

Do I Love God?

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and how this love overflows into our lives and blesses every human life we touch.

Topics: "Loving God", "Faith And Love"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the profound impact of truly loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, emphasizing that this love is the foundation for walking with God. He challenges listeners to reflect on whether they truly love God, highlighting Jesus' unparalleled love for the Father and how our love for God should overflow into love for others. Bieber stresses the importance of loving God above all else, as faith, hope, and love for God are the greatest virtues that bless and transform our lives.

Transcript

You can read a certain passage of scripture hundreds of times, and pass over it as if there's nothing in it. Then one day that same passage bursts into flame before your eyes. It cuts right into your heart as a direct word from God to you. Some time ago the words below did that to me:

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Mark 12:28-31

I had always taken this passage as a little discussion Jesus was having with a scribe about the Shema. "Shema Israel, Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One...." But these words, which the Jewish people have been using in their Sabbath worship for three thousand years, Jesus declares are the foundation, not only for Israel, but for anyone who wants to walk with God.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength.

Notice it does not say, "You shall believe in the Lord your God".....or "You shall obey the Lord your God." No, it says, "You shall love the Lord your God. You shall love God with everything you've got: your heart,

your soul, your mind, your strength. You shall love God!"

Do you love God? Do you love God? Not, do you believe in God? Not, do you have faith in God? Do you love God?

I began to ask myself, Do I love God? Do I love God? God, whom I have never seen. God who is Spirit. God, who is beyond my comprehension. Do I love him?

One thing that distinguishes Jesus from every man or woman who has ever walked this earth is that he loved his Father. He loved God in a way Adam and Eve never did, not even in Paradise. Jesus' one desire was to please his Father, to do whatever the Father wanted done. Because he loved his Father.

From that love for his Father flowed all the things he did for people --- for us. The healings, the signs of the kingdom, his death on the cross --- all this flowed from his love for the Father, which even now brings healing to us as we read these words.

When Jesus rose from the dead as the Firstborn of the New Creation, he was still doing everything he did out of love for the Father.

You may be thinking, "Yes, but he knew the Father. He knew who this was whom he was loving with his outpoured life. But how can we love a God who is unseen, incomprehensible?"

Well, we can. We were created with the ability to love God. It's in our DNA. This inclination, this ability to love God has been twisted by sin. But it's still there. We were made in such a way that love for God was meant to be as natural as breathing. Granted, this gift has been distorted. But when we begin to love God, when we even try to love God, the Spirit comes down and helps us.

Someone says, "What do you mean, 'Try to love God.' Love cannot just be turned on at will by 'trying.' Love has to be aroused, inspired."

The little baby smiles at you, and you fall in love with it.

The beautiful woman smiles at the handsome man, and he falls in love with her.

But love for God ...and even "agape love" for each other is different. This kind of love is something we will. We will it, and there it is....

I once knew a man who seemed to be quite pious. He prayed to God every day. This man had a lovely wife, whom he accepted as one of the fringe benefits of life. In fact this man felt that he was treating his wife better than most husbands treat their wives.

One night, when this man was praying, two words came to him, straight out of heaven: "Love her!"

The man was shocked. "I do love her!" But as he thought about it, this man knew exactly what God meant. He repented of his shallow love for this lovely woman whom God had given him. He began to love her as he had never loved her since the day of their marriage. And she knew it instantly. She knew it!

When it comes to our relationship with God, most of us are like that man, before he woke up. We think we're treating God better than most people do. Then one day comes a word, straight out of heaven: "Love God! Love him!"

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength.

With all your heart. Your heart is your will. You will to love God. You open your heart wide in love for God. With all your heart. Not half-a-heart. All of it!

With all your soul. Your soul is your life. You offer up your life to God in love. With all your soul. Not half-a-soul. All of it!

With all your mind. Your thoughts. Your thinking. When your mind fills up with love for God, you have a new mind. A mind in love with God. All your mind.

With all your strength. Your strength is your body. How do you love God with your body? You offer up your body as a living sacrifice. All of it. All your strength. You love God by worshiping him with your body.

When we love God like that, we cannot help but love our neighbor. What better way to please God than to love our neighbor? And when we love our neighbor out of love for God, when we share with him, when we do things for her, we don't need thanks or appreciation. We're doing it for God. That's all that matters.

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

I Corinthians 13:1-3

We hear this at weddings and at funerals. We hang these timeless words on our walls to remind us. If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. "Have not love....." Love for whom? The apostle is talking about love, first and foremost, for God!

So faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Faith --- in God.

Hope --- in God.

Love --- for God. God first above all things.

We are speaking of a love for God so strong and rich that it overflows our lives and blesses every human life we touch.

So here's the question each of us needs to ask: Do I love God --- with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind, all my strength? Not, do I believe in God? Do I love God? If the answer is unclear, this is where we begin our journey with God afresh.

Peter was overjoyed when he met his Lord alive from the dead. And yet, Peter was not really at peace with himself. He had turned out to be a coward a few days ago, when he denied that he knew Jesus the night of his arrest. And now Peter is at loose ends.

One night in Galilee he says to the guys, "I'm going fishing. I'm burnt-out. I don't want to think about this stuff. I'm going back to what I understand: fishing!"

"Okay, we'll go with you," they reply. That night they caught nothing.

"Did you catch anything?" comes a voice from the shore through the misty dawn.

"No."

"Throw the net on the right side of the boat."

Suddenly the net is invaded by so many fish they cannot bring it up. They have to drag it to shore.

After breakfast Jesus says to Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these fish?"

"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

"Then forget the fish, and feed my lambs."

"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you!"

"Tend my sheep."

"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

"Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you!"

"Feed my sheep."

Here's the most important question heaven will ever ask us. Our answer will determine how we think, how we live, and how we die. The answer has to be given with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength: Do you love God?

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

May these two commandments burn in our hearts.

And may the Spirit give us the power to keep them.

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