

**Title: How Can We Love God Enough?**

Theme: Extreme Love

Focal Scripture: Mark 12:30

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Resource: Dr. Mark Jackson

It's amazing to think that God loves us in spite of our weaknesses and failures. Yet the Bible also says we are called to love God. In fact, according to Jesus, the greatest commandment in Scripture is to love God.

***Mark 12:30***

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*

This may seem an unreasonable calling.

- How can we adequately love God Almighty?
- How can we possibly please him with our love?

\* The February 19, 1930 issue of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette ran a story from Vienna, Austria of a woman named Corin Ward. Corin was a struggling actress who received a phone call from an attorney, telling her she had been mentioned in the will of a deceased client.

Meeting at the agreed upon time at the attorney's office, Corin was told that the will belonged to a man who wished to be known only as "Dr. Meszaros." Corin told the attorney she did not know any doctor by that name, and wondered if there had been some sort of mistake. The lawyer was not surprised that Corin didn't recognize the name. But there was no doubting that Dr. Meszaros knew Corin.

According to the good doctor's attorney, Meszaros lived in the same city as Corin, and had fallen head over heels in love with her. Meszaros, however, struggled with debilitating fears, and never worked up the courage to speak to the woman he admired from afar. But he also was unable to ever move past the

woman who had captured his heart. He died alone. Meszaros left Corin every penny he had saved over the course of his life—all \$50,000.

Meszaros loved Corin, but he never expressed his love in either words or actions. And, as a result, the fullness of that love was never realized.

**I. John suggests that we can do this because our love is initiated by God's love for us.**

***1 John 4:19***

*We love because he first loved us.*

***1 John 4:10***

*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

- A. God loved us so much that he sent his only Son to die on the cross for our sins.
- B. The extreme extent of God's love is proven by the fact that he initiated the process by which his wrath and our guilt could be justly removed at the cross.
- C. Therefore, we can't truly speak of the love of God without also speaking of Jesus' atoning death on the cross.

***Romans 5:8***

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

And there's more.

**II. John says not only that God's love motivates us to love, but that our love is actually God's love being made complete within us.**

### ***1 John 4:12***

*No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

Think of that:

- A. God puts the same divine love in our hearts that he has for us, and his love is fully expressed through us.

\* Max Lucado tells the story of being dropped by his insurance company because he had one too many speeding tickets and a minor fender bender that wasn't his fault. One day he received a letter in the mail, informing him to seek coverage elsewhere. As he reflected on how he wasn't good enough for his insurance company, the spiritual tie-in was too obvious. "Many people fear receiving such a letter [from God]," Lucado writes. "Some worry they already have."

Lucado then imagines this correspondence, straight from the Pearly Gates Underwriting Division:

Dear Mrs. Smith,

I'm writing in response to this morning's request for forgiveness. I'm sorry to inform you that you have reached your quota of *sins*. Our records show that, since employing our services, you have erred seven times in the area of greed, and your prayer life is substandard when compared to others of like age and circumstance.

Further review reveals that your understanding of doctrine is in the lower 20 percentile and you have excessive tendencies to gossip. Because of your sins you are a high-risk candidate for heaven. You understand that grace has its limits. Jesus sends his regrets and kindest regards and hopes that you will find some other form of coverage.

Are you thankful that God loves us even if we don't measure up? Do you believe that he loves us as much as his dear son, Jesus? What is your plan for sharing that love with others?

God must get the credit for any good thing that we do.

- B. Therefore, any praise or credit for the love that we express must rightfully be given to God, because he put his own supernatural love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who lives within us.
- C. The Bible says that we please God by showing love to the people God created.
  - a. If you have a child and I mistreat that child, then I disrespect you as the child's parent.
  - b. I show my love for you by also loving and respecting your child.
  - c. The same is true with loving God.
  - d. We love God by loving his people.

**Matthew 25:37-40**

*[37] "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? [38] When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? [39] When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'*

*[40] "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'*

\* How do we show our love for God?

- By meeting their needs and serving them.

**1 John 3:16-18**

*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. [17] If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? [18] Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

- True love involves more than words; it involves action and sacrifice.

\* Loving God is more than singing a praise chorus at church or giving a generous offering during worship (even though these actions demonstrate our love for God).

- Genuine love for God moves us to go out and serve people in need.

\* Even if you sing on the praise team and contribute every time the offering plate is passed but do nothing personally to help people in your community, then you don't express the full extent of God's love.

- Jesus demonstrated this kind of love when he willingly washed the feet of his disciples, including (we assume) the feet of Judas Iscariot, who would betray him.
  - When God puts his love in our hearts, we can love even our enemies.
  - That's not something natural.
  - It can flow only from the supernatural working of God's Spirit in our life.

\* In the 2008 film Taken, Liam Neeson plays Bryan Mills, a former CIA operative who determines to track down his teenage daughter after she's been kidnapped by human traffickers while on a trip with a girlfriend in France. In one [gripping scene](#), Neeson talks to his daughter's abductor after he's retrieved a cell phone left behind at the crime scene. Neeson states his clear intent to seek and save his daughter.

He tells one of the abductors:

I don't know who you are. I don't know what you want .... I can tell you I don't have money; but, what I do have are a very particular set of skills, skills that I've acquired over a very long career, skills that make me a nightmare for people like you. If you let my daughter go now, that will be the end of it. I will

not look for you. I will not pursue you. But if you don't, I will look for you, I *will* find you and I *will* kill you.

The abductor coolly replies: "Good luck."

There ends the conversation and the start of Neeson's unrelenting pursuit.

Earlier in the film as the storyline is set up, we become familiar with Neeson's earlier career with the CIA, and his choice to change his career path in order to re-establish a relationship with his daughter. It's clear that Neeson is willing to pay any cost to gain back some of the time and trust he lost with his only daughter. As far as he's concerned, all of his training, skills, and time put in on the job are now focused on one thing: finding his daughter and bringing her home.

The balance of the movie is action-packed as Neeson urgently (he only has 96 hours to accomplish his task) and skillfully weaves his way through language barriers, governmental red tape, and crime lords' elaborate hierarchies to find his daughter. After dispatching numerous thugs and villains, Neeson finally finds his daughter on a yacht, sold as a prostitute for a wealthy Arab businessman. She collapses into her father's arms as she says, "Daddy, you came for me!" Bloody, beaten, but ultimately triumphant, Neeson holds his daughter as he quietly says, "I told you I would."

Jesus came into this world to redeem us before God. He ultimately stands before us bloody, beaten, but triumphant. When our faces and lives show surprise at what he did, I can hear his response; "I told you I would."

That's the kind of love God has for us. Do you have that kind of love for others?

**Conclusion:** Why not open your life to God's Spirit and let him fill you afresh with his love?

Corrie ten Boom once explained it this way: We can't remove the darkness from a room by chasing it out; we just open the curtains and let the sunlight in. We can't purge the hate

and resentment from our hearts, but we can allow God's love to fill us, and that love will flush out anything contrary to God's nature. So let his love fill you today!

If you want this to happen in your life this morning, I ask you to stand, put your hands together in front of you with the palms up. Make your hands into a scoop into which God's love can be poured. As I pray if you truly want the Father to fill you with his love, begin to lift those hands up to heaven and ask him to fill your hands, and your hearts with his love.