

## **“How to Tell God You Love Him - Part 2”**

John 21:15-17; Matthew 22:34-40

Preached on October 11, 2009

Rick Warren, the pastor of Saddleback Church in Southern California, is well known for his book, *“The Purpose Driven Life.”* The book emphasized that in every church, and in the life of every Christian, 5 essentials need to be in place - Fellowship, Evangelism, Discipleship, Service, and Worship. We need to be connected to one another, and we need to be connected to God. Last week we began to talk about connecting to God; about how we can tell God that we love Him. We have looked at the first three ways: by singing to him, talking with him, and publically identifying with him through baptism and communion. Today we examine the final three.

4. We express our love BY LISTENING TO HIM. Listening is one of the greatest gifts we can give to anybody. We all want to be understood. We all want to be listened to. When we listen to someone, we’re saying, “You matter to me.” When I listen to my kids, when I listen to my wife, anybody, I’m saying, “I value what you have to say. I value your opinion. You’re important to me.” When I don’t listen, I’m basically saying, “You don’t matter to me. You’re not important. I don’t value what you have to say.” We express love is by listening.

The same is true with God. Every time we listen to God we’re saying, *“God, you matter to me. I value what you have to say.”* Listening is the most misunderstood and forgotten part of prayer. Most of us think that prayer is just talking to God. That’s only half of it. The other half is shutting up, being quiet and letting God speak to us. Usually we’re in too much of a hurry to do that. We say, “Hi, God, it’s me. I’ve got ten things I need from you. Thank you. Over and out. Good bye.” We don’t stop. We don’t wait. We don’t listen. We don’t say, “God, do you have a few things to say to me?” We don’t listen.

God is speaking to us all the time. At least He’s trying to speak to us. If we don’t hear Him, perhaps we’re not listening. We don’t take the time. We’re not quiet. We don’t pause in the middle of the day and say, “Do you have anything to say to me right now?” We’re so busy; our life is so full of noise. We always have a radio, TV, cell phone, something on. God can’t get through because all the lines are busy. We need to take time to talk to God, and we need to take time to listen to God, to stop, to pause because God is speaking.

How does God speak to us? Many ways. One is through the Bible, God’s word. If we’re not spending any time with the book, He can’t speak to us through the book. Another way God speaks to us is through our experiences in life. And sometimes God speaks to

us through the daily trials that life throws at us. But too often we're not listening. We're not reading the stories and principles in his book. We're not aware that God might be trying to tell us something through our experiences and trials. And God also speaks to us through other people, through the advice of Christians and godly people who will say, "What about this?" God will often speak to us through those around us.

God can and will speak to us through impressions. He puts ideas in our mind. We have some great idea. Where do you think we got that idea? Chances are, God put it there. Not every idea we get is from God. But when we get an idea from God, it is called an inspiration. When we get an idea from the devil, that's temptation. When we get an idea from ourselves or our friends, our spouse will usually call that dumb! But we do have some good ideas because God gave us a brain to come up with good ideas. How do we know if an impression is from God or not? Test it. The Bible says we're to test it. Ask some questions. Is it in harmony with God's word? Will it make me a better person? Can this hurt me or other people? Is it the best use of my life, of my time? Use these questions to test your ideas.

The Bible says that hearing God's voice, being able to listen to God and hear God speak is the test of whether we're really a true believer or not, whether we're in the family or not, whether we're headed for heaven or not? In John 10 Jesus said, *"I am the good Shepherd and I know My own sheep and they know Me. They listen to My voice."* If you've never gotten 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? Have I stepped across the line yet?" Maybe not. Maybe God is trying to speak but you haven't entered into that relationship.

Here's the question: How often do I pause to listen to God each day? Do I do it in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening? Hourly? Occasionally? Regularly? Rarely? Do I pause and say, "God, is there anything you want to say about this decision I need to make, this event I'm involved in, this person I need to talk with?" Evaluate yourself on that. God wants to talk to you. He wants to speak to us. But we have to listen. That's one way we show our love to God.

5. We express our love to God BY BEING COMMITTED TO HIM. This is what love is really all about. It's about commitment. We don't really love somebody unless we're committed to them. Nothing significant happens in life without commitment. Our commitments determine our future. We are becoming whatever we are committed to. So choose your commitments carefully. If you're committed to the wrong thing, you're going to become the wrong thing. But we can't lose by being committed to God. Weak people

are defined by their circumstances. 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 might bless them and use them.

What does it mean to be fully committed to God? There are five basic commitments that we need to look at. They are simply: 1. Giving your life to Jesus. 2. Committing your life to His family, the church and joining a church family. 3. Choosing to grow spiritually, in your heart, in your character to become more like Jesus everyday. 4. Using your talents and gifts in helping others. We call that ministry. And 5. Sharing the good news with other people and fulfilling the mission and purpose God put you on this earth to do.

These are five basic commitments, and I've put them into four covenants. They're on the insert in your bulletin. They are based on the idea of being fully immersed, baptized if you prefer, in the Spirit of God. Where are you on that list? Know that we do have to go through them in order, and that some effort and education is necessary to get from one to the other. Several of you have already taken the First Covenant Class. But today, for everyone, are you ready to enter into that first covenant? To protect the unity of the church; to fulfill your responsibility in the church; to serve the ministry of the church; and to support the testimony of the church. If you are, on the attendance pad beside your name write, "I commit." To couples, if you share the same line on the pad and both are ready, write "We commit."

But today we are talking about worship, and worship is not just something that happens in the four walls of a church building. Worship can happen anywhere. Worship can be a way of life. Worship is a matter of presenting oneself to God, to give Him honor and praise. Dr. Paul Stambach upon hearing the modern complaint of some that "I don't get anything out of worship," writes "*Worship is an action verb. Soren Kierkegaard saw the church's worship as drama in which the person in the chancel was the "prompter," the congregation the "actors," and God as the audience. He had it right! Worship is God-centered, not me-centered. In worship we are constantly active in giving to God. And the awesome reality is that the more we completely give, the more we in turn receive.*" God is to be at the center of worship, and of life. So take your everyday ordinary life <sup>B</sup> your sleeping, eating, going-to-work and walking-around life - and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for Him. Commit your life to God. And then rate yourself on that commitment. How often do you renew or reaffirm that commitment to God? Regularly? Occasionally? Rarely?

6. We tell God we love Him is BY GIVING TO HIM. Giving, at its core, is the essence of love. A Love” is spelled G-I-V-E because that’s what love is all about. When we love someone we want to give to them. We can give without loving but we cannot love without giving. It’s impossible. If we say we love God, then it’s got to show up in a lifestyle of generosity. I can claim to be a Christian. 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 our love by looking at our giving.

Why does He do that? God doesn’t need our time. He doesn’t need our money. What does God want? He wants our hearts. He wants what our giving represents. And he wants us to become like Him. *“God so loved the world that He gave...”* “We can either be like God and become a generous giver or we can become like Satan, who holds on to everyone and everything he can.

There are basically two kinds of people in life B cheerful givers and fearful givers. Cheerful givers say, “I’m going to give. It all belongs to God anyway. It all comes from His hand. 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.” 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 out for myself. I’ve got to protect my selfish interests.” Cheerful or fearful - you make the decision. Like God or like Satan? God tests the sincerity of my love by how generous I am in life.

Rate yourself: Which word best describes your giving lifestyle? Regularly? Occasionally? Rarely?

Every week we gather our tithes and offerings. Biblically speaking, a tithe is 10% of all we have received, and an offering is anything beyond that. A tithe is considered the minimum. But giving tithes and offerings is not like, “Ok! It’s time to tip God.” If that’s your attitude, forget it. God doesn’t need your money and doesn’t want it if it is offered with that attitude. Giving is act of worship, just as much an act of worship as singing, praying, thanking, listening, everything else. It’s saying, “God, I love You so much that I want to give back to You. You saved my life and gave me everything in it. Now I want to give back to You in thanksgiving.” Everything we have came from God. We can’t out give God because God gave it all to us in the first place.

The bottom line is that there are many, many ways to express our love to God. We looked at six. Because God has made us with certain tendencies, each of us will

respond better to some things than others. Know, without a doubt, that God wants you. God uses our hands, our feet, our eyes, our ears and all parts of us because He loves us and we love Him. But first we need to establish that relationship with God.

If this message has touched your heart today, pray this prayer in your heart? "God, I realize the need for You in my life. Lord Jesus, today I realize what You did for me on the cross and that I'll never be able to repay what You've done for me. I realize that everything I have is a gift from You. Please forgive me for not trusting You in every area, in every moment of my life. Today, I want to make the commitment to trust my life to You, wholly and completely. I want to be an active part of Your church family. I want to grow spiritually. I want to use my talent to help others. I want to fulfill the purpose and mission that You put me on this earth to do. Use me to make a difference in the world. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen."