

# LOVING AND WORSHIPPING OUR FIRST LOVE

We are all in the position these days in which we say we love God. There are many, many scriptures in the Old and New Testaments which refer to and tell us that the primary issue of a person's heart is that they are to truly love God. We are to love Him with all of our heart, soul and being. However, what does that truly mean? How do you truly love God with all of your heart, soul and being – with all that is within you?

Many people say they love God. Unfortunately, that is like saying that many people love their salami sandwich or that they love their pet. I am not saying that it is wrong to love your salami sandwich or pet. However, are we to love God as such? Obviously, I believe we all know that the answer to that is – no. But do we know the difference?

To begin with, I believe that loving God has much to do with worshipping Him. I believe they are two sides of the same coin when it comes to God. You cannot love God without worshipping Him and you cannot truly worship Him without having a true love for Him; a love and a worship that is with all your heart, all your soul and with your entire being.

So what does the term “love” really mean? I know that we can go to a Bible dictionary and find the different words that are found within the Old and New Testament that have been translated to the word “love.” We know that there are at least 7 different aspects found within the scriptures that have been translated to the term “love.” It has been said that the Greek word “*agapeo*” or “*agape*” is the term that has been given as the expression of being the “highest” form of love. This may sound good but in actuality it is incorrect.

This “*agape*” love has been given an additional push, we can say, with it becoming known as the “highest form” of love. It has been said that it is the form of love in which God now loves each of us. It has also been suggested that, now as believers in Christ, an individual is now able to live out and experience this kind of love. That sounds wonderful. However, it is not true.

The simple definition of the term “*agape*” love is that, “it is an expression of welcoming, to entertain, to be fond of, to love dearly; to be well pleased or to be contented at or with something that has been done for you or simply to be contented with someone.” Nowhere in this original definition of the term “*agape*” do we find the term “unconditional” or any understanding that it is God's love that is reserved for only His people. This is a term that was “kind of twisted” and used back in the late 60's that tried to express God's love for those that now had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We see however, that it is an incorrect use of this term.

In fact there is no word that can describe God's love for His people. His love is unexplainable, undeniable and it is more that can ever be put into “mans” language of words. In essence God's love is totally indescribable. There are no words that can truly define what God has poured out upon us or that truly explains His love. We try, as John did in 1John 4:8, to say that “God is love.” However, He uses the term “*agape*” to express this. Yes, it may be the highest expression we can give to God's love but it truly cannot come near to expressing what God's true, unadulterated love for His people truly is.

In other words, God's love is truly indefinable. We simply experience it and He pours it out upon each of us. This really is not too difficult for us to grasp if we come to the place in which we recognize and stop trying to figure out and define or try to understand God and His love to and for us. This is difficult for many. We must know and grasp everything there is to know about God. Unfortunately, here is where we miss it. He simply loves us – His way, period.

So how does this help me to love God in a way that is pleasing to Him? It is simple. You simply love Him. You live for Him. You follow and do His Word. You live being lead by His Spirit that now dwells within you. If you mess up, He tells you. You hear Him and you make it right and move on from there. It's simple. Yes, God's love for us and us loving God is simple. It's simple unless we try to define it and make it difficult for us as well as everyone else. When it comes to God's love we sometimes become like the Pharisees. We make it more difficult than what it really is.

Now, I am not saying that we are to take His love and throw it under the bus by doing everything we want to do because He now loves us. I am not saying that. The contrary is what I am saying. If I truly love God, I want to do and act in a way that is pleasing to Him – not me or anyone else. I find this way of “doing and acting” through His Word; from beginning to end – from Genesis to Revelation – and **everything** in between.

Now, let's speak about the other side of the same coin. I am referring to “worship.” Worship of God can be seen by two main words found throughout the scriptures – Old and New. The first word we see is the Hebrew word, “*shachaw*”, which means “to bow down, to turn towards and bow down.” The Greek word is similar however, it uses an analogy to put its point across. The Greek word is “*proskuneo*” which also means “to bow down.” However it is used to symbolically to represent “a dog licking its master's hand.”

In both definitions, the Hebrew and the Greek, the main purpose of the word “worship” is to “turn towards” and to “bow down” to the one they are worshipping. In our case, we are turning towards and bowing down to the one and only true God. It is an “attitude of heart” expressed by the individual that demonstrates and shows a total devotion, admiration and love to the one they are turning towards and bowing down to.

This is what Abraham and Isaac did when they went to worship God. It was to totally “turn towards and bow down” themselves to the One who is truly worthy to be bowed down to. They were to bring an offering. At the time there was no offering to be offered. Isaac simply lay on the altar. He wasn't tied down. He didn't yell at his father or at God. He simply trusted God. Abraham did the same thing – he trusted God. At the last moment God provided a ram that was caught in the thicket.

This is what Jesus did. He “turned towards and bowed” Himself while on the cross to the will of the Father. There was to be no “ram caught in the thicket” for Him. He was to be the sacrifice, the final sacrifice that was to be made for all men's sin. He truly expressed and showed each of us what true love and worship was and still is. It is the giving of yourself – all that you are – everything. It is not only giving your life but it is the giving of everything.

Remember, when Jesus died on the cross, it wasn't a pretty picture. He submitted Himself totally to everything that sin could give. There, on that cross, He who knew no sin experienced the fullness of sin's punishment. Why? It was because of Jesus' love and the love of the Father for us His people. Jesus expressed in its fullness what love and worship truly is. Abraham and Isaac experienced it and came close but Isaac could not be the one to bring to its fullness what Jesus could do.

In Deuteronomy 6:4, 5, in the Amplified version, it tells us, “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD (Yahweh) our God (Elohim) is one (The only one – the only God) LORD (Yahweh): And thou shalt love (Be a lover; a friend) the LORD (Yahweh) thy God (Elohim) with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*” This is the crux of our faith. We, through the blood of Jesus are now the true Israel. The Lord (Yahweh) is now our God, our **one and only true God**. (At least He should be but that is for another essay.)

These scriptures tell us that we are to *“love the LORD thy God...”* How do we do this? We must not forget what we mentioned previously. We are to simply love Him. That is difficult because we are not “there” yet. We simply love Him by following His Word and living out His Word the best way we can. We totally turn towards Him and bow down to Him. In other words we love Him through worshipping Him. Remember, they are two side of the same coin. Loving God and worshipping Him are co-mingled. They are related. You really cannot do one without doing the other. They actually are one in the same.

Deuteronomy 6:5 tells us that we are to love God *“with all of your heart... your soul... and your might.”* So what does this mean? When it tells us that we are to love the Lord with all of your heart, He is referring to everything that is within us. He is referring to our inner most being. He is referring to our mind, our knowledge, our thinking, our reflection and our memory. It is also referring to every inclination we have or we can say with our will or our conscience. It also refers to where our seat of appetites, emotions, passions and courage lie.

When this scripture refers to “the soul” it is referring to an individual’s life, their very breath which makes them a living being. When it mentions the word “might” it refers to “muchness” which relates in the Hebraic to an exceeding degree of might and force. It means to love the Lord with all that you are.

In Deuteronomy 5, we read that God gives Moses and the people the 10 commandments. In Deuteronomy 6:1-3, He tells them to obey these commandments in the land that they will possess – the Promised Land. If they do, they will prosper. Then we read that God makes the declaration that we find in 6:4-5. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7, He then tells them and commands them that this truth, His Word and His Commandments, shall be and should be kept within their hearts. They were to keep these Words, do them and live them out while they were wandering in the desert.

In Deuteronomy 6:8-12, God then tells them that they are to keep these Commandments and His Word later on while they are in the Promised Land. You see this truth that God’s Word tells us that we are to live out His Commandments and that we are to love Him with all our heart, soul and might, is not simply a by-product of the relationship we have with our God. No, it is the **foundation** of the relationship we are to have with our God. It is the essence of the relationship we are to have with our God.

In Deuteronomy 6:13-16, He tells them to never forget who He is and to never forget to **fear Him**. He then tells them something that is vital to their living under Him, His Word and Him alone. He tells them that they are not to go after and follow the people who are in the Promised Land or their gods. If they did then they shall be destroyed along with all the other people who did not follow after Him. He declares in verse 16 that if they did not follow Him and if they did go after other gods, then they would reap the consequences that all those who chose not to follow Him would experience. The calamity would be as such as they experienced at Massah – which was not a good result. (See Exodus 17:1-7)

We must remember that these scriptures are all referring us to the 10 Commandments found in Chapter 5. That is the crux of these verses. The 10 Commandments of God that He gave to man. He literally spelt it out for man. However, we know that man took these simple 10 Commandments and made them into something totally opposite of what God had intended for them to be.

We see this, as Jesus explains it to a “lawyer” as found in Matthew 22:35-40. This “lawyer” was one who was to be “astute” in the things of the Law of Moses and of God. He asked Jesus a question concerning the 10 Commandments in an attempt to “trick” Jesus into saying something opposite or even minutely off of the Law.

Jesus knew it was a trick question. If Jesus had chosen just one of the commandments he would have, inadvertently, diminished all the others. Instead He quotes **directly** from Deuteronomy 6:5 – “...*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*” Everyone knew this scripture. Jesus was actually referring to really all of the commandments as found in Deuteronomy 5. That is what Deuteronomy 6:5 was referring to. You love the Lord thy God by being obedient to His commandments which were found in Deuteronomy 5.

However, Jesus did not stop there. If He did then He would have left what would seem to be an opening that He just was referring to simply loving God and omitting the other six commandments thereby giving the lawyer what may seem to be an opening to use against Jesus. Jesus was very much aware of this.

Instead, Jesus includes verse 39. In Matthew 22:39, Jesus includes the last six laws of the Decalogue when He states that the true believer is to love their neighbor, as well. However, we must know that simply knowing the scriptures was not Jesus main point. His point was that a person expresses their love unto the Lord with a lifestyle that desires to be obedient to God’s Word and then **live it out** with all that is within them to those who surround them. That is what truly matters to Him – living it out, daily.

We must keep this in perspective and balance to be careful not to allow “religious gravity” to take hold and get us back into legalism. That is not what I am saying. We must hear the heart of Jesus in Revelation 2:1-6 as we read, “*Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; <sup>2</sup> I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: <sup>3</sup> And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. <sup>4</sup> Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. <sup>5</sup> Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*”

In the midst of all the people “doing” (He is referring to those who call themselves believers in Him) and all their hard work in bringing forth the Kingdom and doing battle against the infiltration of false doctrines in which He commended them for, they were missing one important thing. They forgot about the most important thing to the heart of God, the Father and to Jesus. They lost their passion for true intimate relationship with their “first love.” This is the most important thing to the heart of God - intimate relationship. We must remember that He is speaking to believers here. Hmmm....

That is my question to all of us in this hour that we are living in. Are we so concerned with “defining” what the true love and worship of God truly is? Are we so concerned with all the “right things,” so much so that we are missing out on the thing that is most important to the heart of God? Are we doing all the “right things” but actually forgetting the most important thing to the heart of the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit?

He must be our “first love.” This is done out of our actions. However, the actions must always come from and are an extension of a true love and worship of our God. It is not simply just doing the “right things.” The “right things” will come out of those that truly have a heart that loves and worships the One and only true Living God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Not only for what He does or doesn’t do but simply just because of who He is.