



Testing Your Love For God

As we begin this study together, it will be good for us to examine ourselves before God. The Bible says that the greatest command is to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, and mind.

And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."
Matthew 22:37

Do you truly love God?

Most people think that they love God. But how do we know whether or not we truly love Him?

Jesus answered that question best when He told His disciples, *If you love Me, you will keep My commandments* (John 14:15).

John, one of Jesus' disciples wrote, *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments* (1 John 5:3).

According to these verses, what is the ultimate test of our love for God?

In the Ten Commandments, God has told us specific ways to show our love for Him. You can check a man's love for his wife by his level of concern for her desires. You can check your love for God by how you respond to what God says He loves. Consider the following five commands from God.

Do you pass these love tests?

1. *You shall have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3).*

God's commands tell us how to act and how to think. God forbids us to make anything equal with Him. He demands that our love for Him should have no competition. God insists that we make loving Him our highest priority.

Is there anything in your life that you think about more than God?

Circle the amount of time that you let God's words tell you what to do or not to do.

- a. Always
- b. Frequently
- c. Sometimes
- d. Seldom

2. *You shall not make for yourself an idol (Exodus 20:4).*

God not only demands our full devotion without any competition but also commands that we worship and serve Him in a way that agrees with what He is like. God forbids our efforts to try to squeeze Him into what we want Him to be, whether it's physical or mental. God wants us to worship Him as He really is, not as what we want Him to be or think He should be.

3. *You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain (Exodus 20:7).*

Does your view of God:

a) Agree with what He says about Himself in the Bible?

OR

b) Do you form your ideas about God and what He is like without considering what the Bible says?

Do you live your life by:

a) Assuming that you can come to God however you please

OR

b) Looking to the Bible in order to discover and practice the kind of worship that He says is pleasing and acceptable to Him?

- God's laws direct our thoughts, our worship, and even our words and actions.
- God forbids us to ever use His name in a way that does not agree with who He is and what His name means.
- We are not to speak about Him in a casual or meaningless way.
- We are not to make light of His name or use it thoughtlessly as an oath or as an expression of surprise. Some may say, "But it's just an expression; I don't mean it in an unholy way." God forbids our using His name in an unholy way, either on purpose or on accident.

The phrase “in vain” does not just mean in an “unholy” way; it means in an “empty” way. God forbids any use of His name that is thoughtless, or meaningless, or inconsistent with Who and What He is.

In addition, this command is not only for our speech but also our lifestyle. People who profess to bear Christ’s name (“**Christians**”) must not behave in ways that disagree with the character of God.

- a) **Do you use God’s name in a profane or meaningless way?**
- b) **Do you bear the Lord’s name in an empty way by claiming to be a Christian but living a lifestyle that does not reflect Christ?**

4. *You shall not murder (Exodus 20:13).*

Once again, this command is about what we think as well as what we do. God forbids not only the actual murder of people, but even the building up of the anger that leads to murder or using the kind of language that makes others want to murder.

Jesus said, *You have heard what the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say unto 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 (Matthew 5:21-22).*

You may never have physically murdered anyone, but have you ever:

- a) Wished you could murder someone?
- b) Hated someone?
- c) Used abusive (bad) language that may have caused someone else to hate you?

5. *You shall not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14).*

God's law forbids adultery. Most people think of adultery as a physical act of immorality. Many decide, "I can look as long as I don't touch." But the sin of adultery begins in the mind. Jesus taught that a man who looks on a woman with desire for her beauty has already committed adultery in his heart (**Matthew 5:28**). The heart is where all sin begins – showing that we all have an attraction to what God forbids.

- a) Has anyone kept this command perfectly?**
- b) How will you answer for how you have kept this law?**

This is just a sample of God's requirements. Our failure at any *one* point raises another problem:

When we break one link in God's chain of holy laws, we have broken the whole chain. We do not have to break every link to destroy the chain. It takes only one sin to break God's law and make one a sinner.

Did you pass the test?

So, do you truly love God? If you are honest with yourself and with the Bible, you will have to admit that by nature you do not truly love God. Your disobedience shows it, and the Bible states it. The Bible says that rather than lovers of God, men are actually lovers of themselves (2 Timothy 3:2).

In fact, all men are so selfish that they don't even recognize that their sins against God are the worst of all. Because we as human beings don't know what it's like to be God (a totally unique Being with Whom no one can be compared), we are not bothered so much about sins directly against Him. Rather, those sins we tend to think of as sin are those against other people. Yet all of them are sins against God because they are against His law.

The fact is, whether we feel it to be true or not, we do not love God at all. In our hearts we are actually _____ against God (Romans 5:9-10). We love ourselves, not God.

What is the consequence for failing?

As our Creator, God has the right not only to make the laws, but also to set the penalty for breaking His laws. God puts those who break His laws under a curse (a penalty or ban). *Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them (Galatians 3:10).*

God puts us under the very same penalty that He imposed on Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, when they rejected God's law in the Garden of Eden. God told them that if they sinned against Him they would surely die (Genesis 2:17). Their sin destroyed the opportunity for them to be at peace with God.

Can your heart be changed?

Is there any hope of being forgiven of your rebellion against God and His law?

Is there any way you can get a heart that will obey God's commandments and delight in His law?

Thankfully, there is. The very same God who gave the commands—and who sets and enforces the penalty for breaking them—offers one way to be rescued and to be saved from the curse of the law.

Through Jesus Christ, the righteous, sinless Son of God, God provided a way to deliver you from the penalty for the sins you have already committed and to give you a new heart for keeping His law from this day on.

Jesus Christ kept His Father's Law without any mistake or sin, both in His thoughts and His actions. He kept God's Law for you, as your substitute. Then, in order to deliver you from the death sentence because you broke God's law, Jesus took the penalty for your sin on Himself. He died and was forsaken on the cross by the Father, so that you would not be forsaken by God and go to hell. **(Galatians 3:13)**

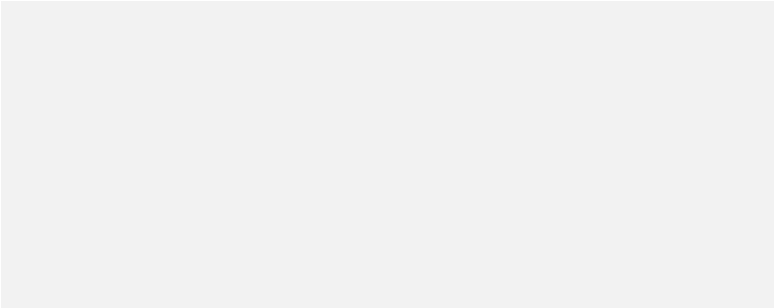
In fact, on the cross, He wiped out the record of all the charges against you for all the times you have broken God's laws. **(Colossians 2:14)**

As proof that the Father accepted Christ's sacrifice, God raised Him from the dead and set Christ at His own right hand in heaven where He now lives. God will put the perfect righteousness of Christ on account of any man who will trust Christ alone as the only way of acceptance with God.

Won't you trust Him today?

Memory Verse

*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf,
so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
2 Corinthians 5:21*



- Agree now that God's verdict of your sinfulness is correct.
- Confess that your failure to obey His laws is a crime that carries a penalty greater than you can pay.
- Believe that forgiveness has been made possible through Jesus Christ's perfect obedience in your place and He made full payment for all your guilt.
- Then, cry out to God to wash away all your sin and to save you because of the goodness of Jesus Christ.

God Himself will then take away your stony heart and give you a new heart on which He will write forever all of His laws (**Hebrews 9**), a heart that will love Him for doing so.