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How many of you have been in a love relationship?

How about a love relationship with God?

- To be loved by God is the highest relationship, the highest achievement, and the highest position in life.

A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- Picture in your mind a tall ladder leaning against a wall. Now think about your life as a process of climbing that ladder. Wouldn't it be a tragedy to ascend to the top and find you had placed the ladder against the wrong wall? One life to live, and you missed it!
- A few weeks ago, we talked about your life being God-centered. That means your life must be properly related to God. This is the love relationship for which you were created—a God-centered love relationship. Your walk with God (*Father, Son, and Spirit*) is the single

most important aspect of your life. If it is not as it should be, nothing else will function properly.

If you lost everything in life, but you still had a love relationship with God, could you be happy?

- During Covid, some businesspeople lost their businesses, their money, and their property. With everything stripped away, they had to decide if having Jesus was enough for them to still have joy. *(Some committed Suicide)*
- If you lost all of your money and possessions, but you had a vibrant walk with God, could you truly be happy?

Why do we equate happiness to stuff?

- We are a doing people. We feel worthless or useless if we are not busy doing something. Scripture leads us to understand that God is saying, “I want you to love Me above everything else. When you are in a relationship of love with Me, you have everything you need.” To be loved by God is the highest relationship, the greatest achievement, and the noblest position in life.
- He will call you to obey Him and do whatever He asks of you. However, you do not need to do something to feel fulfilled. You are completely fulfilled in a relationship with God. When you are filled with Him, what else do you need?

Do you remember this HYMN by Rhea Miller?

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold, I'd rather be His than have riches untold; I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands,

I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand. I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause, I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause.

I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame, I'd rather be true to His holy name. He's fairer than lilies of rarest bloom, He's sweeter than honey from out the comb; He's all that my hungering spirit needs, I'd rather have Jesus and let Him lead.

I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today.

Reflect on the meanings of the words. If you could have only one or the other in each of the following pairs, which would you honestly choose? Check your response.

I **would rather have:** ☐ Jesus. ☐ silver, gold, riches, houses, and lands.

I **would rather have:** ☐ Jesus. ☐ people's applause and worldwide fame.

I **would rather:** ☐ have Jesus. ☐ be the king of a vast domain.

If you chose Jesus for each answer, is this the way you have been living your life?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you really want to love the Lord your God with all your heart? He will allow no competitors, not money and possessions, not fame and popularity, and not power or authority. God says:

"No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" ([Matt. 6:24](#)).

"When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would give you—a land with large and beautiful cities that you did not build, houses full of every good thing that you did not fill them with, cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and when you eat and are satisfied, be careful not to forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery. Fear the Lord your God, worship him, and take your oaths in his name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you, for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God" ([Deut. 6:10-15](#)).

- Once your love for God is in place as your greatest priority, God will provide everything else you need ([Matt. 6:31-33](#)).

[CREATED FOR ETERNITY](#)

- God did not create you for time; He created you for eternity. Time—your lifetime on earth—provides the opportunity for you to become acquainted with Him. It provides occasions for Him to develop your character into His likeness. Then eternity will hold its fullest dimensions for you.
- If you live only for time—the here and now—you will miss the ultimate purpose of creation. If you live for time, you will allow your past to determine your life today. Your life as a child of God ought to be driven by the future—what you will be one day. God uses your present experiences to mold you for future usefulness here on earth and in eternity.

(MATTHEW 6:31-33) So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

What are some things in your past that have a strong limiting influence on your life today? These may include a troubled family background; failures; shame over a personal or family sin; past abuse; pride, or unhealthy desire for success, fame, recognition, or wealth.

Do you think you are currently being shaped more by your past or by your future? Why?

- Paul had to overcome his difficult personal history. Here was his approach to dealing with his past and present:

(Philippians 3:4–14)

⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:

⁵ circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to

know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

(MATTHEW 6:19-21,33)

“Don’t store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.”

Answer the following questions, based on Paul’s statement in Philippians 3:4-14.

a. ***What are some things in Paul’s past that could have influenced his present?***

b. ***How did Paul view these things (v. 8)?***

c. ***Why did Paul view his past this way (vv. 8-11)?***

d. ***What did Paul do to prepare for a future prize (vv. 13-14)?***

Forget _____

Read forward _____

Pursue as my goal _____

Paul's desire was to know Christ and to become like Him. You too can order your life under God's direction, so you come to know Him, love Him, and become like Christ. Let your present be molded and shaped by what you are becoming in Christ. You were created for eternity!

Conclusion

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Begin orienting your life to God's will. His purposes go far beyond time and into eternity. Make sure you are investing your life, time, and resources in things that will last, not in things that will pass away. If you don't recognize that God created you for eternity, you will invest in the wrong priorities. You should store up treasures in heaven ([Matt. 6:19-21,33](#)).

- This is why a love relationship with God is so important. He loves you. He knows what is best for you. Only He can guide you to invest your life in worthwhile ways. This guidance will come as you walk with Him and listen to Him.
- In what are you currently investing your life, time, and resources? Make two lists below. On the left list things that will pass away. On the right list things that have eternal value.

Passing Away Eternal

- Pray about any adjustments you need to make in the way you invest your life. Ask God for His perspective on your life. Write any adjustments you sense God wants you to make.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- To be loved by God is the highest relationship, the highest achievement, and the highest position in life.

- God did not create me for time; He created me for eternity.
- I will let my present be molded and shaped by what I am to become in Christ.
- “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”
- I will make sure I am investing in things that are lasting.
- Only God can guide me to invest my life in worthwhile ways.