

How Will We Ever Love God?

John 14:21-31

Introduction: Have you ever tried to put together a kids table or playhouse, using the instructions that come with it? Or ladies...have you ever tried to a recipe that was unclear or left out key information. When we are trying to accomplish something like this we need information"Just tell me what to do and I will do it correctly." The disciples had similar questions on the last night they were with Jesus. "Just tell us where you are going and we will follow you. Just tell us what you want us to do and we will do it." But they know they are in trouble. Until now they believed that they were following Christ to Glory and Honor as the King of Israel. Now as they discover....

This is their last meal together,

Luke 22:15-16 ¹⁵ And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Jesus expects them to love and serve one another,

John 13:15-17 ¹⁵ "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. ¹⁶ "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Jesus is going where they cannot follow:

John 13:33 ³³ "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'

Their love for Jesus is seriously flawed to the point of complete collapse.

John 13:38 ³⁸ Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.

It is easy for us to pass judgment on these men. But the church in the 21st Century is in serious to critical condition because it has lost sight of Christ's stated desire for His people. In some cities the competition is on for the biggest bill board and the largest building. People go for the programs and the entertainment. The thought of being part of something where you can become a caring servant to others is not in the mind of most modern Christians. How about this for a slogan..."Come to our church where you can help care for others." Or come to our church and we will give money to helpless Christians in Africa together." Loving each other and helping each other through life is not high on the priority list of most church organizations....but it should be.

Now...I have no doubt that most believers today, just like the twelve, think they love Christ and want to serve Him. But Jesus gets to define what that means and not us. In the areas Jesus speaks of here most of us are seriously deficient.

How many believers ever...I mean ever think of looking for a church where they can serve the people there with some ability or asset they possess?

What church would ever dream of promoting itself as the place where you give and sacrifice for Christ?

What church tells people like Jesus says....

John 14:15 ¹⁵ "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

I am not saying this to beat up on our church or just to criticize others. Churches are offering what most people want. But Christians are supposed to be followers of Christ and it is not what Christ wants. People who come to our church struggle with the same issues. It is not in our DNA to want to serve, give, sacrifice and love. We want instead to be served, be given to, be sacrificed for and be loved. What never entered their minds and seldom does ours, is that when you are part of a group that helps, loves and sacrifices for one another you receive much more than you ever give. The disciples are literally struck dumb when Jesus gives them the ground rules for being His disciples.

John 14:21-31 ²¹ "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" ²³ Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." ²⁴ "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me." ²⁵ "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you." ²⁶ "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." ²⁷ "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." ²⁸ "You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I." ²⁹ "Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe." ³⁰ "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me;" ³¹ but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

In the next few minutes we want to do two things. One is to try to understand what Jesus is asking of us. We have a pretty good jump on that already since chapter thirteen. The second thing, and possibly the most important today is to begin to grasp, "How we are going to do what Jesus is asking of us." If we are honest we will admit that we need help.

"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me [21]: I was saved into a legalist Christian church. This is how they understood this verse: "If we learn every commandment of God and keep them to the eighth degree then we can say

that we love Christ...period....end of story.....mission accomplished.” **Easy.** We just need to study and have our list of do’s and don’ts. If we cannot figure out if it is a ‘do’ or a ‘don’t’ we will put it on the don’t list.

But this is not even close to what Jesus said. Jesus says here that men and women who love Him are the ones who keep His commands. love produces obedience and in the mind. Obedience is not the path or the substitute for love. Nothing could be more clear. Jesus never wavers on this point. When asked what was the greatest commandment was

Mark 12:29-30 ²⁹ Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; ³⁰ AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'

Our problem is not that we don’t keep enough commandments. It is that we do not love and adore Christ. And sadly the church has not made this her purpose....if it were she would have no trouble calling people to service, self-sacrifice and worship. We are dangerously close....many have already fallen seriously over this precipice....to Christ’s warning to the church of Ephesus.

Revelation 2:4-5 ⁴ 'But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent.

What deeds? Deeds driven by love for Christ! Sacrificial deeds of love and compassion for and toward one another. Start with your wives men or your husband ladies. Don’t you remember what it was like in the beginning with young, fresh love. What deeds were driven by that. How many things were overlooked? Harsh words were banned from your vocabulary when you were in love. You thought the best thought...not the worst. How about with our parents or children. Then there is your church family.

Jesus is describes how commandments are kept by the one who loves Him. The light of the world is not some religious platitude or prayer it is the beauty of our blessed Savior. If we do not love Him truly then we have no other message to take to the world. Jesus does not want a religious message taken to the world. That is why He said, **repent of not loving me “or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent.”**

He who loves Me will be loved by My Father [21b]: This is the ultimate goal in Christ’s mind. It means that you will be treated by God the way Christ Jesus is treated by Him. You will be welcome where He is welcome and receive the blessings that He receives.

John 17:20-21 ²⁰ "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us,

Romans 8:16-17 ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

And I will love him and will disclose Myself to him [21c]: I love books and I love to study the Bible, but that is one tool in the hand of God. No one knows Christ without loving Him. To know Him is to love Him. And....this is important....He discloses Himself to those who love Him.

John 10:27-30 ²⁷ "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ "My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ "I and the Father are one."

The Love of Christ is central to everything else. Without it we are a social organization or worse. Without intense love for Christ a church exists, no matter what it tells itself on paper or otherwise.... it exists to promote its organization and it has no life giving light that Jesus wants shared with a darkened world.

Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" [22]: Judas has picked up on only one part of this statement. I have made impassioned pleas for someone to love Christ only to have them say something like...."what do you think about modern versions of the Bible?" What?

Many Christian's eyes glaze over when we start to preach Christ to them. Why...because, in their mind, it is a given that they already believe in Him. They go to church. They believe the doctrines. Love of Christ is not relevant to them. They do not see the value or even the possibility of loving someone who died 2000 years ago. They want help with their present situations of life.

This is what the modern church means by relevance. Jesus' words do not fit Judas' idea of what is supposed to happen anymore than Gospel preaching fits the modern evangelical idea of what church is supposed to be. Jesus was supposed to disclose Himself to the entire world as the Glorious King. Today...the church is supposed to be all about meeting the perceived needs of men in a way that they imagine they should be met. What Christ thinks about our deepest needs is confusing, but only because we have our own ideas. Christ cares deeply about your needs and He knows what will meet them.

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word [24]: Jesus returns to the theme. That is "Love for Christ" is the key that opens the door to everything else. Keeping Christ's words will not make you love Him. Do not make this mistake Christian! The Pharisees kept God's Word perfectly but they neither knew Him or loved Him. In fact they could not even recognize Him when He came to them.

John 5:39-40 ³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; ⁴⁰ and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

Paul described himself this way....

Philippians 3:5-7 ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. ⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Commandment keeping is not enough for Christ, who said....

Matthew 5:20 ²⁰ "..... unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

And My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him [24b]: Notice that it is not the keeping of the word that gains the love of the Father. It is loving His Son that will do that. The numerous religions that believe that they can bypass the Christ to get to heaven are entirely in error. The only way to be loved by the father is to love, embrace, trust and give your life to the Son. If you want your sins forgiven and assurance of eternal life in heaven you need to put your hope and trust in Christ.

When that happens both the Father and the Son take up a permanent abode in your life. This is present tense indwelling. It is Christ in you the hope of glory....but with the Father and the Spirit as well.

Colossians 1:19 ¹⁹ For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,

"He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me [25]: The Pharisees kept God's Word ...but they did not keep Christ's! JW's and others try to keep God's Word without keeping Christ's. Jesus raises a standard for the heart. And men find it impossible to keep... in the heart.

Matthew 5:21-22 ²¹ "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER ' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' ²² "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.

These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you [25]: This is a great turning point in the discourse. Jesus is telling them things that are not only difficult to accept but will be impossible to do. We are all too selfish to live for others. We love people who are loveable. It is not in our nature to want or do the things Jesus commanded. This is why the Gospel teachings are considered hard, explained away or just ignored.

We give to people who can or will give something back to us. Love dies between husband and wife when they discover that neither can meet the others desires. The same is true of church. People go to church to get something and when the slightest desire is not met they move on. If the church was a family where we love and help others then

everyone would be loved and helped. Jesus teaches that our greatest need is love....This starts with our love for God, which we have no idea how to do and then it spills over into our families and church fellowship. WE NEED HELP TO LOVE!!

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. [26]: Christ's solution is to send the Holy Spirit to help us. He will act in Christ's name and not His own. The Spirit is not seeking His own renown but Christ's. He has been given to Christians for three reasons:

- To help you experience the presence of Christ [he comes to you in the name of Christ not His own] Christ is alive and the Holy Spirit reveals Him to us. If you want to love God you will need the help of the Holy Spirit.
- To teach you the things that you do not know or understand. [This is not independent of the Scripture. It is through the Scripture which you cannot understand apart from His help.]

1 Corinthians 2:12-14 ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, ¹³ which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. ¹⁴ But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

- To remind you of the things Christ has said to you. [We are forgetful...we need help!]

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful [27]: Peace or "shalom" was a common greeting or farewell. But when they said it to one another it was no more than a wish. "I hope you will have peace." It cannot be anything other than that because we live in a world of conflict. Peace is short lived. It is also a negative term when used this way. "I hope that nothing bad happens to you." Or "I wish you not to be touched by conflict and distress."

Jesus is not wishing peace....He is bestowing peace. Peace I leave with you! He makes sure we realize that this is not anything like the peace we have in the world. **My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.** The world can occasionally have a moment of peace. All conflict ceases, but the peace Jesus gives is different.

His peace will make it possible for Him to say, **Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.**" This is another work of the Holy Spirit that the Father will send into our lives.

Galatians 5:22 ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced [HAVE JOY] because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. [28]: It is impossible to say, in the light of everything Jesus has said about His equality with the Father, that this means that Jesus is not God.

John 10:30 ³⁰ "I and the Father are one."

John 17:22 ²² "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

Jesus is giving them reasons to rejoice and explaining that if they loved Him they would rejoice because He was returning home. Home is where the Father is and where the Father is, is a greater place. His prayer in John 17 makes His meaning here clear...

John 17:4-5 ⁴ "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

"Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. ³⁰ "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me: Jesus is preparing them not to lose their hope and faith when He is killed. Satan is preparing the cross for Him, but is, in reality nothing but a pawn in the hands of God. We need to know that and live in that.

John 10:17-18 ¹⁷ "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. ¹⁸ "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

1 John 4:4 ⁴ You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

But so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here: Jesus closes this teaching by repeating the thought that love is what drives true obedience to Christ. This is exactly why there can be no participation in our own salvation. It would dilute the love we have for Christ. Love for God is diminished in direct proportion to your belief that you have something to contribute. Those who contribute everything have no love for Christ...Pharisees and self-righteous and religious people today.

CONCLUSION: If you are satisfied with your Christian Life you might want to reconsider. On what are you basing your comfort? Jesus makes love for Him everything. He does this at the very end of His time on earth. His disciples, like the church today just seemed to glaze over. He was going to have to send them a helper...The Spirit to cause them to love Him above all else. Now, we have the Holy Spirit...

1 Corinthians 6:19 ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

Did you once have a longing for the presence of Christ and His Word that is now a distant memory? Do you remember the joy of salvation and sins forgiven. Can you think back to the day when you would have done anything for Christ because He had loved you and died for your sins and made you His loved one? Jesus Himself begs us to remember....

Revelation 2:5 ⁵ 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent.

We can and must go back. If you have ever known Christ this way, but let the cares of the world choke it out of you...you can go back. The same is true if you have never known Christ this way. The first step is to repent of it. This means change your mind about it. Want to love Him deeply from the heart and to love Him. Not just to get to heaven, but because Jesus has done everything for you. He is worthy to be loved by you. He is worthy therefore to be obeyed by you. How do we start?

We begin with a commitment to know Him more fully. To seek Him in the Word and to put ourselves deliberately under Christ exalting teaching and preaching. If you want to love Christ more then you will absolutely have to see more of Him. More of His Glory, His Beauty, His Compassion for sinners like you, His love for the desperate plight of broken humans...His willingness to serve men by dying for them and His ongoing love and service for them today.

It is the minister's business to lift Christ up in the gospel. *Christ crucified, the heart's attraction.* "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." *His own glory—the minister's theme—the heart's attraction. Spurgeon*

Learn to repeat the gospel to yourself daily. Serve your spouse and children sacrificially with tenderness and deep affection. It is the truest expression of love for God. Serve Christ's other children with whatever abilities and resources you have. And praise Him in your inner man....not just in church. We will be eventually in the crowd of Revelation five....why not start now....

Revelation 5:9-13 ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. ¹⁰ "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." ¹³ And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."