

What Does It Mean to Love Jesus?
John 14:21

Good morning! We've been going through our series called "Courageous Loving". First, we talked about the tough love of God, then loving our loved ones, then loving our brothers and sisters. Today, I'd like to talk about our love toward the most special person in our lives. And I hope he is the most special person in your life. I'm referring to the Lord Jesus. Is he your real love?

As we end the love month of February, I'd like to end this series today. So, we're cutting it short by one. Because I ran out of ideas, just kidding. I just want to start another one next Sunday right away because we only have like 3 Sundays before Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. Or maybe I'll include both Christian holidays in the series. But we'll see. So, today is the last part of our series and the message today is entitled, "What Does It Mean to Love Jesus?"

I read an article that said if you really love your wife or girlfriend, your eyes will dilate when you turn to look at her. You know, the pupil of your eyes enlarge when you're looking or staring at your loved one because of excitement. You can test that right now, look at each other. You've got to get close. See whether their eyes dilate. I read also that they dilate when you're irritated with them. Just kidding. The love part is true.

That may be sort of a goofy way to tell if you love your spouse, but how can we tell if we really love Jesus? Sometimes we hear people say, "She loves Jesus". "He loves Jesus". What do they mean by that? How do they know that? How can you measure someone's love for Jesus? How do you even know that you truly love Jesus?

The truth is, there is only one way to measure our love for the Lord, and that is to "keep" the things Jesus has said to us.

In the first sentence of John 14:21, (CSB) Jesus says: “The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.” If you love Jesus, you will keep his commands. That is so important to Jesus that he, in fact, repeated that in the surrounding verses. In vs. 15, for example, Jesus says to his disciples, “If you love me, you will keep my commands.” In vs. 23, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.” Then in vs. 24, Jesus puts it in the negative form: “The one who doesn’t love me will not keep my words.”

But what does it mean to "keep" the Lord's commands, to "keep" his words? The original Greek for "keep" in all the above verses means “to guard them from loss or injury, to keep your eye on them, to give them careful attention, and take care of them.” It’s like when you say, “I want to keep her memory”, you don’t want to lose that person’s memory, you always want to think about it, to cherish it, because it’s special. And that’s how the Lord wants us to treat his commands. They’re not suggestions. Jesus emphasizes we have to keep them because we have the tendency to forget the things he has told us, or we pick and choose what we want to keep.

But there’s more to it than meets the eye. When he says “keep”, it means you also do something about his commands. Obviously, he wants us to put them into practice. Meaning, he wants us to obey his commands. His commands are there not just as keepsakes, they are there to be obeyed, to be put into action. That’s why the NIV, NLT, and other versions spell it out for us when they render verse 23 as “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.” And the opposite in verse 24 as “Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching.”

And so, folks, to love the Lord has only one meaning. To love the Lord means to obey his commands. No matter how good you are in teaching, no matter how beautiful your voice in singing, no matter how faithful you are in giving, but you are not obeying his commands, your love for the Lord is in question.

That's a hard saying, but that didn't come from me. That's from the Lord Jesus himself. Bro. Brandon mentioned last week about a person who was considered to be the greatest Christian apologist of all time, Ravi Zacharias. I'm one of those who were in awe of his sharp intellect and impressive communication skills, but did he really love the Lord? He was involved in sexual abuse for years and didn't repent till he died. It's tragic. Did he love the Lord?

Loving the Lord then all comes down to what we are going to do with God's Word or the Bible which contains the teachings and commands of the Lord Jesus. We must treat the Bible like the treasure it truly is.

For the rest of our time, I want to explain further what it means to love Jesus in relation to his Word. If you have a pen and paper, you can jot down some important points from this message.

So, let's get down to it. Loving Jesus means

1. I should store God's Word in my heart.

That's where it all begins. You cannot keep his commands unless you consciously store God's Word your heart. Psalm 119:11 (ESV) says, "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." Look at the blessing if you keep God's Word in your heart. You will not fall into sin so easily. This verse means that you should be so thoroughly familiar with the teachings and commands of God so that you will know the things he wants you to avoid that would put your life or reputation in jeopardy. And keep them in your heart, not only in your mind.

You see, as Christians, we are the vessels that need to be filled with the treasure of God's Word. Of course, this means we have to hear and read God's Word, and hearing and reading it on a regular basis. That's why in Matthew 4:4, Jesus says, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Jesus quoted something He told Moses to say 1,400 years before the Lord came to earth.

This Scripture is found in Deuteronomy 8:1-3, and Moses said this to the Children of Israel: "Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors. Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."

God wants us to know that we have a lifetime supply of spiritual food right here in the Bible! Peter says this to Christians: "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." (1 Peter 2:1-3)

How often do you eat physical food? About once a month? Once a week? No. Generally, we eat every single day of our lives, and God is telling us that we need to take in some of His Word every day. Jesus wants to feed us with the spiritual food of God's Word, but we have to be willing to eat. Sadly, most Christians starve themselves by not eating the spiritual food that is readily available to them.

The truth is, most of us need to hear a whole lot more of God's Word. And when we hear it, we need to really listen to what the Lord has to say to us. He speaks, but do we listen? We need to hear God's Word, but we also need to hide it in our hearts.

And so, we become like a treasure chest, hiding God's Word in our minds, yes, but not just in our minds. We also have to hold it in our hearts, and that makes a big difference.

I remember a good gospel tract that was called "Missing Heaven by 18 Inches." It was talking about the distance between your head and your heart. There are Bible scholars today who can read the whole Bible in the original languages, but their knowledge is only in their heads and not in their hearts. It's much like the difference between knowing about Jesus, and knowing Him personally as your Lord and Savior.

Loving Jesus means I should store God's Word in my heart. It also means **2. I should stand on God's Word.**

We must stand on God's Word because it's the only foundation for a life that will last forever. Jesus taught us this essential truth in Matthew 7:24-27. In that passage, the Lord was at the end of His Sermon on the Mount, and Jesus says: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Everybody is building a house with their life. And every house will be battered by storms. This is one of the things I try to stress to young couples who are about to get married. We can avoid a lot of trouble by wise and godly living, but storms will hit every family, every life, every heart.

Every house will go through storms: That's why the foundation is so important. What are you building on? God's Word is the only rock-solid foundation that will last forever. As Jesus says in **Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."**

I read about this guy named Mitchell Gonzalez who gave a testimony in church. He said, "I saw my two-year-old daughter Natalie carry my Bible by the case's handle. She dragged it in front of a tall table we have. And as I was about to take it away from her, she took the Bible, and laid it on the floor. Then she stood on it and reached up to take something from the tall table."

In that moment, Mitchell said it was as if the Lord spoke to him and said: "If you would take My word, bring it where you need, and stand on it, you'll reach things you couldn't reach before."

Folks, the same is true for us! And when the waves come crashing, we can always stand on the Rock of God's Word! We can stand on God's Word, and we should. His word is essential for our survival.

Loving Jesus means I should store God's Word in my heart, I should stand on God's Word, and it also means

3. I should start living by God's Word.

It's not enough for us to hear God's Word. We've got to act on His Word. That's why James 1:22-25 gives us this warning: "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do."

Of course, hearing God's Word is great. It's the only way to spiritually feed ourselves on God's Word and store it in our hearts. In fact, the greatest commandment of all begins with the word "Hear."

In the Old Testament, this commandment is found in **Deuteronomy 6:4-5:**
“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with
all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

The Jews call this commandment the "Shema," because **"shema" is the
Hebrew word that means "to hear."** Hearing God's Word is great! But only hearing
His Word is a great waste. God wants us to take action! He wants us to act on His
Word. He wants us to apply His Word in every area of our lives.

It's not enough to hear God's Word. We have to do His Word. When God
commands, we should comply. But how can we do that?

James shows us two things to help, and the first thing is to **Remember the
truth.**

You see, the problem in James 1:24 was that the man forgot who he was. He
“immediately forgets what he looks like”. James says, "Don't do that." Remember
the truth. Remember who you are in the Lord. And then, **Remain in the Truth.**

Or as James 1:25 says, "continue" in the truth. God's Word is a mirror in
these verses, and we need to keep looking into the mirror.

We can all understand this because we've all used mirrors. I certainly used
one this morning. This is about as good as I ever look, but you ought to see me
when I first get up! So, I use a mirror to shave. We also use mirrors to help us
comb our hair. And if we see a big piece of spinach between our teeth, we can do
something about it.

That's one of the ways God's Word works. We can see our spiritual
reflection in His Word. It shows us who we are, who we ought to be, who we can
be, and sometimes the mirror of God's Word shows us what we shouldn't be.

But what a mirror! What a Book! It can show us the changes we need to
make in our lives, and God will help us to make every one of them.

But we have to DO the Word. We have to trust in His Word, apply it to our lives, and act on His Word.

Pastor and evangelist Ron Dunn gave a great example from his own life. It centered around Luke 6:38, where Jesus says: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Ron told about the time that verse came alive to him. God applied it to his heart. And Ron said, "God was speaking to me. That verse had my name written on it, and I had to embrace it."

It happened during a time of financial difficulty for Ron. One Wednesday he had been given \$50 for preaching at a funeral service. That night they had a missionary speaker at church. And after the service God spoke to Ron's heart and said, "Give that \$50 to the missionary."

With a twinkle in his eye, Ron said, "I knew that was the devil!" But anyway, he prayed, "Lord, I want to do your will. If that man is still out there when I go outside, I will give him the \$50."

Then Ron just waited inside, and waited, and waited. Then he went outside. Everyone else was gone but that missionary. Ron said he looked like he was waiting on something. So, Ron went up to him and said, "Here, Brother -- The Lord told me to give this to you."

And Ron didn't like it at first but remembered what he said: "God was speaking to me. That verse had my name written on it, and I had to embrace it."

Folks, that's what we need to do more and more every day. That's why we have started this new event in church which we call TNF or Thursday Night Fellowship. I want us to really get acquainted with God's Word. In TNF, we focus on what the Bible tells us about the fundamentals of our faith. And then, how to live out our faith. I encourage you to join TNF. It's just every other Thursday.

I think I should rename it EOTNF. Every other Thursday Night Fellowship. This week, if you don't have the book yet, you should receive it.

Finally, loving Jesus means

4. I should share God's Word.

Folks, all of us should help share God's Word, especially the good news about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Again in vs. 15 Jesus says, "If you love me, keep my commands." This surely includes commands like the Lord's command in Matthew 28:19-20. There our risen Savior says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." I think of Paul's total commitment in Romans 1:14-16. There the Apostle wrote: "I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."

I also think of the church in Thessalonica. In 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8, Paul said this to those faithful Christians: "And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it."

That's the kind of church Jesus wants us to be! God wants every Christian to do everything we can to help spread the good news about our Savior Jesus Christ. We should be like the shepherds in the Christmas story. Luke 2:15-18 says: "When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.”

I am so glad the angel appeared to these unnamed, ordinary shepherds. They remind us that Jesus Christ came for ordinary people like us. But the shepherds also remind us that ordinary people can go and tell people about Jesus. Just like the shepherds, we can spread the good news everywhere we go.

Just like Ate Gina. I want her to share with us her testimony about sharing God’s Word.

GINA

Folks, if we have believed in Jesus, if we have received God's greatest gift, then we surely have good news to share, and God wants us to share it! God wants us to faithfully spread His good news every way we can. And there are many ways to do it:

- Tell them how you got saved.
- Tell them other great things God has done in your life.
- Explain the good news to someone else.
- Invite people to church.

There are many ways to help spread the good news about Jesus Christ. And it's urgent. God knows that time is short, and people are lost. He wants us to care for them the way He cares for them. We need a sense of urgency. Especially during these difficult times we live in.

Taylor Smith was Chaplain-General for the British Army during World War I. And he had a simple test for all ministers who volunteered to serve as chaplains during the war.

Holding his watch in his hand, Taylor Smith would say to each volunteer, "I am a dying soldier. I have only one minute to live. What must I do to be saved?"

The volunteers were rejected unless they could say something like Paul said to the Philippian jailer in Acts 16, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Taylor knew that the most important thing people need to hear before they die is the good news about Jesus Christ.

People need to hear, so we need to do everything we can to help spread the good news about our Savior. It's one of the measures of our love for the Lord, because Jesus has commanded us to do it.

Folks, we must let this truth sink in more and more: Loving the Lord all comes down to what we are going to do with God's Word. Loving Jesus means, I should store God's Word in my heart; I should stand on God's Word; I should start living by God's Word, and I should spread God's Word. May God help us to treat His Word like the treasure it truly is.