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## Is Loving God Enough?

**Deuteronomy 6:5-6: (NASB) *<sup>5</sup>You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup>These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.***

Love God. It is a simple enough commandment - easy to say, repeat and remember. But, what does it really mean? Are there different ways of expressing love for God and does God look for different results depending on what age of humanity we live in? Most of all, is loving God, no matter when and where we live, enough?

To love God is a staple of human existence throughout all of human history, past, present and future.

**A very early and veiled past example of loving God:** Genesis 4:13-14: Cain was driven from the two things he loved most - tilling the ground and God Himself.

At the very beginning, loving God was the most natural part of life, for man was God's son. The original relationship was lost.

**Once sin firmly took its place through Adam and Eve and then Cain, loving God became a basis for living a life of physical favor and blessing:** Deuteronomy 6:1-9: Moses simply laid out the rules for living in a land that God promised to Abraham. God gave them instruction long before they entered the land so they could learn how to be blessed. God prepared them ahead of time. Love God wholly - communicate this love constantly! These words should be on our hearts. We should go through life with a very strong focus and desire to worship the Lord. Ancient Israel was given those instructions. How are we doing with this permeating every part of our lives? Love God wholly - be a walking signpost and *make your abode a proclamation of your love for him!* Loving God was a basis for living according to the Jewish Law.

**What was the theme of the blessing for loving God before Christ? Is it different now?**

How was "loving God" defined from past ages?

- Keeping His statues, His commands and His judgments.
- Speaking your love for Him to all generations and at all times.
- Displaying your love for Him in what you do (hands), how you think and where you go (forehead), and where you live from the inside (doorposts) out (gates).

And in the past, what did loving God bring those who loved Him?

- Length of days;
- A bountiful life;
- A fruitful family; and
- Prosperous land.

What kind of theme do we have here? It is a very bountiful physical human life. Is that what loving God is all about for Christians?

**Let's compare loving God in the past Jewish age to the present Christian age - our previous caller already brought up the first of these Scriptures:** Mark 12:28-34: The Pharisee agrees with Jesus! This shows how BASIC love for God should be!

Jesus' response: *You are not far from the kingdom of God.* Does this show a difference between what the Old Testament said and what Jesus is now introducing? Previous result of loving God was present blessing, prolonged life and a homeland flowing with milk and honey. At Jesus' time *they were already living in the Promised Land*, yet he speaks of the kingdom as something greater and still a bit out of reach.

**What Jesus added is a clear indication that while loving God is a firm and necessary foundation, there is more - much more - required:** Mark 12:31: Of course, Jesus wasn't asked what the second greatest commandment was! He takes both commands and makes them one. If God loved humankind, He wants you to love your fellow man, too.

Does the adding of this second commandment also follow the Old Testament pattern?

The first half of the 10 Commandments were focused on God. But the second half were all about how you treat your neighbor. One tablet focuses "up" and the other focuses all around us. There is more to our Christian walk than loving God. Loving God is a foundation. What do we *do* with that love? How do we express that love?

### Is loving your neighbor the same as loving God?

**The context of love your neighbor as yourself is built on loving God:** Leviticus 19:9-16: (NASB) <sup>9</sup>Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. <sup>10</sup>Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. **I am the LORD your God.**

There was a direct command from God to share of your bounty with those who are needy - that was how to love your neighbor.

*I am the Lord your God:* In other words, make no mistake, this came from God through Moses. This was not subject to interpretation and not to do only if you felt like it. This was how to truly, deeply love your neighbor. Deal fairly with all - be honest, give respect, pay on time, do not abuse and more. Act in a just manner, speak only truthfully and without malice. The Old Testament version of loving God and loving your neighbor was very much centered on physical life and experiences. Does that change in the New Testament?

John 15:12-17: This was a new, higher and more costly way - the Old Testament said "give of your abundance," but Jesus said "give your life!" This is a new and more intimate relationship. Our love for God is expressed through our sacrificing our lives for one another.

*But I chose you:* There would be a calling to individuals. We are now a part of the family of God - not just chosen people.

Loving God is the foundation in both the Old and New Testaments, but it brings us to a different place in the New Testament. If we as Christians are focusing on loving God and having God bless our lands, family, abundance, long life and prosperity, milk and honey and Mercedes Benz', we are in the wrong place! Christian love for God brings us into a different standing.

This was a new way. Christianity as the *house of sons* shows the results of our loving God.

**First, what was under the Jewish nation:** Galatians 4:1-7: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, <sup>2</sup>but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. <sup>3</sup>So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. **Now, what is:** <sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, <sup>5</sup>so that he might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup>Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba! Father! <sup>7</sup>Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

There is a significant difference between loving God in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The foundation is the same but the results are different because we are in a different relationship with God: sons of God through Jesus vs. sons of Abraham and servants of God.

So *at this time*, is loving God enough? The answer is no. We must live a life of sacrifice. It is no longer about just getting a physical benefit. Certainly our homes, jobs and children can be blessed, but that is not the key point. Both groups are chosen, both must love and represent God, one from a heavenly perspective, the other from an earthly perspective. There is a difference in both inheritance and application.

1 John 5:1-3: This sounds very "Old Testament-like."

**Matthew 7:12-14:** (NASB) <sup>12</sup>*In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (This sounds very "Old Testament-like, too!")* <sup>13</sup>*Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. <sup>14</sup>For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

Here is another defined difference: *a call to individuals to walk a narrow, sacrificial way.*

Christianity is not just a belief. We have to live it. This narrow way is an individual walk through persecution! That doesn't sound so nice...what is persecution?

**Persecution:** Strongs #1377 diwkw dioko dee-o'-ko; to pursue (literally or figuratively); by implication, to persecute, ensue, follow (after), given to, (suffer) persecute (-ion), press forward.

**We are led by example:** John 16:31-33: **Loving God through Christ will bring persecution - why? Because you are set apart from all others!** 2 Timothy 3:12: *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer **persecution <1377>**.* **...Set apart to be "buried" with Jesus in the baptism of his death and therefore walk in a new life:** Romans 6:3-7: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>*Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection, <sup>6</sup>knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; <sup>7</sup>for he who has died is freed from sin.*

The Old Testament was about living and had nothing to do with death and resurrection in anyone's likeness. Being baptized as a Christian is not just about getting wet. It is a picture of the *death* of our own will. This is a mature decision to make.

**Our living is to live a new and transformed sacrificial life as a "New Creature" in Christ:**

2 Corinthians 5:17: (NASB) *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, **he is a new creature**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

**Do God's Old Testament servants and New Testament sons love one another in the same way?**

Living as a son means:

- a call to individuals to walk a narrow, sacrificial way;
- an individual walk through persecution;
- to be set apart to be buried with Jesus in the baptism of his death; and
- to live a new and transformed sacrificial life as a New Creature in Christ.

**Another example of the Old Testament focus on loving God - this time the blessing given to the two and a half tribes who settled on the east side of the Jordan River:**

Joshua 22:1-6: Loyalty to the nation, to God and to Joshua earned the blessing of going home.

**But then he cautioned them:** <sup>5</sup>*Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul. <sup>6</sup>So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.*

This was a tribal interaction in an almost political sense - you helped us - we thank you, now go back home and stay close to God. Again, this was a very physical and territorial-based love of God.

**Compare the tribal interaction of Joshua with this New Testament template:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-26: Christianity here is compared to a physical body. There is an equality among all members of the Christian body. The purpose of our lives is different from that of the Old Testament. It is not about "getting," it is about "giving."

A Christian is drawn by God to deny one's own will to contribute to the functioning of a "body" for the fulfilling of the mission of that body under the headship of Christ. The Old Testament was about being part of a nation under the Law of Moses.

**How does the foundation of loving God for Christians compare with the future earthly foundation of Israel loving God?**

Let's review some of the "loving God" Christian foundations:

**Suffer - be offered up:** Philippians 1:29: (NASB) *For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in him, but also to **suffer <3958>** for his sake.*

Just belief is not enough.

**Be transformed - become something you were not:** Romans 12:1-2: What happens to a Christian as a result of their loving God? There are a lot of benefits. They will be developed to learn how to be "sympathetic high priests" for the kingdom. They are promised to receive glory, honor and immortality. They will have a heavenly reward and will help bless all nations on earth. Because of a life of sacrifice, in advance of the world, they have the ability to bless the world later. *Many are called but few are chosen.*

Loving God was in the very beginning from Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel. Loving God was written into the Jewish Law about physical blessings like family and land. Loving God for the Christian is about sacrifice. There is not a physical reward but a spiritual one.

What about the rest of the non-Christian world and the billions who have died without ever hearing the name of Christ? The Bible tells us what the future will look like.

**Here was a commandment for Israel, but this time it is a future commandment to take place after all of the previous ages of sin:** Deuteronomy 30:1-10: We believe this fulfillment is already starting as it pertains to Israel. This prophecy was made before there even was a nation of Israel - already we were told of a splintering then a regathering. This is happening right now...we live in a time when prophecy is unfolding right in front of our eyes! There is an unfolding process described. First, there is a return to the land their father's possessed.

The act of circumcision was given to Abraham to set the people apart. Here the prophecy says it is no longer about *outward* difference but instead *inward* difference.

God's love is boundless! No circumstances are beyond His reach, no blessing is beyond His heart and it is by these things that the circumcision of *their* hearts - their love for God will blossom to life for the preservation of their lives!

God fights for them and they learn new obedience.

Being favored of God as His chosen nation is full of "ifs." The pathway of God's blessing for loving Him was physical in the Old Testament, for a time becomes spiritual in the New Testament, and then for the rest of the world in the kingdom becomes physical again. No matter when you live, loving God is always the most appropriate foundation.

In the end, God prospers them and they follow His laws and love Him completely.

To love God is good and necessary but to act upon that love with your whole being - that is something entirely different. What does this mean? It depends upon who you are! Love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and your neighbor as yourself. Is loving God enough? It is a great start but don't stop there!

**So, is loving God enough?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!**