

When God's Love Seems Impossible

For a long time, I struggled to win God's **approval** through human **determination** and **achievement**. But the yoke of **religion** never permitted me the unattainable luxury of **acceptance**.

From the time I was a little girl, I wanted to **love** God, but I just didn't think I could love Him enough. Imagine my relief when I began to understand that God put the desire in me to love Him and that He would make it **possible** for me to fulfill it.

In commenting on the greatest commandment—to love God with every part of our beings (Matt. 22:37)—Matthew Henry wrote, “All obedience begins in the affections, and nothing in religion is done right, that is not done there first. ... Man is a creature cut out for love.”

It's possible to work for God and not love Him. But it is foolish to settle for demanding religious observances that are void of passion and eternal value.

Loving God fulfills our primary need for intimacy. If we don't devote ourselves to Him, we are apt to go astray.

I've had more than one married person tell me that although having a devoted spouse is a blessing, it is not a substitute for the intimacy we are designed to enjoy in God's presence alone. Most of us know this already, but either out of habit or in response to what we perceive as a desperate need, we try to fill this God-given desire for intimacy through unhealthy means that eventually will imprison us.

Why do we shy away from intimately knowing our heavenly Bridegroom? In *The Pursuit of God*, A.W. Tozer says that one major hindrance in our face-to-face experience with Jesus is

the veil that continues to cover our hearts.

This veil is comprised of what he terms the “self sins”: “self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration [and] self-love,” among others. They are hard to unseat due to the fact that they are so tightly interwoven into our nature and upheld by our culture.

Rather than a burdensome obligation, the command to love God is, in essence, the pronouncement of a liberating privilege, for Scriptural commands can only be obeyed by the Spirit of God in us. Anna Rountree says, “Only God can love God.”

How freeing that knowledge is. Henry put it this way: “If [love] be the fulfilling of the law, surely the yoke of the command is very easy. Love is the rest and satisfaction of the soul; if we walk in this good old way, we shall find rest.”

If we’ve placed other things in the space God formed within us for Himself, these will obstruct our view of Him and leave us empty and enslaved. But giving first place to our First Love and offering to Him what He desires most will bring liberty and the fulfillment of our deepest needs for this life and the one to come.

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