

## Sharing Intimacy With God

Matthew 23:37-38

**If somebody asked you to describe the Christian life in a few words, what would you say?** If somebody asked you, “What does God want from us more than anything else?” What would you say? **If you said moral devotion, if you said ethical behavior, if you said religious ritual you’d be wrong.** The essence of the Christian life can be summed up in two words **“love affair.”** God wants to have a love affair with you.

**The Bible says that you were created as an object of God’s love. God made you to love you. He made you to be an object of His love. He wants to have a relationship with you.** That means that you are created for the purpose of having a relationship and, as a result, the most important thing you can know in life is that God loves you. And the most important thing that you can do in life is to love Him back. Jesus said it like this in Matthew 22:37-38, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.” **Nothing is more important.** **If you do this you will fulfill your primary purpose in life.** If you learn to love God and you let God love you, your life has fulfilled its meaning, its purpose. **If you miss this part of your life, your life is a failure.** Because you have missed the very reason that God created you and put you on earth – to love and be loved.

**There’s a term in the Bible for expressing love to God.** That term is called **“worship.”** We think of worship as a ritual or routine or something you do in a church. **No. Worship simply means expressing love to God.** Any time you are expressing love to God, you are worshipping whether you are by yourself, in a small group, in a large crowd or wherever. **When you express love to God in any way you are worshipping.**

You may have noticed that sometimes, for some people it’s hard to say, “I love you.” (especially for men). **Sometimes we feel it, we just don’t know how to get it out, how to say it.** So we don’t know how to express our love to our children, to our wives/husbands, to our friends and neighbors, the people we work with or even to God. **It’s kind of difficult. Why does that happen? Why is it sometimes hard to say, “I love you”?**

**You may have been raised in a very non-expressive home where there was no love or maybe there was and you just didn't talk about it that much. You didn't frequently say, "I love you." Or maybe you were taught to stuff your emotions, push them down, and hide your feelings. Maybe you have been hurt in the past and you say, "I don't want to get hurt again so I'm not going to tell anybody I love them." Or maybe you have done some things in the past that is causing you some pain and you say, "I don't want to love God. There are things in my life I don't like." Or maybe you just don't know how to express your love to God.**

**So what I want to do today is to talk about how to express your love to God. Actually, there are many ways to express your love, but I have narrowed it down to just six.**

**By the end of this service I hope you will feel loved by God more than you ever have in your life. And I hope that you will have learned to express love to God more than you ever have in your life, learned a deeper level of worship. And it is possible that some of you will receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior today.**

Let's look at these six ways.

**1. The first way is one we are real good at here at Mountain Grove and that is by singing to Him. I hope that you have noticed that music and love go together because music comes from the heart. Music is not something you do intellectually it is something that comes out of your soul, your emotions. There are many love songs in the world. But did you know that more songs have been written about Jesus Christ than any other topic in the world? Nothing even comes close in second place. Over the last 2000 years there have been more love songs and songs written to Jesus Christ than any other subject. Christianity is a singing religion, a singing faith. Why? Because it is not about religion - it's about a love affair. It's about a relationship with God, who God loves you so much that He sent His Son to die for you and He wants you to love Him back.**

Psalm 147:7 says, "Sing out your thanks to Him. Sing praises to our God." **Nothing will make you more aware of God's love and God's presence in your life than singing and praise.** I know some of you are saying, "But you don't understand. I can't sing." In Psalm 66:1, 81:1, 95:1, 95:2, 98:4, 98:6 and Psalm 100 the Bible says, "Make a joyful noise." I know this has been applied just to

singing, but these scriptures are not just restricted to singing, but to all avenues of praise, and all of you can “**make a joyful noise.**”

**Let me get real personal right here for just a moment. I know there are some people who would just as soon bypass the music and get right to the preaching, but that would be a big mistake.** You see, you not only need biblical principles for your head you need music for your heart. **Music inspires, it refreshes, it rejuvenates, it revitalizes.** Music and worship in praise to God has a healing element to it. If you are depressed you need to sing a song. **I have noticed that when I least feel like singing that’s when I need to do it the most.** When I don’t feel like participating in worship, when I don’t feel like getting involved, when I just want to stand still and be a spectator that means my heart is cold and it needs to be warmed up. **I need to get involved and let my mood be lifted in worship.**

**2. There is a second way you can express love to God and that is by talking to Him.** Every relationship, if it is going to develop and grow, is based on communication. **Why? Because a relationship is never standing still.** It is either growing or decaying.

**The same is true with God.** On the days when you have deep, significant talk with God your relationship grows. **On the days when you have little or no talk with God your relationship decays.** It’s that simple.

**What do you talk to God about if you want to express love to God?** Anything that you would talk to your best friend about. **Everything.** Your hopes, your fears, your dreams, your anxieties, the things you are embarrassed about, the things you are proud of, the things you are ashamed of, your goals, your ambitions, your hurts, your cares, every part of your life – you come to God and you talk to God about it. **The Bible says in Psalm 116:1-2 says,** “I love the Lord because He hears me and answers my prayer, because He bends down and listens. I will pray as long as I have breath.” **Some of you have been saved for a long time and you honestly, have lost your spark. Your Christian life has become routine, dull, joyless, and lifeless. There is no real joy and spark any more.** There is a simple remedy for that. **Start talking to God again.** **Let me suggest that you stop using all of the “thee’s” and “thou’s” and trite little clichés that you repeat over and over, and start talking to Him like you would your best friend, your loving Father.** Prayer is not some duty that you have to perform. **It is a privilege that you get to do.**

**3. There is a third way you can express your love and that is by listening to Him.** Listening is one of the greatest gifts you can give to somebody. When you listen to someone, you are saying, “You matter to me.” When I listen to my children, when I listen to my wife, anybody, I am saying, “I value what you have to say. I value your opinion. You are important to me.” When I don't listen to somebody I am basically saying, “You don't matter to me. You're not important to me. What you have to say I don't value.” **One of the ways you express love to anybody is by listening to them.**

**The same is true with God.** Every time you listen to God you are saying, “God, You matter to me. I value what You have to say.” **Listening is the most misunderstood and left off part of prayer.** Most of us think that prayer is just talking to God. **That is only fifty-percent of prayer.** The other fifty-percent of prayer is being quiet and letting God speak to us. We are usually in too much of a hurry to do this. What we do is, “Hi, God, it's me. I've got ten things I need from You. Thank You. Good bye.” **We really do not take the time to listen.**

**One of the primary ways that God speaks to us is through His Word.** He does that through sermons, through personal Bible study, and through small group studies. Remember, God wants to talk to you because He loves you.

**Did you know that hearing God's voice, being able to listen to God, and hear God speak is the test of whether or not you are really saved?** Jesus said this in John 10:27, “I am the good Shepherd and I know My own sheep and they know Me and they listen to My voice.” If you have never ever got an idea or an impression or heard from God, you have every reason to wonder, “Do I really know God? Do I really have a relationship with Jesus Christ? Am I truly a believer?”

**God wants to talk to you. But you have to listen.** And that is one of the ways you show love to God.

**4. The fourth way you can express your love to God is by publicly identifying with Him.** That is, by not being ashamed of Him at work, at home, or in your neighborhood. If you are ashamed of God then you don't really love God. **Because, if you love somebody you are not ashamed of them.** You publicly identify with them.

**You can't say you love Jesus Christ and be ashamed of Him at the same time.** Jesus said it like this in Mark 8:38, “If anyone is ashamed of Me and My

teachings then I will be ashamed of him when I come in the glory of My Father.” Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of Me on earth, I’m going to be ashamed of you in heaven.” We need to publicly identify ourselves with Christ. That is how we show our love for Him.

**What did Jesus do for us that should cause us never to be ashamed to identify with Him?** Let me give you just three things:

**1. He saved us from the penalty of sin.** Everything you have ever done wrong was paid for on the cross so you get to go free and forgiven.

**2. He saves us from the power of sin.** He breaks sin’s grip in our lives. He gives us a new power to be able to make changes so we are not the same anymore. He can do new things in our lives that we always wanted to do but never thought we could do on our own.

**3. Eventually He saves us from the presence of sin in heaven where there will be no sin, no sorrow, no suffering, no pain, and no grief.** That’s good news.

**My gratefulness for all that God has done should cause me to identify with Him in my everyday living.** Church membership is another way that I can identify my life with Christ. These are ways that I can show my love for Him.

**5. The fifth way to express love to God is by being committed to Him.** This is what love is really all about. Love is about commitment. You don’t really love somebody unless you are committed to their best. Nothing ever significant happens in life without commitment. Your commitments determine your future. You are becoming whatever you are committed to. So you had better choose your commitments carefully. If you are committed to the wrong thing, you are going to become the wrong thing. You cannot lose by being committed to God. Weak people are defined by their circumstances. But strong people are defined by their commitments. The Bible tells us in 2 Chronicles 16:9 that God is looking for people whose hearts are fully committed to Him that He can bless and can use.

**6. Finally the sixth way you can tell God you love Him is by giving to Him.** Giving, at its core, is the essence of love. You spell “love” two ways: T-I-M-E and G-I-V-E because that is what love is all about. When you love someone

you want to spend time with them and you want to give to them. You can give without loving but you cannot love without giving. It is impossible to do that. If you say you love God, then it is going to show up in your generous lifestyle. I can claim to be a Christian, a follower of Christ. I can claim to love God. But the Bible says there is one way to really test the sincerity of your love. 2 Corinthians 8 “Just as you excel in faith, in speech, in knowledge, and in complete earnestness, see that you also excel in the grace of giving. I am not commanding you but I want to test the sincerity of your love.” God tests the sincerity of your love by looking at your giving.

Why does He do that? God does not need your time. He does not need your money. What, then, does God really want from you? He wants your heart. He wants what your giving represents. And He wants you to become like Him. “God so loved the world that He gave...” You can either become like God, or become a generous giver, or you can become like Satan and become a stingy hoarder.

I have discovered that there are really basically two kinds of people in life – cheerful givers and fearful givers.

Cheerful givers say, “I’m going to give. It all belongs to God anyway. He gave it all to me. I wouldn’t have anything without God so I’m going to give it all to Him and He can take care of all my needs.” Therefore, cheerful givers see giving as an act of worship. Cheerful givers – that’s the kind that God loves.

Then there are the fearful givers: “I can’t afford to do this. I can’t afford to give. I’ve got to hoard. I’ve got to watch what’s for me. I’ve got to protect my selfish interests.” They do not see giving as an act of worship, but a responsibility. And they are afraid if they don’t give God will get back at them in some way. Fearful givers.

Giving is another act of worship. It is as much an act of worship as singing, praying, thanking, listening, everything else. It is saying, “God, I love You so much I want to give back to You. You saved my life and I want to give back to You.” Everything we have came from God. We can’t out give God because He gave it all to us in the first place.

Here’s the bottom line: There are many, many ways to express your love to God. We just looked at six. The truth of the matter is that loves you with

**an unconditional love, and He wants you to love Him in return. When you learn to love Him the way He wants you to, your life will never be the same again.**

If you have never been saved, why not come today?

**Everyone please stand for prayer.**

Father,

Thank You for loving me just the way I am. Thank You for what You did for me on the cross. Use me to make a difference in the world as I learn to express my love for You in my everyday living. In Jesus' name. Amen.