

DEVOTED
“Love Him”
March 23, 2025

INTRO.: It is a joy to welcome you this morning to our ongoing series, **DEVOTED**. In this series we have been looking at how God has and continues to show His devotion to us, how that informs and directs our devotion to Him and to others. Our theme this morning is, *Love Him*. The “*Him*” that I’m referring to is God. “Love” is certainly a word that has been defined in many different ways. What comes to your mind when I say this word? We have a holiday dedicated to this: Valentine’s Day. How many different books do you think have been written about love? How many different ways have you and I used this word “love” in just the past week? The very title of this message sparks several questions such as:

- *What is love? (explanation)
- *Why should I love God? (enthusiasm)
- *How much do I need to love God? (extent)
- *How do others know that I love God? (evidence)

THE EXPLANATION

How does the Bible define God’s love? To answer this question, we’re going to look at 1 John 4:9-10.

1 John 4:9–10 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

Verse nine explains how God showed (revealed) His love among us. Love was meant to be demonstrated. So, what did God do to show or reveal His love? He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. We need to remember how significant this statement is because of our standing with God before coming to Christ.

Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

We were separated from God spiritually and unable to change that through our own efforts and abilities. Spiritually dead people need to be made alive by God.

John then goes on to define this love.

1 John 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

“This is love:” present tense

Get ready because John is about to provide the definition of love and the supreme example of love.

“not that we loved God:” love did not and still does not begin with us. If we are going to have any hope of defining love it must begin with God.

“but that He loved us:” this is an accomplished fact, it has already been displayed. It is not a theoretical love! How has God’s love been displayed?

“sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins:” the phrase “*atoning sacrifice*” used in the New International Version (NIV) is actually the word “*propitiation*.” This is a biblical and theological term. Sometimes we stay away from theological terms like justification, sanctification, and propitiation, because we’re not familiar with them or because we think they’re too complicated. If you take courses in college in various specialties, there will be terms that you will be required to learn so why should we think it would be any different when it comes to the Word of God?

“propitiation:” means “satisfaction” or “appeasement.” In the Greek culture this word was used of their gods who the people had to do something to satisfy the gods. There was something the people had to do to earn this standing with the gods. In the Bible God is the one who is providing the propitiation. It has nothing to do with us earning favor with God.

Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross met the just demands of God’s wrath which we were under because of our sin. God could not sacrifice His holiness or righteousness because if He did He would not be God. God did not need to be reconciled to us for He has always been holy, righteous, just, and totally without sin. You and I have to be reconciled to

God which we cannot accomplish on our own. Every one of us is under the just condemnation of God because of our sins. Christ's sacrifice on the cross is a fulfillment of Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53:4–6 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. **5** But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. **6** We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The true definition and understanding of love must begin with God. It is interesting to note that the Apostle Paul tells husbands that they are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Any love we have for God and others must come from God's definition of love.

THE ENTHUSIASM

We have looked at the explanation of God's love as given in the Bible. Next, we want to look at why should I love God? What is the motivation for loving God? Let's begin with our state apart from God.

*We were helpless

Romans 5:6–8 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. **7** Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. **8** But God demonstrates (present tense) his own love for us in this: While we were (present tense) still sinners, Christ died for us.

*We were dead in our sins and He made us alive

Ephesians 2:4–5 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

-God's great love; rich in mercy

-made us alive

-by grace you have been saved:

"have:" present tense

"been saved:" perfect, passive tense (this emphasizes that God is doing the saving)

*Jesus left the glory of heaven to come to earth as a baby with the purpose of dying and raising again for our sin.

Philippians 2:5–8 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: **6** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, **7** but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. **8** And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!

*Because Jesus is coming again!

1 Thessalonians 4:15–18 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. **16** For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. **18** Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Since Jesus is coming again shouldn't we be showing our love for Him now? We have seen the explanation of God's love, the enthusiasm for loving God, and thirdly:

THE EXTENT

How much are we to love God? We see very similar statements in the Old and New Testament. First, as Moses is speaking to the Israelites.

Deuteronomy 6:4–7 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. **5** Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. **6** These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. **7** Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

The totality of the whole person is involved in loving God. This is not a partial effort.

When Jesus was asked, as a test, from the religious leaders to choose which was the greatest commandment in the law replied with the following:

Matthew 22:37–40 Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ **40** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Note the similarity to that which we read from the Old Testament. God has always been after our heart. The religious leaders were more about making sure the people followed the rules. Several men have been reading through the book of Proverbs and sharing with one another what we’re learning. I have been reminded several times in my reading that God is after our heart. We can look good to other people by our actions but still not have our heart right (possibly having wrong motives).

Loving God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind has always been the first (in priority) and greatest (where we get the word mega) commandment. The word “love” used here (agape) and in the Old Testament involves an act of the will. This is not primarily an emotional response!

There are so many areas in our lives where we are expected to be “all in.” If you’re a student, the teacher expects you will do the assignments and hopes you will do them enthusiastically. Where you work you get rewarded for effort. If you’re on a sports team the coach is looking for a great effort. How would you rate your love for God? None of us can love God the way He desires without first having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

THE EVIDENCE

How do people know that I love God? Is there any sort of measuring stick according to the Bible? It’s not enough that I say that I love my wife, I must show it. Could others find evidence that we love God by our lives? Before I go any further, I want to make it clear that the Bible is not telling us to do these things so that we can earn our salvation. It is because a person knows Jesus Christ that the following evidence must be characteristics of our lives.

*Obedience to God’s Word

John 14:23–24 Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. **24** He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

When somebody comes to faith in Christ as Savior and Lord their life changes. If you have come to faith in Christ as a young child your life should still continue to be changed. What happens when a person comes to trust Christ as Savior and Lord? They come under new ownership!

ILLUS.: How many of us have seen somebody buy a house that had not been kept up over the years? It might need new paint, windows, lawn reseeded and usually several repairs on the inside. Sometimes the house is bought at a reduced price, and the buyer intends to fix it up and sell it. Listen to what the Bible has to say about the believer. The Apostle Paul tells the believers they shouldn’t commit sexual immorality. What is Paul’s reasoning?

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **20** you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

The Lord has paid the price for our salvation, and He is keeping us. His adoption of the believer is permanent!! I should love God’s Word (Psalm 119) and show that love through obedience to God’s Word.

*Love for fellow believers

1 John 4:19 We love (present tense) because he first loved us.

1 John 4:20 If anyone says, “I love (present tense) God,” yet hates (present tense) his brother, he is (present tense) a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

“*liar:*” same word used to describe Satan in John 8:44

John 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Satan is the originator of lying and he has continued to be behind lying. What did God tell Adam in the Garden of Eden? **Genesis 2:16–17** And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; **17** but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

What did the serpent say to Eve in the Garden of Eden?

Genesis 3:4 “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman.

*Showing the fruit of the Spirit

The word “*fruit*” is singular. This is a package deal. We don’t get to pick and choose. Note the tremendous contrast in Galatians:

Galatians 5:19–23 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; **20** idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **21** and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

*Looking forward to Christ’s return

2 Timothy 4:8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

*Sharing the Gospel

1 Peter 3:13–16 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? **14** But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” **15** But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, **16** keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

This is the best news ever! It’s even way better than Penn State winning the NCAA wrestling championships!

SO WHAT???

*Have I come to personally know the Lord, the one who provides the definition of love?

*Each day write out a Scripture that says something about God’s love

*Each day spend some time thanking God for His love

*What evidence is there in my life that I love God?

Men, the best thing you can do for your family is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. How many men are willing to take up that challenge today?

Women, the best thing you can do for your husband, children, and friends is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Young person, the best thing you can do for your siblings and friends is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Can I encourage and challenge you in your dating relationships, as you look for someone to marry don’t just find someone who says they know Jesus. Look for someone who loves Him with all their heart, soul, and mind.

Older, retired people, the best thing you can do for the next generations is to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. You need to finish well and give hope to these next generations that Jesus changes everything. Continue to make a difference for the Lord!!