

TO LOVE CHRIST MORE

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple.” —LUKE 14:26

The word ‘hate’ used in the above verse seems extremely harsh, especially in relation to our families, but it is a condition Jesus states in becoming a true disciple. This speaks of the seven closest relationships we have. Most of us would probably shrug our shoulders and think, “Surely, Jesus must mean something else.” Scripture tell us, “Husbands, love your wives. Children, honour your parents. Love your neighbors as yourself.” And Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

The Bible talks a great deal about love in relation to others, and the New Testament uses the word ‘hate’ the way we normally would - to hate that which is sinful and destructive, so why does Jesus use the word ‘hate’? What we probably don’t realize is that ‘hate’ is also a Hebrew way of saying “to love less than something”. In Matthew 10:37, Jesus said, “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” In other words, when Jesus used the word ‘hate’, He is saying, “to love less than Me”. But that also presents a problem in how do we love Christ more than those we are closest to?

Love cannot be proportioned. It isn’t like filling a gas tank, and allotting a portion for a short trip, and a larger portion for a longer trip. Love is a source from which we draw. There exists that deep inner core of our being, which is satisfied only in relation to God where we experience the

depth of His love. Whatever else is true about us, we are loved by God, and by His Spirit, He spreads His love abroad in our hearts. Any other attempt to meet the need to be loved, whether in marriage, family or friends, will eventually lead to disillusionment, because it will never be enough.

When we experience the love of God, it then becomes the source from which we love our families, friends and even those we considered enemies. It's a deeper, lasting, forgiving, compassionate, and patient love derived from Jesus Christ. And as we abide in Him, He abides in us, and the consequence becomes - "loving each other as I have loved you." To love Christ more is drawing upon the highest love there is, which ultimately flows out through us, strengthening and enriching our relationships as well as bringing benefit to others.

PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for all the love You've shown me, and I ask for many opportunities to pass your love on.

TO REFLECT UPON: Are my relationships influenced by my love for Jesus?