

1. **GOD LOVES YOU** and wants you to have **eternal life with Him**.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

But most people aren't experiencing a meaningful life and aren't sure that they have eternal life because...

2. Man has a **SIN problem** which **SEPARATES** him from GOD. Every one has sinned.

Romans 3:23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

3. The **good news** is that **JESUS CHRIST** is God's **solution** to your sin problem. He is the **ONLY way** to heaven.

1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ also died for sins once and for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God..."

4. Therefore you must **REPENT** of your sins and place your **FAITH** in **JESUS alone** to **save** you.

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the GIFT OF GOD; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

5. Upon believing and receiving Jesus, you have a **NEW LIFE** with complete assurance of **SALVATION**.

1 John 5:13 "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."



Christ-like Maturity: the Goal of Discipleship?

(John 14:15)
Last week's message

Isn't Christ-like maturity the goal of discipleship? YES, it is. But it is a qualified YES. In John 14:15, Jesus says: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." Does Jesus, then, define love as obedience in this verse?

A. Obedience is not the TOTALITY of love.

- Loving Jesus is not the SAME as obedience to Jesus. The text itself in John 14:15 say so. Keeping the commandments or obedience is the ACTION resulting from MOTIVATING love. Thus obedience does not DEFINE love; obedience EVIDENCES love. Love implies obedience. Obedience is included in love but does not comprise the totality of love.
- Matthew 10:37, 1 Corinthians 13 and Luke 7:36-47 support our understanding that loving Jesus cannot be boiled down to obeying His commands, nor that obedience comprise the totality of loving Him. There is something else in love other than obedience.

B. Is this distinction (between love and obedience) important?

- The first point is that before I realized that something was fundamentally wrong, I lived a dangerously fragmented life. At the eternal level – I had salvation. On a spiritual level, I was trying to live my life in obedience to God's commands. And then there was the rest of my life which concerns my heart. Where did I find pleasure, and satisfaction? On what did my security rest?
What was wrong with that? I believe what could be wrong was that:
 - I may be guilty of idolatry, the basic, definitional evil which the Lord God condemns in Jer 2:13 .
 - On the matter of obedience to God's commandments, if this pursuit of righteousness is driven purely by duty, rather than by love for Christ, two issues arise. Firstly, I would be in exactly the position described by 1 Corinthians 13:3 – doing good without love and therefore profiting nothing, and secondly, one would be justified in doubting the sustainability of duty-driven obedience.
 - Finally, if I do not truly love Jesus, I may not even be saved! 1 Corinthians 16:22 states: If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord!
- The second point is how wonderful it is supposed to be in a love relationship with Jesus as described in the bible in very powerful-sounding verses.
 - Does 1 Peter 1:8 characterize my faith and love relationship with Jesus? Is this relationship a deeply joyful one? Is my joy in Christ inexpressible?
 - Did I feel the way Paul felt in Philipppians 1:21? Happily leave everything in this life...all that provided me with satisfaction, pleasure, joy to be with Christ?

So, beyond the concerns about potential idolatry, the sustainability of duty-driven obedience, or worst, the doubtfulness of my salvation...am I missing out on something wonderful in the Christian life?

C. What then does it mean to love Jesus?

- In the context of human love relationships, J.C. Ryle says... *If you love a person, you will: enjoy thinking about him, hearing about him, reading about him; like his friends; not want to hear others speak against or do something to offend him; desire to please him; long to talk to him; long to be with him.*



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Christ-like Maturity: the Goal of Discipleship? (Continued)

2. Love based on knowledge, not empty sentimentalism. It has content, and goes beyond that to a knowledge based on experience with the other. It is thus, basically dependent on the other's willingness to be known.
3. In John 17:2-3, it is clear that God wants us to know Him, and He has revealed Himself to us as:
 - Righteous, a Providential King. (Matthew 6:31-33)
 - A Faithful Husband. (Hosea 2:16, 19)
 - A Loving, Forgiving Father. (Luke 15:20)
4. But the most important aspect that God wants us to know of Him is His saving love (John 10:18-19, Jeremiah 9:24, Exodus 33:18-19)
5. And this knowledge of his saving love: 1) has the historical fact of Calvary as its objective content; 2) is a gift from God through the Holy Spirit; and 3) it is a heart experience as deep as our grasp of God's saving love.
6. As illustrated by the story of the sinful forgiven woman in Luke 7, our love for Jesus is only as deep as how much we grasp the greatness of our forgiveness in salvation

We have come full circle: loving Jesus is based on knowing him, at the center of which knowledge is his saving love, most manifest in the cross (the gospel); and our comprehension of the graciousness and cost of the gospel determines how deeply we will love Jesus. So is Christ-like maturity the goal of discipleship? It depends. John 14:15 says: *if you really love me, you will of necessity keep my commandments*. So if by Christ-like maturity we mean 'love of Christ-driven obedience' then the answer to the question is an unqualified YES. Otherwise, a qualification is necessary because obedience may not flow from a true love of Christ.

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