

Loving God

- Ron Stullenbarger -

The world is an exhausted place. We search constantly for what should be most important or what deserves our attention from moment to moment. As the tides of societal values ebb and flow, so do our affections. We invest value and love into that which offers us nothing in return. And unfortunately the cares of this world have crept into the people of God. Our gatherings are often marked by complexity and exhaustion. With program goals and achievements, we make complex what God intended to be so blessedly simple. We give our attention, energy, and love to that which isn't always rooted in simply loving God.

When asked to highlight the most important commandment in all of Scripture, Jesus responded, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment"* (Matthew 22:37-38). All of Christianity boils down to this one pursuit. And because we are to pursue loving God in all we do, all of life boils down to this single pursuit. Every single thing we do, whether it involves work, family, friends, church, entertainment, school, or solitude, is meant to be marked by the simplicity of loving God.

At the end of our days, the way we loved our heavenly Father will matter most. Our love for God matters more than any achievement, success, or program. It matters more than any possession, status, or relationship. And when we align our perspective with the first and greatest commandment, everything else comes into focus. When we pursue loving God above all else, all other pursuits fall into their proper places.

We were not created to offer our affections to anyone or anything but God first and foremost. To do otherwise is simply idolatry, and it will ruin the heavenly peace and simplicity God intends for His children. We create our own golden calves and ask them to satisfy us in ways only God can. We look to the world to offer us love it never had to begin with. But our heavenly Father is a wellspring of love and affection for us.

The commonly quoted verse John 3:16 says, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* You will never be satisfied until you rest in the powerfully simple truth of Scripture that God has loved you and will always love you. And you will never experience the fullness of what Christ died to give you until you respond to His ceaseless love by crowning Him Lord and loving Him with every fiber of your being.

May you come to realize the beauty and fulfillment of a life lived in pursuit of God above all else as you spend time in prayer.