

*Do You Love Me
More Than These?*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs” (John 21:15).

Peter loved Jesus with human love. He even admitted that he loved Jesus with *phileo* love—a good, brotherly kind of love—but not God’s love. A great dilemma for many Christians is that their love for Jesus is limited by their capacity in the flesh. Loving Jesus in the flesh will only last until God tests that love. Without trials, tragedies, or disasters happening in their lives, probably no one would discern that they were operating in human love.

We must let God’s Spirit search our hearts and reveal the source of our love. Our schedule and our preferences reveal whether our love is human or divine. In some situations, we may lack faith in the supernatural simply because

our love is human, though we call it divine. We delay obedience because human love is not sufficient motivation for us to obey God.

There are so many poor marriages even among Christians because people have only human love for God and each other. Human love tries to counterfeit divine love through reason, sight, need, experience, and wrong priorities. That is why the Lord Jesus asked, "Peter, do you love Me more than these?" In effect he answered, "You know that I don't. I love You with human love." In the end, Peter revealed a transformed life of divine love as he manifested the very character of God, even as he was being martyred.

Jesus will challenge each of us with the question: "Do you love Me more than these?" And as this booklet will reveal, most of us will see that we have an ongoing need to be transformed, but that we also have an unlimited provision from God's own heart.

Chapter One

THE LIMITATIONS OF
HUMAN LOVE

“If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

“If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?

“Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

“Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?” (1 Corinthians 9:11-13).

Pastors with a heavy schedule have to watch constantly that they don't try to fulfill their duty in human love. Even in the greatest churches, the real problems occur when people serve in human love.

A woman who at one time attended church

faithfully has been backslidden for eleven years. She is totally living in the world, living with a man she is not married to, all because another man broke off a relationship with her. She put her need for that relationship first and revealed that she never truly loved God.

Fret Not!

Worrying is the first indication that we don't have the right kind of love. The only reason people live in fear is because they have human love, which cannot cast out fear (1 John 4:18).

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

If you go to work and worry about what people think or wonder whether you're doing a good job or not, you are going to work in human love. You don't love Jesus more than your fears, your worries, and your anxieties. When you get offended, it is because you are living in human love, and the flesh reacts.

In heaven, we will not need grace, even though it will be displayed in the glorified body

of Christ throughout all the ages. We will not need mercy in heaven, because we will not sin in heaven. We will not need forgiveness, because the past is forgotten. But in heaven, we *will* need love.

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13:13)—and charity never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8). Furthermore, we follow after charity (1 Corinthians 14:1a). And when we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, the whole issue will be this: Did we love Jesus, who is the Living Word, and His written Word “more than these”? More than all the things of the flesh and all the pleasures of the world, we were made to love Him.

Loving Jesus Above All

I love my wife with all my heart, but I love God more. I love the Body of Christ deeply and richly. I love coming to work, getting in the car after a time of prayer with my wife, and heading to the office; but, I must love God more than my vocation. I don't ever want to be familiar with the details of my schedule. I want Christ to be revealed to everyone I see.

I love my church and the people in it. But

more than my church, I love Jesus Christ. I thank God for the love my church has for me, but I thank God that they love Jesus Christ more than me.

“Do you love Me more than these?” Jesus said.

Someone who loves God more than any other thing in this world is the most peaceful. So many people have confused emotions. A woman may have a good report on Thursday, and by Saturday she is talking about the problem again. Divine love was turned into human love, and her confession came from human love.

A man who is discontented lives in human love. With God Almighty inside of him, why would a man be discontented? We are going to heaven! We have eternal security. Sin cannot be imputed to us. God will never forsake us. We have elect angels that follow us. We have a prayer life before the throne of God where God hears us. How could any Christian be discontented?

It doesn't matter what a person says about me or what they think about what I do. I love God more than I am concerned about what people think. I love soul winning—it is one of the most precious things in all the world. But I love

God more than soul winning. The point is that there are people who evangelize in the flesh. And because they are not motivated by loving God first, they are not sensitive to His still small voice to find the key to a lost person's soul. We ought to love God more than our own concepts and be led by him.

Don't Preserve the Flesh

Christians who do not get offended love God more than the flesh that some try to preserve. Are you easily worried and upset? Love God. Just start loving Jesus. That's not difficult, is it?

We do not want to hurt anyone. We honestly want to help. But we must love with Jesus' love, and His love is not sentimental.

A man came to see me about a trend going on in some churches. Many people in one church had begun drinking, and at a function several became intoxicated. It all happened because one pastor tried some non-alcoholic beer, which led to drinking real beer and wine. Then he declared that it was all right to do it "in moderation." Many were affected by that deception and did the same.

What happened in those churches is sin. The

pastor has quit drinking, but he cannot get his people to stop. They love their “liberty” more than they love Jesus.

Do you love Jesus more than your liberties? Do you love Him more than your opinions? More than your rights? More than the opinions of your friends who believe it is okay to do things that hurt others?

“Do you love Me more than these?” Jesus is asking.

Christians will be faithful to attend church and to gather more often in these last days because they love Jesus more than their own lives.

Chapter Two

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:2-3).

God’s commandments are not difficult. They are not heavy. His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). The key to every issue is loving God with God’s love and not human love.

I received a call from a man who said, “I have listened to your radio program, and a message I heard really convicted me about my sin. I am living in adultery. Can you help me?”

I wept as I asked him, “Do you love Jesus more than you love your adultery? Do you love Jesus more than being immoral? Do you love Jesus more than hurting your family or your church? Do you love Jesus more than hurting your testimony?”

I continued, "Sir, the problem is this: You don't love Jesus. If I can help you to love Jesus, then you won't ever want to be alone in a room with any woman unless she is your wife. You won't even let your mind wander."

"Oh, I feel so ashamed," he said.

"Do you love Jesus more than being ashamed?" I asked. "Do you love Jesus more than feeling guilty? Confess your sins to God and repent. Let Him turn you."

Filled with His Love

Jesus said, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:11-13).

Therefore, I can say to God, "I can't love You with human love, though I have tried it many, many times. Please give me Your heart of love." Human love may even keep you from overt sin. But that love will be tested, and only God's love will make it through the fire.

I love Jesus more than fear. I love Him more

than disobedience, more than anger. I love Him more than despair and depression. I love Him more than negative reactions. I love Him more than going around with a negative attitude.

Perfect Love Gets Rid of Fear

What does love do? It casts out all fear. Fear was the first sin of Adam and Eve after the Fall. They were hiding from God because, Adam said, "I was afraid" (Genesis 3:10). Fear is the premise for all other sins. But if the love of God is flooding my heart, then I don't have a single need or fear. If I do live in fear or need, then even when I am doing the best that I can, I am doing it in human love.

We need to ask Jesus to fill us with the Holy Spirit. "Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:17-18). Then, as dear children, we are able to "walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2).

The Great Occupation

In front of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus

said that to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength was the “great commandment.” The second commandment is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. These two are the greatest *commandment*, He said (see Mark 12:30-31). Jesus refers to the “commandment” in the singular. We are to be so occupied with Christ that we love Him with all of our hearts and all that is within us.

People can receive dying grace when they receive the love of God and love His promises more than they fear death. Many prayers for healing are not answered because we are occupied with the sickness more than the love of God that can heal sickness through love.

I am to love the Lord my God with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind, and all my strength. This is the first and great commandment.

Divine love is the whole issue. If a man becomes separated from his wife, he should love God with all his heart and let God meet all his needs. Then he can go back to her and honor her, and love her with God’s love. That means if he had to be the victim, he could be.

Chapter Three

REST THAT BRINGS MUSIC IN THE SOUL

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope:

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us” (Romans 5:1-5).

Take a moment now and say, “God, I really love You with Your love. I love Your people with Your love. I love my spouse with Your love. I love my children with Your love. I don’t love my opinions or my liberties more than You and Your

truth. I don't love my rights. I don't want to sin against You (1 Corinthians 8:12). I am not a victim of fear because Your love casts out fear. I am not a victim of need because Your love fulfills every need."

That's exactly what the Word of God says.

In Zephaniah 3:17, Jesus says, "I will rest in My love, I will joy over thee with singing." In the original Hebrew, it says, He will rejoice in "the music of My soul." Jesus is resting in *His* love.

Shortly after reading this, some will not be able to remember what they have read. Why? Human love was allowed to come back in to replace divine love. We should begin each day on our knees with God. Before every church service, we should all spend time in prayer to prepare our hearts for the message. Whatever we have to do, every moment we can claim the filling of the Spirit.

True Love in the Home

Some husbands just do not know how to love their wives with God's love, and they wonder why their wives react and become emotional. These men expect sex from their wives, but they need to learn how to make love to their

wives. A real man of God will do everything he can to build up his wife, being kind and loving her with tender touches. He can have skills of righteousness as a gift in the realm of lovemaking.

A man should not blame his wife for not responding until he gets right with God and learns how to love her properly. Too many men do not love their wives beyond their own self-gratification. They think they are doing their wives a favor!

A man of God can fulfill his wife and endure without self-gratification because he is so sustained by having the right motive in lovemaking—godly love for her body *and* her soul.

Now don't get upset because I mentioned sex. We are all alive today because our moms and dads had sex. We didn't just appear! This should be no great revelation, but the problem with the Christian world is that people have not been taught how to love spirit, soul, *and body* through the Holy Spirit and through Jesus Christ in the sacredness of love.

Deliverance Comes through Love

When I was a young pastor, a man who was an alcoholic asked Christ to be his Savior. For

several months, he came to my house drunk. I would go out for coffee with him late at night. Then finally, I said to him, "Let's settle this once and for all. Go out to your car and get your bottle—I know it's out there. Come back, and while you're at it get your cigarettes, and bring them right here on my porch."

He did it.

"Now," I said, "do you love Jesus Christ more than that bottle and more than those cigarettes?"

He was delivered that night, right there on my porch. His problem wasn't his drinking; his problem was that he didn't love God.

The love of God casts out fear, and it gives victory, power, and joy. The love of God puts music in our souls. We must rest in that love. This love is in a personal relationship by grace through faith with the living and written Word of God.

To the dear people who are always having such battles with depression, why don't you start letting God love you? Let God fill you with the Holy Spirit. Become spiritual—not just for a day or two, but for seven days and seven nights every week of every year. Shout it out: "Alleluia, praise the Lord—God loves me and I love God!"

Relating to God in Divine Love

For some people, the least little thing happens and they become so upset at life. I pray with this one and then I see him a couple of weeks later with a frown on his face. There is sadness on his countenance. There is no joy in his soul, no spring in his walk, and no glow on his face.

The problem isn't his circumstances, as he has made himself believe. The problem is that there is no personal relationship with Christ, where the love of God flows freely as a gift, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Then comes walking in the Spirit so that you don't fulfill the lusts of the flesh (see Galatians 5:16).

Being filled with the love of God: This is the key for everything. It is the key to relationships, to happiness, to prayer. It is the key to being happy when you are alone and it seems as if no one cares.

Just let God love you, and respond through the Holy Spirit by giving that love back to Him. "You have never walked in my shoes," you say? That's true. But having the love of God shed abroad in your heart is the key.

"Do you love Me more than these?" Jesus is

asking.

In all brokenness, I can say that I want to, I will, and I do love Him more than anything. That is the key to living. I am not going to need grace in heaven. Neither will I need mercy or forgiveness there. Once redemption gets me there, I won't need redemption either. But I *will* need love forever and ever. That is what will make eternity a destiny of glory and joy forever.

CONCLUSION

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more” (2 Corinthians 5:14-16).

Under divine love, we know no one after the flesh anymore because we don't have human love anymore. Do you know your husband after the flesh? That means you have human love. Do you know your wife after the flesh? That means you have human love. We are to know no man after the flesh, not even Jesus Christ. And though He was crucified in weakness, He is now glorified and ascended, and seated at the right hand of the Father forever. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, and he loves God

with divine love. Charity cannot fail.

If the Spirit is bringing conviction, tell God—and God alone—that even though you have been coming to church faithfully, you have had a lot of human love with people—even in serving God. Human love comes under attack, but divine love is beyond attack. Natural love feels the problems; divine love cannot see the heat when it comes. Circumcision—speaking of fleshly legalism—or uncircumcision avails nothing. All that matters is a faith that serves by love.

Let us keep ourselves in the love of God and rebound when we fail (see Jude 21). We keep ourselves in the love of God by letting Him love us and loving Him back with His love. We will have no needs because He supplies them all if love is the issue.

Father, we pray that these words on love may be revealed to each believer personally. Encourage each one as we desire to love You more than everything. In Jesus' name, Amen.