

Luke 14:26.

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Jesus said nearly the same thing about a year earlier (Matthew 10:37-38). In Matthew's account, there is an important difference. Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

This isn't an instruction to hate our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and ourselves. We are told to love others as ourselves. The Apostle John, who was present when Jesus spoke these words, later revealed that loving our brother is essential to true salvation. This is simply saying that in comparison to our love for God, our feelings toward ourselves and others ought to be far less. Many people have become co-dependent on others instead of God. This is commanding just the opposite. This is a comparative statement and is not teaching hate as a condition for being Jesus' disciple. Jesus was simply stating that we should prefer Him above any other relationship.

John 6:26.

Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

They were seeking the Lord, which was the right thing to do, but they were doing it for the wrong reason. Once again Jesus reveals that the motives behind our actions are more important than the actions themselves.

There is much more emphasis on what we do than how we do it. Yet Paul clearly stated that the motives behind our actions are more important than our actions. That's because God is a Spirit, and He deals with us on the spiritual level, not the carnal level. The way we deal with people is an indication of whether or not we are like God. Do we judge them only externally, or do we know them by the Spirit?

Hypocrisy exists when people do something pretending to please God or help others, when in reality they are only play-acting.

Hypocrisy is defined by the dictionary as "the practice of professing beliefs, feelings, or virtues that one does not hold or possess.

Hypocrisy is often described as doing something even though we don't want to or feel like doing it. It is true that God demands that our motives and reasons for doing things be right, but this does not mean that we always want to do something or delight in doing it. To do what God wants us to do, or to do unto others what we would want them to do unto us, is not hypocrisy, even if we don't feel like doing it. It is hypocrisy only when our motives for doing it are wrong and we're not genuinely seeking the welfare and benefit of others. Remember, Jesus didn't feel like going to the cross, but He went anyway to seek the welfare and benefit of the world.

Vine's Expository Dictionary describes AGAPE love as the "love [that] can be known only from the actions it prompts.... This is not the love of complacency, or affection, that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects, Christian love, whether exercised toward the

brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations.... Love seeks the welfare of all, and works no ill to any; love seeks opportunity to do good to all men".

It would be wrong to say that people can't love their spouses because their feelings are not in it and that they would be hypocrites to try. Remember that Jesus did not "feel" like dying, and He was no hypocrite. AGAPE love is the only kind of the three kinds of love that can be commanded, for it is not an emotion but rather the "exercise of the Divine will [of God] in deliberate choice". That is why the Apostle John says, "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments [ways, or principles]".

Some scriptural examples of AGAPE love being commanded and carried out by God's grace and deliberate choice are "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you"; "Love thy neighbour as thyself"; "If ye love me, keep my commandments"; "Let love be without hypocrisy"; "By love serve one another"; "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness"; "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins"; and "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth".

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In society today there really seems to be a lot of controversy in relationship to what I am about to say. 1 Corinthians 7:40 says:

But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

This is one of the most radical statements on marriage in the Bible: Marriage was not designed to make us happy. Paul said we would be happier if we remain single.

Many people look to marriage to provide things for them that God never intended marriage to do. Therefore, it is just a matter of time until these false expectations produce disappointment and frustration, which often get directed at the mate. They think, "My lack of joy and peace is all your fault. If you were the spouse you were supposed to be, I'd be happy."

However, marriage wasn't intended to make us happy or fulfilled or to take away loneliness. All these needs should be met through our relationship with the Lord.

Only when people find their happiness and peace and fulfillment in the Lord will they be able to really enjoy their marriages. A lack of understanding this is the cause of many marital problems. People's mates can never be to them what God is meant to be.

Getting back to John 6:26 on commitment.

Actions can be negated by motives. Motives of the heart are more important than actions. This is why many Christians have paid their tithes yet haven't seen the financial blessing that God's Word promises come back to them. There is more to giving than just the action; the motive is very important.

Probably the most dominant motive for giving in the church today is that of debt or obligation. Ministers often use Malachi 3:8-10 to tell their congregations that they are robbing God if they don't tithe. They go on to say that God will curse them for not tithing. That motivates the people to give, but for the wrong reason, and then their giving profits them nothing.

In the New Testament, Paul made it very clear that "every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver". Giving because it's a debt, or because we'll be cursed if we don't give, is definitely not consistent with the motivation Paul gave. There is a difference between New Testament giving and giving under the Law, and that difference is the motive.

Tithing was in effect before the Law of Moses, so tithing is a biblical principle that still applies to us New Testament believers who are not under the Law. The curse placed on those who did not tithe was a part of the Old Testament Law, and it doesn't apply to us today. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree". I am not cursed if I don't tithe. I'm stupid if I don't, but I'm not cursed.

Those who want to cling to the curse of Malachi 3:9 need to read Malachi 3:8 more carefully. It says people have not only robbed God in tithes but also in offerings. Some people have estimated that all the tithes and offerings prescribed in the O.T. amounted to as much as 33 percent. So, to honestly use these scriptures in Malachi to motivate people to give, the preacher has to preach that any gift below 33 percent of one's income is just the payment of a debt, and the people are cursed if they don't give at least that much. I don't know anyone who believes that, yet that's what Malachi 3:8-10 says.

Giving, including tithing, should first and foremost be an act of worship and thanksgiving, an acknowledgement that it is God who gives us power to get wealth. It also is an act of faith. If there was no God, and if His promises were not true, it would be foolish to give our money away. Our resources would diminish, not increase. However, because there is a God who honors faith, we can actually increase by giving.

It takes humility and faith to give. It is also smart. However, if you don't tithe and give, God still loves you stupid. You won't have a crop to harvest if you eat all your seed, but God will still love you.

When people apply this N.T. attitude to their giving, then it becomes an acceptable offering to the Lord and releases upon the cheerful giver all the blessings that God has promised in His Word. But those who give with the wrong motive will not be profited anything.

If we desire the Lord just because of what He can do for us, then we are no better than these people were. We should certainly take advantage of all the good things the Lord provides, but we must always love Him for who He is and not just what He provides.

Just as in John 2:23-25, Jesus knew the people's hearts, and therefore He did not commit Himself to this crowd. Just the day before, these same people had tried to take Him by force and make Him their king, but He withdrew and spent the night in prayer. Jesus was never moved by flattery, and He said that those who were could not operate in God's kind of faith.

This crowd looked like they were seeking Jesus, but they were actually trying to use Jesus to seek their own welfare. It is true that there are many personal benefits to be reaped through serving the Lord, but the benefits are never to become our object. In all things, Christ must have the preeminence.

Jesus exposed the true intent of these people's hearts by preaching a strong message of commitment. Those who were self-centered were offended and left, while those who were willing to lay down their lives so that they could experience God's abundant life remained. Commitment to God Himself (not what He can produce) is what always separates the true worshipers of God from the false.

These people had no true commitment to God but wanted Jesus as their king for their own selfish reasons. They had mistakenly interpreted the miracle that Jesus performed in feeding the 5,000 to mean that Jesus would supply all their lusts. On the surface, it may have looked like they were seeking Jesus, but they were actually seeking their own interests. Jesus didn't come to do His own will or our wills, but the will of the Father.

In these verses, we see Jesus did something that very few ministers of the Gospel will do today. He preached a hard message of commitment, knowing that many of these people would follow Him no more. Many times, we see Christians today compromise the message in an effort to win more people. Regardless of how well ministers can argue this point and justify their actions, this is not the way that Jesus ministered. Jesus was always more interested in quality than quantity. We would do well to follow His example.