

Loving God

Part 1

Introduction.

1. For the next few weeks I would like to study the most important task of mankind.
2. Of all the tasks of mankind, nothing is more important than reverencing and loving God. (Eccles. 12:13; Matt. 22:37-38).
3. Today we are going to explore the subject of “Loving God.”
4. The Scriptures teach us how much God loves and cares for us, but they also challenge us to love God, to give Him our hearts.
5. Christianity is first and foremost a relationship through Christ with our Father in heaven who hears our prayers and meets our needs.
6. Without the love of God this world would indeed be a hopeless and cruel place.
7. The brightest things in life come because of the love of God.
8. The Bible helps us to understand what love is and how love matters in life.
9. That is why we turn to God’s word for understanding and infallible guidance.

World Without Love

1. Imagine we awakened in a world without love.
2. It would be a terrible world - a world where no one would want to live.
 - a. It would be a world where no one cared and might makes right.
 - b. It would be a world where people would do anything to survive and would do horrible things to others to survive and to satisfy their selfish ambitions.
 - c. It would be a world where the lives of old people and the unborn are cheap, where morals are nothing as long as you get what you want.
 - d. It would be a world where people hardly marry, and those that do rarely stay that way.
 - e. It would be a world where children fend for themselves and have no real value except to be exploited.
 - f. It would be a world where people sit silent when evil takes place, where protecting the weak is unimportant.
 - g. A world without love would be a world without hope and filled with all the ugly, abominable substitutions

that people find to take love's place.

3. Part of what makes hell so terrible is that there will be no love there - only pain, regret, suffering and hopelessness.

Why We Love

1. It is important we examine the words "why we love."

2. The apostle John gave a clear and precise answer to this question by writing, "We love, because He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19).

a. John makes it abundantly clear that we love because God "first loved us."

b. This love predated man's creation. (Eph. 1:4,5).

3. Among our greatest treasures, none surpass the love of God for us.

a. We learn love through knowing God who is "love."

b. John penned these words. (1 Jn. 4:7-9).

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1 John 4:9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

4. We often talk about how much God loves us, but in this series of lessons we will focus on how we should love God and how God wants to be loved.

a. Loving God means learning how to please Him - not ourselves.

b. We want to please God, so it is important for us to take our minds off other things and focus on Him.

c. That's not as easy as it sounds, since there are so many things competing for our attention.

d. Drifting is a great danger of man and even Christians must be careful not to drift away from God. (Heb. 2:1).

Choosing What We Love

1. We choose what we love, and many things battle for our affections.

2. The Lord Jesus spoke these words about loving. (Matt. 6:24).

Matt 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

3. What is true of money is true of many things; at some point we must decide whether we will serve God or not.

4. God has created us as creatures of choice and made us such that we must choose to love and serve Him or choose to love the world.

5. God wants us to love Him and warns against loving the world. (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

1 John 2:17 The world is passing away, and {also} its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

6. We cannot hold onto worldly desires and hold onto Christ at the same time.

a. We must choose between the two. (Matt. 12:30).

Matt 12:30 "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

b. We must decide whether we will take our faith seriously and truly devote ourselves totally to God.

7. The apostle Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, made this prediction found in 2 Timothy 3. (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

2 Tim 3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

2 Tim 3:2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

2 Tim 3:3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

2 Tim 3:4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

2 Tim 3:5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

a. This passage speaks of mankind at its worst, people who pretend godliness but have no room for the Lord or anyone else in their lives.

b. They, the ones pretending godliness, love themselves so much they have little room for God in what they do.

c. When the choice is made, they are going to do what they desire.

d. They cannot imitate the Lord Jesus and say, "not My will but Yours be done," because they love themselves. (Matt. 26:39).

e. They are lovers of money and they want the pleasures that money gives them.

f. 1 Timothy 6:9 -10 gives this warning about the danger of loving riches.

1 Tim 6:9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

1 Tim 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. Lit. "root of all the evils is the love of money" is a hyperbole meaning "all kinds" or "all sorts."

g. Some who blame God for their problems ought instead to look in the mirror, for they bring many of their sorrows on themselves.

1) People who will do anything to get rich often find themselves filled with heartaches and regrets.

2) People think sin makes them happy, but sin always hurts.

I. Sometimes people justify their sins with "God wants me to be happy!"

- 1) Yes, God wants us to be happy and to bless us; but God does not bless people by blessing their sins.
- 2) God's blessing comes from righteous living, not from following fleshly desires.

j. Peter warns us to "abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul." (1 Peter 2:11).

- 1) Sinful lust enslaves us and hardens our hearts; it robs us of true joy, and true peace, and love.
- 2) It never lasts. "The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever" (1 Jn. 2:17).

8. People "in the last days" [the Christian age] will fall into the habit of "not loving good."

- a. They no longer want to be pure and holy, they do not want anyone else to be; and they do not want to even hear about it.
- b. They are so given to sin, they can no longer tolerate righteousness.
- c. The Lord Jesus said. (1 Jn. 3:19).

John 3:19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

- d. Some today know more about zombies, vampires, and witches than they do about God and His word.
- e. Their hearts are far away from God!

9. When people fail to understand the love of God, they eventually become heartless and unloving.

- a. They cease to care even for their own families. They have closed their hearts.
- b. The Lord Jesus predicted, "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold." (Matt. 24:12).
- c. Lawlessness makes people stop loving God and others.
- d. People begin losing their love for God when they stop counting their blessings.
- e. They become ungrateful, as if the world owed them whatever they have.

10. What can we do to show our love to God while we are surrounded by a sinful and secular world?

James' Answer To This Question

James 4:7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

James 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James 4:9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

1. First, we must submit ourselves to God.

- a. We must choose to make the Lord Jesus the ruler of our hearts.

b. To do that, we must take ourselves off the throne.

c. Paul wrote these words in Romans 6:16-18.

Rom 6:16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone {as} slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

Rom 6:17 But thanks be to God that though **you were slaves of sin**, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,

Rom 6:18 and having been freed from sin, you became **slaves of righteousness**.

d. No matter what our past has been, we can obey God from our hearts and make changes to our lives.

e. Submitting to God is not slavery; submitting to God frees us from the sin that ruins us. God gives us hope!

2. Second, we must resist the devil. The passage says if you will resist the devil, he will flee from you.

a. The devil is strong and evil, but he is not stronger than the Lord Jesus. (1 Jn. 3:7-8).

1 John 3:7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

1 John 3:8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. **The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.**

b. Jesus triumphed over the devil when He bore the cross to forgive sin and rose from the dead to overcome death.

c. Christians can gladly follow Jesus, “because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (1 Jn. 4:4b).

d. Many find it easy to flirt with the devil and play with sin; but we can’t get close to God while we are flirting with the devil.

1) We must get away from [resist] the devil in order to draw near to God.

2) We have to decide we will not run with the devil any more, and we will not run with his crowd any more.

3) We have to decide we are not going to play his games, and we are not going to do his bidding.

4) When we finally get the courage to resist the devil and tell him to get lost, we will see the devil flee.

3. Third, we need to draw near to God, and when we draw near to God, He will draw near to us.

a. The Father in heaven and the Lord Jesus want to be close to us and to bless us.

b. Jesus died on the cross to demonstrate His love for us. (Jn. 15:13).

c. God’s heart is open to us, pleading for us to return to Him and to serve Him.

d. All need to listen to this admonition found in Isaiah. (Isa. 55:6-7).

Is 55:6 Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.

Is 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD,
And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

4. Fourth, the passage in James says “cleanse your hands, you sinners.” (Jas. 4:8).

- a. We must make a clean break with sin and repent.
- b. We cannot draw close to God while we hang on to our sins. (Isa. 59:1-2).

Is 59:1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear.
Is 59:2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden {His}
face from you so that He does not hear.

- c. Sin separates us from God and fills us with shame and regret, so we must get rid of the sin and draw close to God.
- d. Repentance changes the heart, it opens the door to forgiveness, and it sets a person in a new direction that allows fellowship with God..

5. Fifth, “purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

- a. We need a clean heart and a clean conscience.
- b. This demands coming clean with God, confessing our sins to Him. (Prov. 28:13).
- c. This is also taught in 1 John 1:8-9 that demands we do not deny our sins, but confess them.
- d. As long as we have issues with God we will find it hard to draw close to Him.
- e. Being right with God opens up the door to eternal life and the blessing of God that He gives forever.
- f. Remaining in sin will only cause us heartache and ruin.
- g. We must not let anything come between us and God – not sin, not money, not pleasure, not our own desires.
- h. The more we love God the more joy and peace we will find in life.
- i. It is urgent that we respond to God’s love by loving Him back.
- j. Loving God will bring great blessings in this life and the life to come.

Conclusion.

- 1. In lesson 2 we will discuss the importance of “Loving God Totally.”
- 2. In lesson 3 we will study “Love and Law” and in Lesson 4 we will examine the question of Jesus “Do You Love Me?”

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