we hear Him. Prayer is two-way communication between the God of the universe and His creation. We cannot have a relationship with God apart from regular prayer.

God loves you and wants to be part of your daily life. Moment-by-moment He is engineering situations and circumstances for your best because He loves you. He wants you to come to Him and spend time with Him. He wants to teach you His ways so you can see for yourself how much He loves you.

Strong relationships require quality time. It is no different in our relationship with our Master. Jesus says come to me. It is not a one-time

coming, but a daily, moment-by-moment coming to and staying with Him.

It is prayer that brings our minds and hearts into the presence of the Master. As our mind and heart is directed to Him throughout the day, we find perfect peace in everything we do.

As we acknowledge Him in all our ways, He will direct us in the way we should go. As we learn this discipline, we will find good favor with God and everything in our lives will fall into place just as He determines.



Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

As we develop a passionate love for our Master, we will develop a passion for prayer and a love for His Word. As you renounce every other passion in favor of your passion for Him, you will experience spiritual transformation.

You must take more and more time away from other things so you can have time to be with your Master. Jesus wants time with you far above anything else you might do by serving Him.

Remember, you cannot serve Jesus unless you are following Him. You cannot follow Him if you are not spending time with Him and abiding in Him regularly and consistently.

Your activities are valueless to Him unless they are accompanied by devotion, loyalty, and love for Him above all things, even above your own life. You must love Him with all your heart, all your soul, all your thinking and all your strength.

Apart from developing a passion for Him, you will never have a passion for His Word and prayer. You will end up in a spiritual desert and will be living outside His will. Your spiritual life will wither.

If you do not know how to pray or how to read and study the Word, let the person who is your disciple trainer teach you how. It is through your daily obedience that you demonstrate your love for God.

Intend to Love God

We will only love God when we intend to love Him. The goal of this lesson is for you to begin loving God according to His standard. This requires a change in how you think and how you live.



Joshua 22:5 ESV “Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

The truth you are learning to live through this lesson is very important and you must stick with it until you know you are living it. If you think that God will understand your situation and be OK with your choice not to love Him wholeheartedly, think again.

There is always a consequence when we rebel against God’s commands and go our own way. The consequence will be that your relationship with God will suffer significantly. God will not take second place to anything in your life.

The Lord never leaves us, but we can leave Him. He never walks away from the relationship; we are the ones who walk away. We cannot have a relationship with God on our terms, only on His terms.

Therefore we must make every effort to develop and maintain a constant, close, and intimate relationship with the Lord. We do that by loving Him in the way He desires to be loved. Through that relationship we will find good favor and blessings.

If you need to put every other goal in your life on hold until you make this truth a reality in your life, then by all means do it. It is far and away more important than anything else in your life. You can do this. You must do this.

Make and keep the Lord as your first and most important love. If, by your behaviors and attitude, you betray Him by loving someone or something else above Him, you have left your first love and your relationship with Him will suffer.



Revelation 2:4-5 ESV “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”

1 Corinthians 16:22 ESV “If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!”



One Step for Living This Truth

The foundation of the *One Step* series that you have been reading is to be able to live God’s truth, one truth at a time, one step at a time.

Next we will suggest the specific action step you can take to allow the truth taught in this lesson to be lived in your own personal life.

You only have to do this one step to master this lesson. Your focus and effort should be to make sure you consistently and persistently do the step as directed below.

You must know, understand, and accept God’s standard for having a loving relationship with

Him. You must intend to make loving Him the highest, most important goal for your life. Then you will find life more abundant and you will continue to experience spiritual transformation.

ACTION STEP

Review this lesson as needed to remind you of God’s standard for loving Him. Continue to spend at least 30 minutes each day in prayer and in the Word.

You must develop the discipline of daily reading of the Word so you can know the teachings of your Master and be obedient to Him. You will not grow in your faith and be transformed if you fail to do this.

You must discipline yourself to pray and turn your mind to the Lord often in your day. During your prayer time, reflect on how your thought life and behavior are demonstrating your willingness to love God as He desires to be loved.

If God is truly your beloved you will turn your mind to Him throughout the day and keep in regular communication with Him as you go about your daily activities. Have reminders or a Bible around to help you develop the habit of doing this.

Keep as your primary goal for Him to be your first and primary love. Give Him your complete devotion and loyalty over every other thing – your job, your family, your church group, and anyone or anything else.

Here is a prayer you can pray daily as you commit to love the Lord each and every day with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength:

Lord, I fully understand the standard you have set for me to love you.

I commit with all my heart to keep you as the first and most important love in my life and to demonstrate this through my thinking and behavior today.

I commit to spend time in your Word and in prayer daily with you no matter what activity I must take time from – whether my family, my job, or any other activity as necessary.

I commit to demonstrate my love for you through obedience to everything you have taught and commanded, to follow you faithfully and to make disciples.

You will have completed this lesson when your love for God becomes more and more evident through obedience to Him and He is on your mind more consistently throughout your day.

Living this truth must become more important to you than anything else in your life. If it is not, you can never have the relationship with God that He wants to have with you and you will soon stop following Jesus.

At the end of each day, evaluate your day and how you did or did not

demonstrate your love for God in your thinking and behavior.

Continue to read a chapter in the Gospels each day.

As you continue to practice living this truth, you may need to come back to this lesson often. Don't be in a rush to start the next lesson. Even if it takes several weeks to get this truth integrated into your life, keep it as your primary focus until you know you are living it.

Remember, the most common problem with Christians today is that they know many truths about the Christian life, but are not living them. Make sure you are solidly living this truth before attempting to tackle the next truth.