

10 Steps to REALLY Loving God (The GREATEST Commandment)

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August 2004

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Summary: You probably want to love God, especially since Jesus called it “The Greatest Commandment”. But it’s one thing to think we love someone and another for that person or Being to FEEL loved by us. This message describes 10 steps to developing a rich, full, deep loving relationship with our Creator. Put these points into practice and your life will change forever.

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(This message may be best understood after first hearing the messages on “New Creation in Christ” and “God—The Ultimate Father”. These transcripts are NOT an exact word-for-word rendition of the audio. This will contain some information not in the audio and vice versa, but overall it will still be helpful for you to use with the audio tape).

I’m sure those of you who regularly study God’s word, pray and hear this type of message feel you love God. And I’m confident you do. Many of our friends and work acquaintances would also claim to “Love the Lord”. We know God loves US, but are we as sure that we love HIM? Are you sure *He* feels loved by you and me?

I’m talking about this today because Jesus – when asked which the greatest commandment was – said the first and greatest is to “*LOVE* God with all your heart, with all your might, all your mind and all your strength!” (*Matthew 22:35-40; Deuteronomy 6:4-5*)

If this is the greatest commandment, perhaps we better double check to be sure GOD *feels* loved by us and *is* loved by us. ***I hope this message will challenge you to recommit to having a profoundly DEEP love for your God, your Maker and Savior.***

DO you love God? Are you sure? And does GOD *feel* loved by you? You know what I mean, don’t you? We can *say* we love our husband or wife. But if our spouse doesn’t *feel* loved, we can say all we want that we love that person. The KEY is to be sure the one we say we love, in fact *feels* and *knows* our love. A book came out 20+ years ago called “The Languages of Love” that elaborated on real love being and doing the things that make the one we claim to love actually *feeling* loved by us.

Remember the messages to the 7 congregations of God’s church in Revelation 2 and 3? Jesus, in messages to His very own fiancée, says one had *lost* their first love, one was dead or dying, one was lukewarm – and miserable, wretched, blind and naked... and most of the 7 churches were oblivious to the way GOD felt about them. He wasn’t feeling very loved, frankly. So the *lesson*: let’s not assume God feels loved by us. Revelation 2 and 3 apparently show much of the church is in DENIAL about the real state of the relationship with God.

GOD *clearly defines* what HE means when He says we are to “LOVE” Him, as we’ll see. I have ten *steps* to *really* loving God – and that’s my title -- all backed by God’s word. You probably can rattle off 2-3 of the points right now, but I hope you’ll listen to the whole message and commit to a *complete* love for our Great God, even though we have never seen Him (1 Peter 1:8).

1. LOVING GOD STARTS WITH GOD LOVING US, and our responding to that call to establish a relationship with Him. It starts with repentance and removing the wall of sin that separates us.

1 John 4:7-10, 19 “Beloved, let us love one another, for *love is of God*; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, *for God is love*. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, *but that He loved us* and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.19 **We love Him BECAUSE He first loved us.**”

Everything is about GOD, HIS will, HIS plans, His purposes, His objectives – Notice again verse 7 – “love is of God”. Love, the ability to love, the source of love – “is OF GOD”. Because Love is what HE IS (verse 8). And we can love Him *because* He loved us FIRST.

But there’s a problem: *The sinful person, in a sinful nature, is cut off from God, until God calls that person and he/she ANSWERS God’s call, repents and has the barrier removed BY GOD. But apart from God, we cannot be said to love God. But in fact GOD is the One who even leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4) – but we DO have to answer that call.*

We can’t come to God unless God first calls us (John 6:44). And the process of salvation has to be through the one Savior Jesus Christ and none other (Acts 4:12). Jesus is *the* Door, *The* Way. We can’t do it through any other name, or through any other religion than what the Bible teaches.

But first we start with repentance, responding to His call for us to come to Him in repentance.

Isaiah 59:1-2 “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 **But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.**” We’re told in **Proverbs 15:29** “The LORD is *far* from the wicked, But He *hears* the prayer of the *righteous*.”

I have several messages available on Godly repentance. I’ve often repented in the past, but NOT in a godly manner, but I trust God has taught me how to repent in a genuine and godly way now. But since I have messages that go in depth on this, I will just take the time to make this a STARTING point in our steps to *really* loving God. Be **turning to Isaiah 55:6-7** please.

And God is *inviting* some to come into relationship with Him. Life is *all* about relationships, starting with the one we can have with God.

Isaiah 55:6-7 “Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. 7 **Let the wicked forsake his way,** And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let *him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him*; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.”

AS we repent, and turn to God, He in turn opens up lots of blessings. For we’re told in **Jeremiah 5:25** that our iniquities have withheld good from us. But turn now to Isaiah 1, where God invites us to restore a strong relationship with Him.

Isaiah 1:15-20 “When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I **will not hear**. [why?--] **Your hands are full of blood**. 16 “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; **Put away the evil** of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, 17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow.

18 “Come now, and let us reason together”, Says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. 19 *If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land;* 20 *But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword”;* For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Can it get any clearer? SIN cuts us off – and God wants us restored in relationship with Him.

Sin is the transgressing of God’s commandments (1 John 3:4) – and it’s cutting us *off* from God’s blessings! When our land is full of violence, corruption, adultery, lying, sabbath breaking – and even little kids take God’s name in vain dozens of times a day – is it any wonder God, in His love for us, is *warning us* to repent and come into relationship with Him? We’ve all sinned, me included. Of course I have – but we must each *repent* and put those behind us, before we can say we love God.

Please hear my messages on repentance for a fuller and more complete explanation of this topic. But it’s *where we start* in relationship with God. ***Please turn to Romans 5:8-11.***

A *profound cost* was paid by God in order to allow us to be freed from the penalty of our sins.

Romans 5:8-11 “8 But God *demonstrates His* own love toward us, in that *while we were still sinners*, Christ *DIED* for us. [IT COST God to restore our relationship with Him] 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath *through Him*. 10 For if when we were *enemies* we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

We can read through those words and think of them as mere words – or we can read them in AWE of what the HOLY God of the universe did for ME, for YOU, personally. Jesus came to die not *just* for the whole world – but I feel, for me -- *personally*. For you – personally. And He was *resurrected* to live for ME, personally. And for you, personally.

And this *recognition* of what God did, and continues to do for us, there should be a sense of *debt*, owing God, as it were. We’re said in many places in Romans to have “died to sin” now, and we are to live for righteousness.

Now notice Romans 8:12 because it’s a great segue to the next two points: “Therefore, brethren, we *are debtors* -- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.”

2. WE CAN LOVE GOD A LOT WHEN WE RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE HOW MUCH WE’VE BEEN FORGIVEN. Start by turning to Luke 7:40-48.

Background: Jesus has been invited to a religious leader's home – they were called Pharisees back then (a strict religious sect). These Pharisees did not associate with people they considered “sinners” – basically anyone who didn't adhere to their strict codes.

While they're having dinner, a woman of known ill reputation comes in uninvited and falls at Jesus' feet, repenting, crying, and wiping her tears off His feet with her hair. The Pharisee, named Simon, can't believe Jesus is letting her do this and condemns them both in his heart. So this is where we pick up the story. Now keep in mind, rabbis back then wouldn't even talk to their own wives in public, and never to this kind of human debris, as they would view her.

Luke 7:40-48 “And Jesus answered and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” So he said, “Teacher, say it.” 41 “There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii (lets say 500 pieces of silver), and the other fifty (pieces of silver). 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” 43 Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have rightly judged.” 44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? [This is hilarious! The ONLY thing Simon was seeing for the past 5 minutes was this undesirable woman who had trespassed into his “holy quarters”] I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. [Jesus was implying He would have been happy to wash His own feet—but wasn't even given any water to do so!] 45 You gave Me no kiss, [you didn't bother really welcoming me] but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, [you didn't make me feel like anything special] but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. 47 **Therefore I say to you, her sins, which ARE many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.**” [Jesus is saying: “I know...I know who she is. We ALL know. You've all gossiped enough about her to make sure of that! And I know WHAT she is. But I'm forgiving her!"] 48 And He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

The truth is: we've all been forgiven of an indescribable amount of sin. Yes you, too! It's just that some recognize it more. Others feel their sins are somehow “not as bad as” someone else's so they feel they can get on their high horse and condemn! Condemn away all you want – but if you don't stop it, YOU will be the one condemned by our loving God who wants to forgive us our sins and wants us to get along with each other. More on that later...

But just let me say this: how can inmates – all on death row – think that someone else on death row is worse they are? They've all done something that the judge felt was worthy of the ultimate penalty. I'm talking about US, brethren. We've all been on spiritual death row. We've all sinned, we've all incurred the penalty of eternal death – but the love of God *freed* us from that death penalty when HE died FOR us. So how can we continue to condemn – or refuse to have anything to do with -- others?

PAUL certainly did not consider himself superior to anyone. **In 1 Timothy 1:15 PAUL calls himself “CHIEF SINNER”, one of the sinners Christ came to save.** Would you call yourself that? Why not?

In the book of Romans, he says in Romans 7 that he knew in his carnal fleshly nature, “NO good thing dwells”. He says “in my flesh”—for he did know that He had God's spirit also, which *was* good. So why do we condemn others, when we each need so much forgiveness? Are you better than the Apostle Paul?

Even righteous DANIEL, considered by many to be among the most righteous to have ever lived on this planet, talks about “WE have sinned” – he always includes himself. You can read that for yourself in Daniel 9 when he was repenting for himself and for the nation.

But the main point is that we will *love God* a LOT when we recognize how much of His love and forgiveness He’s graciously extended to *each* and to ALL of us. It matters little whether you’ve ever raped anyone, murdered anyone, or have been an adulterer, or homosexual, or any of the other sins most of us would consider “really bad sins”. We’ve all been on spiritual death row – and so we’re all in the same ultimate boat.

We should see ourselves *so completely covered* by the love of God we see nothing else!

We can readily see this JOY OF SALVATION from those who RECOGNIZE God has forgiven them of SO much in many examples in scripture:

-- *The story of Zacchaeus ... and how salvation and great joy came to his home (Luke 19:1-10)*
The people complained about going to such a “sinner’s” home, but Jesus said He had come into the world to seek the LOST, and to have the joy of salvation for horrible sinners like Zacchaeus – and me – as well.

-- *The parables of Luke 15 – the prodigal son in particular.*

And there are also WARNINGS that we had better be forgiving one another also! Please be sure to hear my message on “FORGIVING AS CHRIST FORGIVES” for a full explanation of this. So many of “God’s people” [I wonder] are not willing to let someone’s past be past, though they’ve repented bitterly and had those sins covered by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ in their stead.

--*When we TAKE our forgiveness for granted, or forget all His benefits, we won’t love as much. Or looking at it positively: You want to love God? OPEN your eyes and see His love for YOU!*

This 2nd point boils down to this: **1 John 4:19** “We love Him *because* He first loved us”. We’ll love God even more if we recognize He’s forgiven you and me of the death penalty – and now we’re free.

3. We need, and are given, a NEW HEART, SPIRIT and MIND so that we can LOVE GOD because the natural, carnal person is HOSTILE to God and His ways.

I have a complete message on this point in the one called “A New Creation in Christ”. Our old self, called “the old man” in the Bible, the carnal heart, according to Jeremiah 17:9 is desperately wicked and *cannot* love God unless we first repent, see what God has done, and then RECEIVE a new heart and spirit.

Romans 8:7-8

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against [hostile to] God; for it is not subject to the law of God, NOR INDEED CAN BE. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

You and I CANNOT love God properly without a new, clean heart from God that is no longer a carnal heart. Jeremiah 31 speaks eloquently of this new heart. This makes us *new*. And when God’s spirit is

active in us, we become different, and this time, want to obey God and want to please Him. Notice what even happened initially to Saul, as God was calling him to be king over Israel. Samuel, from God's word, tells Saul:

1 Samuel 10:6, 9

"Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another [other translations: ["a different"] man... 9 So it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart; and all those signs came to pass that day."

And we'll read in chapter 16, that God have given Saul His holy spirit in fact – by which Saul could say he had a new heart.

Over time, however, King Saul hardened his heart, turned from God, and when we do that *over time*, God's spirit can and will leave us. That is why David prayed in Psalm 51, in repenting of his murder of Uriah and adultery with Uriah's wife, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me".

1 Samuel 16:13-14 "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; ***and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David*** from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah. But ***the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul***, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him."

(Bonus material for you who use transcripts to the next dotted line)

There's a persistent misconception that God's spirit never was given to anyone until Acts 2. What happened in Acts 2 was the granting of God's spirit to a lot of people all at once. But prior to that, God in fact was giving His spirit to one here, one there. Certainly our spiritual forefathers like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, the prophets, etc. had God's spirit. How else, and why else, would David pray "take NOT thy Holy Spirit from me, O God"?

Caleb, one of the 2 faithful spies not killed by God, was able to follow God because he too had a "different spirit" – GOD'S spirit -- in him to allow him to obey (Numbers 14:24).

Joseph is said to have had God's spirit (Genesis 41:38); Joshua (Numbers 27:18); Daniel (Daniel 5:11); David (1 Sam 16:13); certainly Elijah and Elisha and many, many others. That's how they could love God.

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God actually sends Jesus to live in us via His indwelling Holy Spirit. See **Galatians 4:6-7**. Also **Ephesians 3:17** SAYS "Christ now dwells in our hearts through faith".

So it should be clear that though we still *have* a carnal heart – and will, until the resurrection when incorruption replaces corruption – we have also been given another *new* heart, a heart from GOD, a clean heart, a good heart, a new heart. THIS heart, with JESUS *in it* now, is NOT against God, is not enmity against Him, but in fact *loves* God and loves God's laws and ways. David said over and over "Oh how LOVE I thy law" and many variations of that, talking about how God's words and laws were his DELIGHT – over and over and over again, especially in **Psalm 119:16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 174**. This point is really *expanded* upon in my message on "New Creation..."

Paul said in **Romans 7:22-23** he delights in the law of God now, according to the new inward man and goes on to say in verse 23 that this new nature WARS against the old carnal nature we still also have.

And from now on, God wants us to worship Him with our HEARTS in it.

Notice Proverbs 23:26 “My son, give ME your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways”

Matthew 15:7-9 “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 8 "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, *But their HEART is far from Me. [read that again! Their HEART is far from Me!]* 9 And in VAIN do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

With only our old carnal heart, we could not love God from the heart - - But now we finally can! We’ve repented, accepted God’s forgiveness, recognize the depth of His love, and now we have the mind, heart and spirit to be ABLE to love God and even take delight in Him. God LOVES that!

The points which follow cannot be possible without these first 3 points.

4. We PROVE our love and GROW in love for God by OBEYING Him and Keeping His commandments through CHRIST – not just because we HAVE to, but we REALLY WANT TO now. And now we CAN since we now have the heart, spirit and mind to WANT to obey and love God!

We are now indebted to Him, to obey Him and present ourselves to Him as slaves of righteousness.

Sometimes those who preach obedience get worried when someone talks about obeying out of WANTING to vs. obeying without “having to”. Do we have to obey? Of course. But do you feel loved by your kids if they do what you have told them to do, but you know they don’t really WANT to?

This 4th step cannot happen until the first 3 steps happen. We cannot obey God without first repenting, recognizing how much we’ve been forgiven, and then given a new spirit that allows us to obey.

Jeremiah 10:23 says it is not in man to direct his own steps. We need God’s help. If we try to obey on our own merit, it will be SELF-righteous legalism and will fall short of salvation. That is why Paul said he did NOT want his own righteousness from the law, but the righteousness which is from Christ through faith (Philippians 3:9). But we STILL have to obey the commandments – but now through Christ, and through faith in Christ living in us, and righteousness from God by faith. Be sure to read Philippians 3:9.

John 14:15, 21, 24 “If you love Me, keep My commandments.....21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him..... 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.”

Can it get any clearer? GOD feels loved by us when we show we want to obey what he tells us to do. It’s that plain. We can SAY we love God all we want, but if we SPURN His words and commands and refuse to do what we know He wants, when we live a life contrary to His words, He does not feel loved by us at all and His love is not in us. It can’t be any plainer.

And as I said: we now *want* to obey. Sure, we're *tempted* and give in at times. Or we're weak – but the spirit was willing at least, right, though the flesh is weak. But nowadays, when we don't measure up and sin, we feel *badly* about it. We really didn't want to. Paul so eloquently explains that in Romans 7 – that which I **DON'T** want to do, I do. . . that's the battle with the old self going on. A battle we sometimes lose. But overall Christ gives us the victory over sin and death.

AND REMEMBER: It's how we END UP that counts most! Don't despair if you've been a spiritual wretch til now. Come to God with your heart in your hands, give Him your broken heart and live now a life of obedience – and all will be well in the end.

Another problem with this point arises sometimes because anyone who preaches obedience is **accused of teaching salvation by works**. The Bible, however, is clear. We are saved by GRACE and then prove our sanctified and justified state, and show our appreciation for God's saving grace BY a life of obedience. That's *what Ephesians 2:8-10* clearly says.

Please slowly also read Galatians 2:16-21. Paul says in **Galatians 2:16-21** that we are justified by the faith of Christ, but when we combine that with **James 2:14-26**, that FAITH has to be proven by a NEW LIFE of righteous obedience. Use the WHOLE Bible.

Galatians 2:21 says if we think we're righteous because we keep the law, then Christ died in vain and we frustrate grace. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't obey... just don't obey and think YOUR obedience is what is saving you. It isn't. But you still have to obey to PROVE you love God.

And it's also clear in scripture that we're saved by grace, but *rewarded* by our works. Rewards are not salvation. But Jesus made it clear in John 14 and will again in the book of 1 John that if we want God to know we love Him, we better be obeying Him.

So those of you who feel we don't have to keep the commandments will have some head scratching going on, if you're honest. Why else would Jesus' commission be to make disciples and to "teach them to OBEY all things I've commanded you"? Yes, obedience is central to being a true disciple.

If we used to be adulterers and philanderers and flirts – it's time to stop that conduct. When we prove to God, by changing, that His way means more to us now than the very momentary thrill of a sex fling, we will be in the kingdom. But it's clear that unrepentant adulterers and sinners won't be in the kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

If we used to get drunk from time to time – if you claim you love God, get some help and stop the drinking to the point of drunkenness. Alcoholics may have to stop drinking completely. Drunkards, who don't overcome, won't be in the kingdom. Read it. It's plainly there in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

If we used to use **Jesus' name or God's name in vain** – God feels very disrespected whenever we do that, and it's a horrible sin. IT needs to stop too.

If we **cheat on our income taxes and tithes** – we're lying, we're stealing, we're coveting – all kinds of sins going on there. And the same principle of starting to OBEY – applies to sabbath keeping, and all the commandments, and all the scriptures where God is showing us *His way*.

Are we obedient to the commandments when no one is looking? When no one knows us? When we're all alone? Except, that is, for millions of on looking angels, the 4 living creatures around the throne of God, the 24 elders, and JESUS AND GOD themselves – all looking on! We're never alone.

However, a big word of caution here: obedience by itself – without the heart in it – is like a hard working housewife who keeps the house clean, does the laundry, shops for food, does all the right things by her *works* that she's a "good" wife – but whose *heart* isn't in the marriage anymore! Doing things of "love", but done out of *duty*, is not the same thing as done from, and with, the *heart*.

I can't overstress this point, as we go through this point about obedience. There are many employees, many soldiers, many spouses, who *obey* their boss, their commander, their spouse out of *fear*, but don't *love* them! We can be doing all the right things, but if our *heart* isn't in it, we can be like the *Ephesians* church! *God*, whose Son is going to marry the church, does not want a wife who *just* "does her *duty*" – if I can be so bold to say that – you know what I mean, don't you? *No*, He wants a wife who has some godly zeal, fervor – yes, let's even call it passion -- in her love life! And wives, for that matter, want a husband who has a *passion* for *them* too! Our *hearts* have to be in our love – or it just becomes *duty*.

It's like some of the love songs: "you don't close your eyes anymore when you kiss my lips", "you don't bring me flowers anymore..."

You see, this is what was said about the Ephesians church:

Revelation 2:2-4 "I know *your works, your labor*, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 and you have persevered and have patience, and *have labored for My name's sake* and have not become weary. 4 *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*"

From what I read, our Husband-to-be, Jesus Christ, is not always feeling a lot of love from His fiancée – largely because we're not as obedient as we should be.

1 John 5:2-3 "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3 **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.**"

1 John 2:4-6 "He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a *liar*, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

PART of that obedience is doing the things which please and honor our Holy Father and Jesus

I can tell my wife all day long that I love her, but if I constantly do things that irritate and annoy her, or show my selfishness – will she FEEL loved? That's why Jesus said in John 8:28-29 that He always did the things that pleased His Father.

God tells us in **Micah 6:8** that He really likes people who are just, love mercy and walk humbly. Read it sometime. Then in Isaiah 66:2 God says He looks to people who are of a humble, contrite spirit and who deeply respect His words – who tremble at His words.

God wants to be honored and it pleases Him when we seek to please Him, seek to obey Him, and do the things *He* knows are best for us.

John 8:28-29

"Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that ***I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.*** 29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for *I always do those things that please Him.*"

Micah 6:8 "He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD **require of you** But to do **justly**, To love **mercy**, And to **walk** humbly with your God?"

Isaiah 66:2 "For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the LORD. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word"

5. God FEELS LOVED by us when we totally RELY IN HIM AND TRUST IN HIM.

Please be turning to Hebrews 11.

As a father myself, I know I feel accepted, honored and loved by my children when they trust me and even rely on me in little ways like asking advice. God is no different: HE loves it when we go to Him in prayer and ask for His help, ask for his will to be shown, ask for Him to guide and lead us and to help us follow His guidance. How could He not feel loved by that?

We certainly feel more love from anyone when they do things which PLEASE us. You know what? God is pleased when we live by faith and diligently seek Him and His way:

Hebrews 11:6 "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." *Those who live by faith obviously PLEASE Him.*

Proverbs 3:5-7 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil."

Psalms 37:3-5 "Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.

4 *Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.*

[obviously pleased] 5 Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass."

I'm preparing a whole message on living by faith, and trusting in God, so I won't say much about that now except to make it a point in this message.

6. God feels LOVED when He sees us LOVING HIS OTHER CHILDREN – OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS TOO – OR ELSE THE LOVE OF GOD IS NOT IN US EITHER.

1 John 4:7-12 “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we **also ought to love one another**. 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us”

Very clear, isn't it? We can't make everyone love US, but you know what? WE can choose to love everyone—and thereby show we are God's children.

1 John 4:20-21 “If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that **he who loves God must love his brother also**.”

That's what Matthew 25:34-40 is all about – proving your love for your brother by DOING something when they needed you! “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you [DID SOMETHING!] gave Me food; I was thirsty and you [did something!] gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you [DID SOMETHING!] clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' 37 'Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'”

I've certainly had to repent of offenses against various ones. And so must you. Part of proving our love is really forgiving one another, from the heart, and seeking to restore the relationships. We can't say we love the offender if we don't forgive and restore the relationship. (I spell it all out clearly on my message on “forgiving one another as Jesus does”.)

And please, brethren – God wants His children's love for one another to be the very PROOF they are His people. Remember what He said in **John 13:35** – “by THIS shall ALL know you are my disciples: if you have LOVE for one another as I have loved you.” ***God, as father, loves it when He sees His kids all getting along and loving one another and cooperating.***

I know I get, as a father, my biggest thrills when the family comes together in harmony – and my biggest hurts whenever I'd see my kids (I'm talking years ago) sometimes do things that hurt one another. God feels the same about this. (Psalm 133:1)

But instead, what do we have among *some* of the brethren of the various church groups? We have *factions*, denominations, badmouthing going on, isolationism, one-upmanship going on.... This *should not be!* And we *know* it! So brethren, regardless of what the leaders of the various groups do to keep God's children *apart*, let US reach out to one another, cross the church lines, and *show* our love for *all* of God's children!

7. WE PROVE OUR LOVE BY WANTING TO SPEND TIME WITH GOD, and doing so!

We spend time with those we love, OR with the things we love to do. We want to. Not “have to”.
“Have to” implies duty. “Want to” implies desire and love. God is on our mind constantly, all through the day, and we often talk to Him, all through the day.

We may have to schedule in that time if we’re not yet doing it. Sometimes in mature relationships – like a 29 year marriage like ours – you have to be sure to make time for one another, to go on walks together, to date one another.... And the same with God. Take time to evaluate where you are with Him.

Do you love God’s word? Do you love Bible study? Your actions will prove whether or not you do. If you really love God – you’ll want to hear (or read) what He has to say to you. You’ll be in His word; you’ll spend more time with God, rather than in watching TV, or your favorite hobbies or pastimes.

Please hear my message about MANNA – and the tie-in to God’s word. Daniel prayed several times a day. So did David. Moses walked and talked with God constantly, as did Enoch, Abraham and many others. *And WE can today by praying and studying first thing every single day.*

We’re commanded to “seek *first* the kingdom of God and its righteousness” in Matthew 6:33. God wants to be placed into *first place* in our life. *Do* we pray first thing in the day? *Do* we study God’s word first thing every day?

As a father myself, I know how *loved* I feel when my daughter in Orlando calls me. Or when any of my kids take the time to be with us. Or invite us to see a movie with them, or come over to their home for dinner.... or when my 16 year old son says he wants to play basketball with me... I love it!

God wants our hearts. Remember Matthew 15:8: “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their **heart** is far from Me.” God almost seems hurt here, disillusioned perhaps.

Jesus is our future Husband. How would you feel if *your* fiancée never called you, or spent time with you? Would you wonder if she had died? Or doesn’t need you?

Keeping the commandments is not enough. We have to *spend the time* with God also, to show we love Him.

Wives know this: they feel like a mistress to their husband’s true “wife” – their job! Or the golf game. Or hunting season. Just as we shouldn’t neglect those we love, we must not neglect God himself.

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

And of course, again, the well known **Matthew 6:33** – “*Seek you first* the kingdom of God and its righteousness...” There are dozens and dozens more scriptures we could use showing God wants us going to Him, relying on Him, calling to Him, trusting in Him, talking to Him.... Let’s do it!

One of the worst things about the 21st century is the BUSY-NESS of our lives! We’re busy. We’re weighed down with things to do, worries, concerns, anxieties, to-do lists – and God gets forgotten. To our peril, if we do.

8. WE also prove our love by OFTEN TELLING GOD how much we love Him***Be turning to John 21.***

I put this near the end, because this point is meaningless if we haven't proven it by obedience and all the other points we've already discussed. I'm going to refer again to **Matthew 15:8** – we can honor Him with our mouth, but if our *heart* isn't in our worship and adoration, it is meaningless.

But this doesn't mean we *shouldn't* take the time, *many* times, to *tell* God how much we appreciate Him, love Him, adore Him.

Apparently the *answer* to this is *important* enough to God that Jesus asked *Peter* three times in a row: “Peter, do you *love* me?” (**John 21:15-17**). He was asking Peter if he had the unconditional, never ending “agape” love for Him, and Peter 3 time answered “you know I *phileo* (like, love as a brother) you”.

John 21:15-18

“So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you *love* Me more than these?”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

He said to him, “Feed My lambs.”

16 He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love *Me*?”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

He said to him, “Tend My sheep.”

17 He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, ***DO you love Me?***” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?”

And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.”

God apparently wants to *know* we do, and *hear* that we do. And I know – and there's not the time to go into it right now – that there was a WHOLE LOT more than that going on in this passage too. I know that. You probably do too. That's an interesting study all by itself.

Some people just have a hard time *expressing* love – but many people need to *hear* it. I think GOD likes hearing it, when it's combined with *proof* by our actions.

(Story of the marriage counseling) I was **once** asking a husband in marriage counseling, “do you *love* your wife?” He had *such* a hard time saying “yes”. And when I asked him if he could tell her, his reply was: “well, I provide a roof over her head, don't I? I bring home the pay check, don't I?” – but his wife *also* wanted once in a while to *hear* him *say* he loved her. And when he finally said, “Honey, Yes, I love you”, she bawled like a baby. She had never heard the tender words “I love you” from his lips. Sure, actions mean more – but words mean something *too*, when combined with action.

David sure made sure HE said it:

Psalms 18:1-2 “***I will love You, O LORD, my strength.*** 2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”

WOW! What adoration! What praise! David was real good at the adoring love which one would have for their husband. In Psalm after psalm after psalm...

Statements of your Love

So do you once in a while just say, “My God, my King, I love you...”, or “dear ABBA, my Dear Father, oh thank you, thank you for being who and what you are...I sure do love you. I love you *for your wondrous sunsets – you’re such a great Artist! Wow. I love you for the warm beaches you made for us, the smiles on our children’s faces make me think of You. I love you for the deer/fawn in your back yard, for wondrous clouds and the flowers and butterflies, as well as the great healings You give, for every little thing and big thing that happens. You are just terrific! You’re the best. And I want to be with You always. I sure love you!*”

Let’s turn our hearts back to Father!! Love Him *from* the heart, with *all* our hearts. Remember the first commandment is to love the Lord your God with *all your heart!* Give your heart back to *Jesus*. Tell God of your love, and voice it often. He likes hearing it.

9. WE PROVE OUR LOVE FOR GOD BY TELLING OTHERS OF OUR GREAT LOVING GOD WHO SAVED US. WE PASS ON THE NEWS ABOUT OUR GREAT GOD.

The lady I saw on the news, whose life had been saved, and how she eloquently and emotionally even, talked about those who had saved her. Can we not do this when we’re saved for ETERNITY?

Is this idea just for ministers? No way. When you’re excited about something, you share it! We share names of great restaurants. Won’t we share the good news about Jesus Christ, and the Kingdom that is coming? And the salvation we can have right now?

In so many ways, so many times, I bring up God’s word even at work.

Acts 8:3-5 “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. 4 *Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word* [these were not the apostles: they stayed in Jerusalem] 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *preached Christ* to them.”

Acts 11:19-21 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over *Stephen* traveled as far as *Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word* to no one but the Jews only. 20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.”

These were *not* ministers or apostles, but everyday brethren! And “the hand of the Lord was with them”, as they preached about *Jesus*.

David, in his great prayer of repentance in Psalm 51.... We don’t often read the ending, but it’s SO inspiring:

Psalm 51:12-15 “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, *And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* 15 O Lord, open my lips, *And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.*”

Was “showing forth praise” only for David?

1 Peter 2:9-10 “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, *that YOU may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness* into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”

Paul did, of course, and he was an apostle. But he couldn't contain this good news.

Yes, we do have a responsibility to spread the word! God does the calling, but who is to say, that like the believers in Stephen's day, that many can come to believe because of your life and your words?

(Story of the lady who came to church to see her best friend there—who had never shared that, and how disappointed and hurt she was.)

When your life has been saved by someone, and you come to love and respect that person for all he's done and all he is to you – you tell people about that person.

10. WE PROVE OUR LOVE BY LOVING GOD ABOVE ALL OTHER RELATIONSHIPS, more than anything else in the universe, and we prove it by our actions.

Our love will be tested. A time of great trouble is coming.

Matthew 10:37-39

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

Yes, our love will be tested. But you know what? It's also tested in every day stresses and time demands. We often show God that we love a meal more than time with Him. Or we love work more than meditating on His word. I'm so guilty of that so many times myself and have to keep repenting of that.

Remember the parable of the sower. One of the seeds when it started to grow was choked by the weeds – the cares of this world, pursuit of riches, worries—all those things are things we can put ahead of God too.

So our God is first and only in our lives.

SO LET'S review and summarize THE 10 POINTS which show we love God truly, which Jesus called the greatest commandment:

1. **We've repented** and come to realize our actions and ways were hostile to God – and there's no loving God without a full, deep repentance first.

2. We **recognize we've been forgiven a LOT, so as a result, in DEEP APPRECIATION for that, are able to love God profoundly.**
3. We've received **a new, converted, spirit-filled heart so we now WANT TO love Him** and respond to Him. We come to God, asking for this new heart and mind and for His Holy Spirit.
4. We prove, and GROW in our love for God **by wanting to OBEY Him and keep His commandments and by doing the things which PLEASE Him.**
5. We prove our love by RELYING AND TRUSTING in Him.
6. Our love is ***proven by loving, accepting and forgiving all of God's children.***
7. We prove our love by **wanting to spend time** with God, and then doing so every day.
8. We prove our love **by OFTEN TELLING God** we love Him.
9. We prove our love **by telling OTHERS about the love of God.** Sharing the good news of God's love and how He is making it possible for us to all be in His kingdom.
10. We prove our love **by Loving our Father and Savior more than anything or anyone else** in the whole universe.

Now – DO we love God therefore? I hope this has been helpful to you, and God bless you as you grow in the Love for our great Father and for our Savior, King Jesus.

I'm sure, if you're like me, you found a lot of things we can spruce up in our spiritual lives. This message was good for ME too. I need to prove my love much more fervently than ever before. May God's loving grace be in you and with you all your days.

All for now, my friends, and God be with you. Why not go pray to Him right now and ask Him to help you love Him more than ever. Feel free to share this copyrighted message – but I give that permission when the message is shared in its entirety, and not just portions taken out of it. So this is Philip Shields, saying good bye friends.