

# **DO YOU LOVE GOD?**

When a lawyer of the Pharisees asked Jesus which commandment in the Law He considered the greatest, His reply was: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Matthew 22:37; Deuteronomy 6:5). While I am sure that we all recognize the importance of loving God, I wonder if we are willing to put our love to the test? Do I really love God? (2 Corinthians 13:5). Honestly give yourself this test of love and see how you fare.

1. What is my disposition toward God's commandments? John tells us that the "love of God" is to "keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3). We cannot say that we truly love God when we are not disposed to obey Him. Christ shows us that the doctrines of men are repugnant to God (Matthew 15:9). Whenever we exalt manmade doctrines above the commandments of God, we have shown that we do NOT love Him! It is possible for us to be busy keeping His commands and still not be pleasing in His sight, because we are doing them "grudgingly, or of necessity." While these words are applied directly to our "laying by in store" on the first day of the week, I believe the principle of "cheerful" obedience is applicable in all areas (2 Corinthians 9:7). All that we do in obedience to the commands of God must be done because we love Him and we are thankful for all that He has done for us.

2. What is my attitude toward worshipping God? True love will always seek association with the one loved. James tells us to "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you..." (James 4:8). How can we do this? In every act of worship which is "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24), we are moving closer to God. We cannot draw near to Him, however, unless we do so "...with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:22). For this reason, the author of Hebrews goes on to say that we are to "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as {is} the manner of some, but exhorting {one another}, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:24,25). Whenever we take a haphazard attitude toward the regular assemblies for worshipping God, it is a clear manifestation of our lack of love for Him.

3. What is my attitude toward my brethren, God's people? There are some who seem to think that they can love God and look upon their brethren with despite and contempt. Such an attitude is foreign to every principle taught in the Word

of God. Jesus says that one of the identifying marks of His disciples is that they "...have love for one another." (John 13:35). John went into more detail in 1 John 4:20 when he wrote: "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?" Are you truly "tenderly affectioned" toward your brethren (Romans 12:10)? Or, are you busy trying to "bite and devour" those who are your brothers in the Lord with malicious gossip (Galatians 5:15)? If so, you do not love God - and you stand in danger of being lost eternally unless you repent!

4. What is my attitude toward sin and error? In a misguided effort to show "love" for the brethren, some today are advocating a soft, compromising attitude toward those who would teach and practice that which is foreign to the teaching of God's Word. Such is evidence that these people do not love God as they should, for God teaches us to "hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104). We should hate everything that is false and sinful with the same intensity that we love God. Why? Because as surely as our love for God will mean an eternal home with Him in heaven, love for false ways and sin will mean eternal punishment with the devil and all his angels! (Matthew 25:31-46). If you do not hate sin and every false way, your love for God is NOT what it should be!

5. What is my attitude toward prayer? Do you often approach God's throne in prayer, or is it something you only think about when you in public assemblies or at the dinner table? Paul says in quite simple terms, "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17)! This indicates that we should be ready always to pour out our hearts unto God, both with entreaties and thanksgivings. How often do you stop in your busy day and pray to the Father? You love your parents, and you try to communicate with them as often as possible. If you love your God, shouldn't you speak to Him on a regular basis as well?

6. What is my attitude toward regular Bible study? In the busy world in which we live, it is easy for us to put very little emphasis on Bible study. It seems that there is never enough time to sit down and give attention to the things God has inspired in His Word. Aside from the fact that Paul admonished Timothy to "Study to show {himself} approved unto God..." (2 Timothy 2:15), we need to give some thought to the fact that IF we love God we should WANT to read, and re-read what He has caused to be written for us today. When you receive a letter from some dear one, don't you like to read it over and over? True love for God will compel us to give daily and diligent attention to the Bible!

Do you REALLY love God? If you do, won't you manifest it in every phase of your life? Determine to live in accordance with His commands, worshipping Him as the true and the living God in the manner which He has prescribed, showing true love for the brethren, hating sin just as God does, going to God in prayer often, and giving regular attention to the study of His Word, the Bible! "Examine yourselves {as to} whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? - unless indeed you are disqualified."

(2 Corinthians 13:5).

- Gailen E. Evans