

## One More Time, “Do you love Me more than these?”

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

In our previous email, “*Do you love Me more than these?*” <<https://restorationministries.org/download/102.6-15-2021.pdf>>, we cited the more frequent point that’s often made about our Lord’s question to Peter – determining whether the apostle loved certain other people more than he loved Christ Himself. We also discussed several personal impediments we’ve observed over the years which cause people to fall short of the love that our Lord Jesus so richly deserves — impediments which keep them from sincerely and respectfully using the Name of Jesus in their conversations with unbelievers. In this Teaching Email we’re going to discuss “*Do you love Me more than these?*” with the focus on this being a comparative question:

### ***“Do you love Me more than these people love Me?”***

There’s a *spiritually healthy* use of comparison even as there are *unhealthy* ways of comparison. Paul used a healthy form of comparison with the Corinthians: “...*I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others*” (2Corinthians 8:8). He was doing this to motivate them to take a particular action.

Our Lord used a healthy form of comparison in the same parable which also revealed an unhealthy aspect to evaluating yourself compared to others. He tailored this parable to a specific group who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else. In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:11-14), Jesus cited the spiritually *unhealthy* comparison which the Pharisee used, “*God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector*”. (Many in Christianity today evaluate themselves this way, considering their own lives to be spiritually superior to those of other people.). Our Lord concluded this parable by commending the humility of the tax collector who could only plea with a sincere heart, “*God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*” Jesus summed up the comparison with this declaration, “*I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God.*”

***“...they took note that these men had been with Jesus”***

(Acts 4:13).

Mike: My spiritual pilgrimage was deeply transformed one day as I compared my own devotion to the Lordship of Jesus in my life with that of a certain follower of Jesus I'd previously mocked with disparaging comments like, "I bet he doesn't even stir his coffee without talking to Jesus." Sometime afterwards, when I'd been following my Lord Jesus for just a few months, this man came to visit me.

As he and I sat in the living room, he related a conversation with our Lord Jesus which he'd recently had. He was eligible for retirement and told me that during his prayer time our Lord had asked him if he really wanted to retire. He told Jesus that he would like to continue working but in a different area in the company. He also wanted to work for someone who loved Jesus as much as he did. The next day the head of the very department in which he was interested in working asked to meet with him. As he entered the department head's office, there on his desk was a Bible. They spent hours in wonderful conversation about Christ that day, and my friend stayed at that company for another 10 years.

As I sat across from him that day as he shared his account I began to cry — I yearned for the same devoted intimacy with Jesus that I saw in this man's life of childlike trust. All I can say is that the Spirit responded within me with a much deeper presence and work that day that was like my friend, and I was never the same again.

Over the years I have sought out men whose relationship with Jesus was more devoted and sacrificial than mine was, and then asked Jesus to fill me with what that person had. I had learned THE Source for everything we could ever desire in becoming more like Jesus — it's asking Jesus Himself for His transforming Spirit to deepen His character within us.

Over the years we have found that the *healthy* comparative thinking which motivates someone from within is actually a rare phenomenon in Christianity. *Unhealthy* comparison is far more the norm, such as when someone encounters a more mature and sacrificially loving follower of Jesus and is unnerved by how that person's devotion to Jesus. They think to themselves, ***“I'm glad it's you and not me.”***

This response is even more pronounced when the observer knows that the sacrificial follower of Jesus experienced severe trials and deep suffering as they served our Lord.

We realized that in our last email some of you may have missed our emphasis on the *Source* of the courage to sacrificially live and love as Jesus would if He were you. This can only happen when you turn to the Spirit of Christ through your spirit. None of the Christian books you read or sermons or teachings you listen to can ever accomplish what *only* the Spirit of our Lord Jesus in you can do. You need to ask our Lord for *His sacrificial love for others* so that His Spirit changes you from within.

Jesus impressed on His own how crucial it is that He is THE Vine (John 15:1-9). Only by staying attached to Him can we bear lasting fruit to the glory of our heavenly Father. That life-giving flow is the internal presence of the Spirit of Jesus within each of His branches. That's how we experience this reality: *“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty*” (Zechariah 4:6). The life-giving flow from the Vine is proof that we are attached to Him. And that flow is poured out in the sacrificial motivations and actions of His Spirit through our spirit in our mind, will and emotions.

***“For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of”*** (Luke 6:45b).

***“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so too faith without actions is dead”*** (James 2:26).

Here are some questions to take to heart regarding your own walk in Jesus:

- In your daily thoughts and speech, how often are you thinking or discussing how you can bless or benefit other people?
- Have you the courage to ask those who are close to you and frequently interact with you what they hear and see in you?
- Does our Lord Jesus's concern for others come out of your mouth to reveal what's in your heart?
- Do actions that bless or benefit others — the kind for which your heavenly Father would commend you — follow your words? In Philippians 2 Paul sums up the motivation and action that epitomize the Spirit's influence and control of our mind, will and emotions through our spirit:

*“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:3-5).*

Your humility of heart deepens during your faith pilgrimage to your salvation as you continue to ask our Lord Jesus to change your mind, will and emotions to conform to His. You'll find that He will often use other people in your life who exemplify the sacrificial love of Jesus in their concern for and service to others. As Paul urges, *“Follow [their] example, as [they] follow the example of Christ”* (1Corinthians 11:11). Allow these mature and sacrificial followers of Jesus to motivate you to ask our Lord for the same Spirit you see working through their spirit. Don't ever let yourself consciously or unconsciously think, “I'm glad it's you and not me” that He's working in and through.

***“Love our Lord with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself”***  
(Mark 12:33).

The Apostle John offers a succinct understanding of *why* we would want to have our Lord's humility and a life of sacrificial service to others: ***“We love Him because He first loved us”*** (1John 4:19). Sometimes we each need a reminder of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus on the cross, an act of grace which we couldn't do for ourselves. He established for us a righteousness that comes through trusting in Him, a righteousness that we now have imputed to us because of what HE accomplished. And the humility of our *living repentantly* in grateful love keeps us connected to HIS accomplishment on our behalf.

There's absolutely nothing more or nothing less that we can do to earn His love. The important testimony in our lives is, “How is our gratitude and appreciation lived out in response to what our Lord Jesus accomplished, something we couldn't do for ourselves?” It's because of *Who Jesus is* and *why He became man* that not only enables us, but also compels us to ask Him for the help we need to

become more like Him on earth. Our pilgrimage to our salvation is one of ongoing transformation from within, producing grateful service to everyone as we gladly consider them more important than ourselves.

Let your life be a legacy of **“deep appreciative regard for your Lord Jesus”** both in our heavenly Father’s view of you and in the lives of those you bless and benefit. Please prayerfully consider what your own life displays to others.

Mike & Sue