

## Our Love for God

God loves us greatly, but have you considered that God wants \_\_\_\_\_ to love Him greatly? When you love God, you'll also love His \_\_\_\_\_ found exclusively in the Bible. The Bible tells the \_\_\_\_\_ of the amazing love and grace of God, how God has watched over us all through the years. It's more than a simple love letter; it reveals His \_\_\_\_\_ love towards us and what He expects from us. The Bible teaches us \_\_\_\_\_ to love God.

Love begins with a decision, but \_\_\_\_\_ love for God cannot remain with simply a decision. It must grow until it becomes the \_\_\_\_\_ priority. Love starts in the \_\_\_\_\_ but shows in the \_\_\_\_\_. True love will not stay \_\_\_\_\_; it'll prove itself by the way that it behaves. Love must \_\_\_\_\_. Romans 5:8 says, "God shows his love for us in that while we were \_\_\_\_\_ sinners, Christ died for us." God demonstrated His love for us by sending Jesus to the \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord Jesus sacrificed His life on His own initiative when we didn't ask for it, didn't deserve it, and didn't quite understand it. That's true love.

The word "love" is often \_\_\_\_\_. For instance, people say that they love something when what they really \_\_\_\_\_ is that they like or enjoy it. They may enjoy it greatly, but it certainly isn't the \_\_\_\_\_ of their lives. Loving God can never be on the same \_\_\_\_\_ as loving ice cream. Many say they love God when truthfully they only \_\_\_\_\_ Him. They've never taken God seriously enough to make a lifelong, \_\_\_\_\_ commitment to Him. They never let God make a difference in their moral or spiritual \_\_\_\_\_. They love the \_\_\_\_\_ of the grace and forgiveness of God as long as God doesn't mess with their lives. They love Him but want to do as they themselves \_\_\_\_\_.

**Our reading today comes from Mark 12:28-31.** That's from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If I asked you if you loved God, how would you \_\_\_\_\_? Many people would quickly answer yes, but how does your love for God \_\_\_\_\_ itself in your life? It's easy to \_\_\_\_\_ that you love God. The Lord, however, defines love in ways that may \_\_\_\_\_ from the common understanding of love. We use and misuse the word "love" so frequently that it's hard to define \_\_\_\_\_ love. Today let's explore how love for God demonstrates itself.

First, I would ask you, do you \_\_\_\_\_ God? Love begins with \_\_\_\_\_. Genuine love for God pays attention to the love that \_\_\_\_\_ has shown. Have you considered all of your blessings that come from God's hand and are you \_\_\_\_\_ thankful? Love and thanksgiving intertwine; you can't have one without the other. The person who counts his blessings grows to appreciate and to love, and the person who loves won't fail to \_\_\_\_\_ the kindness and goodness of the Lord.

I've always loved the words of Jeremiah that are found in the book of Lamentations. Jeremiah wrote this book at the time when his \_\_\_\_\_ was falling apart. He saw the love of God in \_\_\_\_\_ times and in the \_\_\_\_\_ of times. The Babylonians had once again invaded Jerusalem

in 587 BC; and they tore down the \_\_\_\_\_ and destroyed the city. Yet Jeremiah could say in Lamentations 3:22-24, “‘The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will \_\_\_\_\_ in him.’”

Jeremiah never gave up on God. True love never \_\_\_\_\_. We live in a society ready to \_\_\_\_\_ on anyone they don’t like for any reason. Many keep a remote in their hands, ready to change channels the moment they hear something that doesn’t \_\_\_\_\_ them. Some feel God is only \_\_\_\_\_ of our love as long as He does what we want or what we agree with. Instead of \_\_\_\_\_ God, many feel God ought to obey us. They judge the God who created them, forgetting that He’s the \_\_\_\_\_ of every blessing they have. The air they breathe, the water they drink, the food that they eat come from His hand. They selfishly \_\_\_\_\_ appreciating and acknowledging the God who made them and sustains their lives.

Many \_\_\_\_\_ God if anything in their lives turns sour. They even blame God for the heartaches that they \_\_\_\_\_ for themselves. We should never suppose God has forgotten us or has stopped loving us because times are \_\_\_\_\_. **Read what Paul said in Romans 8:31-32 when the Roman Christians were going through some rough times.** When times are tough, instead of forsaking God, let’s \_\_\_\_\_ to Him.

Second, do you \_\_\_\_\_ God? Are you interested in Him? Do you \_\_\_\_\_ to draw close to Him? When people love each other, they want to spend \_\_\_\_\_ together. The Lord wants to spend time with you, and He wants you to spend time with Him. Can you imagine loving someone but \_\_\_\_\_ communicating with that person? When you consider the time that you spend with God, how loved do you think God \_\_\_\_\_? We hear God’s heart and message by a close \_\_\_\_\_ of the Word, and we share our hearts with God when we \_\_\_\_\_. Our relationship with God deepens as we \_\_\_\_\_ Him. Love involves \_\_\_\_\_ and communication. Do you read your Bible, pray, and worship God \_\_\_\_\_?

How long has it been since you \_\_\_\_\_ the Bible at length? The Lord Jesus said, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by \_\_\_\_\_ that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). We need every word that God says. It nourishes our \_\_\_\_\_; it keeps us going in the right direction; it builds us up; and it gives us hope. Oh, I tell you if there was ever a time, we need the Bible.

Let me ask you, when was the last time you spent just a half-hour in \_\_\_\_\_? When was the last time that you worshiped at \_\_\_\_\_? Many of you attend church, I know; but do you \_\_\_\_\_ worship there? Is your worship focused; is it sincere and true. **Read what the Lord Jesus said in John 4:23-24.** I fear many folks go to church, have a good time as a spectator, visit friends, but may \_\_\_\_\_ to worship God. Loving God means focusing on what He has done for us and on what He \_\_\_\_\_ us.

God hears our worship and looks into our \_\_\_\_\_. God complained through Malachi, the prophet, that the Jews were making \_\_\_\_\_ that were polluted. They substituted animals that were blind, and sick, and lame, and blemished for the \_\_\_\_\_ ones. Worship was no longer

\_\_\_\_\_. **Read what they were saying in Malachi 1:8.** Today, in place of worship, many \_\_\_\_\_ entertainment or meaningless rituals.

Some think that God ought to be \_\_\_\_\_ with whatever we offer Him, but is He? Loving God means paying enough attention to Him so as to do what \_\_\_\_\_ Him. Don't you want God to pay \_\_\_\_\_ to your requests? Why should you think that God is willing to \_\_\_\_\_ whatever we offer?

We need hearts that \_\_\_\_\_ for God. The sons of Korah wrote, "As the deer pants for flowing streams, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1-2). They longed to worship God, to be \_\_\_\_\_ to Him. David too had that kind of \_\_\_\_\_ for God. David said, "O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1). We love God by \_\_\_\_\_ Him and drawing close to Him. We should love Him so much that we can't spend not even one day without Him.

Drawing close to God means that we \_\_\_\_\_ righteously. The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be \_\_\_\_\_" (Matthew 5:6). Hungering and thirsting is common for food, but do you hunger—I mean, really hunger—for righteousness? If you truly love God, you will long to be \_\_\_\_\_ with Him. No one wants to be in \_\_\_\_\_ with the person that they love. Loving God also means loving what He loves. He loves what's good and right, but God despises what is hurtful and wrong. God despises sin because He loves you and knows how sin will \_\_\_\_\_ you. Loving God means loving righteousness.

In Matthew 6:33, the Lord said, "But seek \_\_\_\_\_ the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Many want God but don't understand that having God necessitates being "right" with God. You can't have the grace and favor of God and then just \_\_\_\_\_ in sin. Romans 6:1-2 asks, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that \_\_\_\_\_ may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?"

Third, are you \_\_\_\_\_ to God? True love involves commitment. Many want the joy of love but without any strings attached. That isn't love—it's selfishness. Love without commitment is fickle and can't be \_\_\_\_\_. We live in a society that's \_\_\_\_\_ of committed love. Millions of couples live together without the commitment of \_\_\_\_\_. They want the better but not the worse, the richer but not the poorer, the health but not the sickness. Love without commitment is a \_\_\_\_\_. Without a commitment, lasting love isn't possible.

People talk much about placing \_\_\_\_\_ in God, and so we should. God is utterly trustworthy. But trusting God means you're \_\_\_\_\_ to put yourself into His hands. May I ask you, "Can God trust you? Are you trustworthy? Can God trust you to love Him for a lifetime? If you want God to be committed to you, are you \_\_\_\_\_ to be committed to Him?" Someone says, "Well I don't like to be tied down." The Lord Jesus wasn't tied down; He was \_\_\_\_\_ down. He didn't merely \_\_\_\_\_ about love and commitment; He demonstrated it.

Loving God fully and wholeheartedly means putting Him \_\_\_\_\_, before anything or anyone. **Read what He said in Luke 14:26-27.** The word “hate” here does not mean to despise but means to \_\_\_\_\_. If you compare your love for Jesus to your family or even yourself, you will love Jesus more.

Commitment to the Lord means staying away from \_\_\_\_\_. **Read Romans 12:2.**

Love also means \_\_\_\_\_ myself to what is good. James 1:27 says, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” Pure religion means helping those who are in \_\_\_\_\_. We show our love for God by loving and helping people.

Committed love means \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord and \_\_\_\_\_ His commandments. The Lord Jesus simply said, “If you love me, you will \_\_\_\_\_ my commandments” (John 14:15). Jesus wasn’t putting a \_\_\_\_\_ on us that He didn’t bear Himself. The Lord said, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. And if you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love” (John 15: 9-10). Love listens; love pays attention; and love submits to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the One that we love.

**Read 1 John 2:3-6.** My friend, you can’t \_\_\_\_\_ obedience from the love for God. Love means living the way Jesus lived, caring for others as He cared, forgiving as He forgave, and doing what is right just as He did.

Why are we asking and talking about all this? Because God wants us to love Him the \_\_\_\_\_ that He loves us. God has loved us with a great love and He \_\_\_\_\_ us to love Him with a great love. When we consider His grace and forgiveness, His daily blessings, His guidance in the Word, and the eternal home that He has prepared for us in heaven, how could we \_\_\_\_\_ but love God with all of our hearts, and all of our souls, and all of our minds, and all of our strength?

Love \_\_\_\_\_ makes a commitment. You can say “I love God” when you’re \_\_\_\_\_ to make a lifelong, serious commitment to Him. Loving God requires \_\_\_\_\_ than words. God doesn’t want fair-weather friends or nominal followers. He wants people who \_\_\_\_\_ love Him fully, freely, and faithfully. He wants people who will \_\_\_\_\_ for His cause, who won’t give up when things get tough. He wants people who will follow His \_\_\_\_\_, love His \_\_\_\_\_, and not compromise the faith.

Will you decide today to be His \_\_\_\_\_, to deny yourself, and take up your cross and follow Him? If you want His love and grace to \_\_\_\_\_ you, commit yourself to Him. We become Christians by putting our \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Our faith isn’t private; we must \_\_\_\_\_ it before others. With our faith, we must \_\_\_\_\_ from sin to righteousness, from error to truth, and from evil to good. Repentance means \_\_\_\_\_ from sin to the Lord and His will.

Our faith, and love, and repentance will lead us to \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord in baptism. Baptism is biblical; it’s how God \_\_\_\_\_ us with Christ and saves us. **Read Romans 6:4-7.** Oh, let God free you from sin, be baptized!