

How Can I Love the Lord?

Sometimes, when I am walking for exercise, or driving somewhere of any distance, I will listen to a sermon or podcast. It is always a strength to listen to others who are devoted to God's will. Recently, I have been listening to a series of lessons by Joshua Gurtler dealing with evidences (suffering, humanism, evolution, etc.). He is a PhD research scientist for the USDA specializing in food borne illnesses. Through the series he mentioned several examples of Christians, especially youth, who lose their faith when they leave home. We are not just talking becoming unfaithful but telling others they are now an atheist. The catalyst? The teaching of evolution, sometimes in so-called religious institutions. This is something that needs to be addressed in churches, which we have done, but it also needs to be grounded in homes.

In this series of lessons, he also made mention of a family of several generations that has stood faithful to the Lord, even though many (if not most) families are faltering. When asked what they were doing that built such a faithful legacy his answer was simply: *We teach them to love the Lord*. In a society that is filled with struggles and as many as 75% of youth losing their faith when they leave home for various reasons, including the teaching of evolution (INCLUDING theistic evolution), the tolerance of immorality, rampant compromise and fellowship with unbelievers and error, cheapening the truth of God's word, and a general apathy toward faithful living, I would like to consider: How Can I love the Lord?

As is often the case, in this lesson, I will not be revealing anything new but simply examining some things that can help us learn to love the Lord the way we ought to.

I. What does it mean to love the Lord?

- a. Matthew 22:37-40. Jesus taught that this is the first and greatest commandment. Vs. 40 gives the reason, all the law hinges on that one command. Another occasion. Luke 10:27 records the same message but on another occasion. .
- b. Marks 12:29 in accounting this quotes from Deuteronomy 6:4-6 – based on understanding there is only ONE God. It was also foundational under the LOM. In fact, Jews actually called this command, the **Shema** and is based on the Hebrew word “*hear*”. Quoted more than once by Jesus, it is clear they understood the importance of this command.
- c. Simply put, loving the Lord is about honoring and respecting Him. As we have discussed often, it is about Him being your priority. It is about total commitment to Him.
- d. In our text, we are called to love the Lord with:
 - i. **ALL your heart** – we have noted how the heart is that which defines who we are – our motives and character. Out of it springs the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23, Mtthew 12:34-35). To love God with you heart means He is at the center of our lives.
 - ii. **ALL your soul** – this is about our being or existence. The word *soul* in scripture, both OT and NT is challenging because it is used interchangeably with spirit, one being the fact that we are literally alive and the other descriptive of that part of humans that will live on eternally (cf. Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7 – man became a living being, Ecclesiastes 12:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, etc.). Thus, to love God with your soul means that with your eternal being, you consider and honor Him. He IS the reason behind you living.
 - iii. **ALL your mind** – the mind is where our thoughts develop. This is our intellect, our reasoning, our source of wisdom, etc. The point here is intentionality. He has captured not only our person, but even our thoughts – 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Philippians 4:8 it is the focus of our thoughts – the types of things we bring into our minds. Biblehub.com concludes a discussion of this by noting, *Loving God with all our mind means every idea is measured by His Word, every curiosity pursued for His glory, and every plan surrendered to His will—*

until, like Paul, we can say, “We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” ([2¹ Corinthians 10:5](#)).

- iv. **ALL your strength** – added in Mark 12:28-31 (and Luke 10:27). This is also found in Deuteronomy 6:5 (while *mind* is not found there). This is about dedicating your physical abilities and resources to Him. This is using the talents, abilities and energies you have for His glory. 1 Corinthians 10:31, *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* This takes loving God out of the realm of concept and into real life actions.

II. How can I love the Lord?

- a. It has to be a decision. Not coerced, but within.
 - i. A dilemma that both Jesus and Paul (and many godly people in the Old Testament) faced was the desire for all to turn to God. But the sad reality is that most refused to. Jesus made every conceivable argument to promote repentance. Paul prayed, reasoned and taught the Jews and Gentiles to turn to God, but they did not want to. They will NOT be forced into obedience.
 - ii. Why? Because forced obedience never really works. You made force submission, but the heart is just not there. What is done will be only enough, if that.
 - iii. The fact that we are COMMANDED to love God demonstrates this. One might ask, can you really command love (or any emotion)? Not really. You can order it all day long, but you cannot force it. Emotions come naturally as the result of one’s heart and circumstances. There are reasons you love those you love (and you love different people differently).
 - iv. Romans 12:2- we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. If you are to love the Lord, it will be a transformation in how you think and your attitude toward Him.
 - v. Romans 10:10 notes that it is with the heart that one believes unto righteousness...
- b. Get to know God -
 - i. This is about relationship – this needs to be personal. He is not far from each of us. Acts 17:26-28 – HE is not far from us. We are His offspring.
 - 1. We are reminded of how God views us – His children – 1 John 3:1. All the blessings of family are found in Him.
 - 2. Unlike most deities of history, God is a personal God that cares about each of us individually – 1 Peter 5:7.
 - 3. John 3:16, Romans 5:8 – God demonstrated that by sending Jesus to die for us.
 - 4. He has revealed Himself to us – 1 Corinthians 2:9-11
 - 5. We learn of His interactions with man through the history of scripture. We KNOW that He cares about us.
 - 6. He wants a relationship with us. And while this concept can be overanalyzed, it is still a fact.
 - ii. Learn what Biblical love is.
 - 1. Building on this, we need to let God define what love is about.
 - 2. In our English language, *love* can mean many different things. And often, man confuses the Biblical concept of love with what we think of – especially toward our families and close friends.
 - 3. But Biblical love is based on caring and sacrifice. Defined, “*Caring enough to sacrifice for what is best.*” It is best demonstrated by what God has done for us (see the previous point). And it is the focal point of EVERY relationship we are in as Christians.

¹ https://biblehub.com/q/How_to_love_God_with_all_your_mind.htm Accessed - 9/25/2026

4. 1 John 4:16 says, “God is love”. The point being He is the essence of Christian love. To abide in this love is to abide in God. Continue reading – 1 John 4:17-19 – our love for Him is based on His love for us.
 5. It is manifested in the way we conduct ourselves. Consider 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.
- c. Pursue holiness
- i. Holiness is about setting something apart as sacred. It is about sanctification and being saints – both words based on the same Greek root word.
 - ii. Hebrews 12:14 calls for us to pursue holiness without which we will not see the Lord. 1 Peter 1:15-16 – we are holy, even as He is holy. 1 Peter 2:9-10 describes what it means for us to be holy.
 - iii. Holiness means that we strive to live pure (unpolluted and undiluted) lives (cf. Matthew 5:8). It involves the idea of moral purity, choosing Him over worldly pursuits (separation)
 - iv. We have to get rid of anything that hinders. Hebrews 12:1 – the weights and sins that slow us down.
- d. Obey God’s commandments – this is crucial. We cannot separate loving God from obedience. This is how we demonstrate that we love God.
- i. John 14:15, 23 – Jesus declared if we love Him we WILL keep His commandments.
 - ii. 1 John 5:3 – this is the love of God that we keep His commandments.
 - iii. We cannot offer lip service and expect Him to accept us – James 1:21-25. Consider also 1 John 1:5-6 – if we say we love Him and walk in darkness (disobey Him) we are lying.
 - iv. Many today separate obedience from salvation. They will say that we must obey Him and if we love Him, we WILL obey Him, but obedience is not essential for eternal life. That is contrary to so many passages of scripture.
 - v. I will concede this one point with that – our obedience to Him ought to be BECAUSE we love Him in more than simply a submissive role. 1 John 4:19 noted that *we love Him because He first loved us*. The better we get to know God and the closer we are to Him, the more our obedience will be not merely an action out of compulsion, but because we genuinely care for Him and appreciate what He has done and who He is – and that leads to genuine obedience out of love. It is THEN that we can say, “and His commandments are not burdensome”. (1 John 5:3).
- e. Spend time with Him –
- i. How do you get to know anyone better? You have to spend time with them. That is why good marriages (and other relationships) grow stronger over time.
 - ii. IF we are to develop love for God, it WILL be seen in the things we do for Him.
 1. Think of the song “Take time to be holy”
 2. Devote regular time to Bible study and prayer
 3. Worship God – God COMMANDED that we assemble. Your attitude toward it – how often, preparation, commitment, etc. will determine the degree to which it can strengthen your faith.
- f. Prefer His people over the worldly –
- i. Again, we emphasize this regularly. Just as we are children of God, we are also brethren. We are the family of God.
 - ii. Romans 12:10 reminds us to give preference to one another as brethren.
 - iii. Galatians 6:10 – as we have opportunity – especially the household of faith.
 - iv. IF you want to learn to love the Lord, seek out and spend time with others that do love Him. You will learn from them and be encouraged from them as well.
- g. Prefer Him over the world.

- i. We must mention that as we go through life we will be faced with choices. Opportunities to either serve the Lord on a given occasion or to NOT serve Him.
 - ii. Worldliness in its various forms will hinder us from loving the Lord with our all. 1 John 2:15-17. NOTE especially vs. 15, *“if anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him.”*
 - iii. Matthew 6:24 – no one can serve two masters. We addressed that not too long ago.
- h. Do good to others
 - i. Loving the Lord means that you will not keep Him to yourself.
 - ii. That is what being the godly example is about.
 - iii. Recall Matthew 22:39 – love your neighbor as yourself, SECOND only loving God.
 - iv. Helping others is essential to making life about more than oneself. Philippians 2:3-4
 - v. Share His word with others! Often being helpful open doors to share your faith. Philippians 2:15 – that is the point.
- i. Keep the fire burning –
 - i. Our final point! You have to keep going. Learning to love the Lord is not an instantaneous act. It is a journey. It takes time and it grows as it is nurtured. And the more you feed it, the greater that love will become.
 - ii. Build on your faith – it needs to keep getting stronger and stronger. 2 Peter 1:5-10.
 - iii. And heed the warnings if we fail to keep it going.
 - 1. Hebrews 2:1 – give the more earnest heed lest we drift away.
 - 2. Hebrews 10:36-39 – you have need of endurance.
 - 3. Ephesus left their first love – Revelation 2.2-4. They were told to repent and do the first works (rekindle the fire).
 - iv. Furthermore, we cannot give up – Galatians 6:9 – let us not grow weary in doing good....

These are some reminders that will help us to love the Lord as we ought to. Bringing ourselves back to where we began. Loving the Lord is NOT something we keep to ourselves. Others need to see it in us – in our homes, the Lord’s body and with whomever we have opportunity to let our lights shine. As you look at your life, do you love the Lord as you ought to?