



“Do You Love Me?”

Jn 21:15-17

I want to play golf. I live in a state filled with beautiful golf courses. Golf is good exercise. Many of my friends play golf. I want to play golf!

Well - I *say* I want to play golf – but I don't mean it. I think I mean it; I say I mean it; but, I don't. I know this because I won't pay the price required to play golf.

First, I would need golf lessons; I won't take golf lessons. Then, I would need to go to the driving range; I won't do that either. I would need to buy or rent clubs; I absolutely won't spend money on golf! Although I say, “I want to play golf,” it is just a vague dream. It isn't a real goal.

Many of us say we want to be like Christ. But it is a vague dream, not a goal. Recently I have been asking, “Why is Christ-likeness no more than a dream for so many Christians?” One reason Christ-likeness is not our primary goal is that we have never truly fallen in love with Jesus.

I will never pay the price to learn golf because I have not fallen in love with the game of golf. And we will never pay the price to become Christ-like disciples until we fall in love with Jesus. We do not become Christ-like by reading a book, *Christian Discipleship in Three Easy Steps*. We do not become Christ-like by wearing a WWJD wristband. We become Christ-like when we fall so deeply in love with Jesus that it transforms every area of our life.

Three times, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “*Do you love me?*” I used to think this was merely a rhetorical question to get to the homework assignment, “Feed my sheep!” But this question the core of the conversation, “Peter, do you love me?” God is looking for people who are in love with Him.

David prayed, “*As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God*” (Ps 42:1). Like a running deer desperate for water, David thirsted for a deeper relationship with God. He loved God!

To those who measure the Christian life by a list of do's and don'ts, this seems far too simple. Many of us never think of godliness in terms of delight and enjoyment; we think only in terms of

duty. But David shows us that a godly life is a matter of delight. Repeatedly, he testifies to the joy of an intimate relationship with God.

Jesus told a story about a merchant who found a valuable pearl (Matt 13). The merchant sold everything he owned to buy that pearl. Imagine saying, "Poor man! I am sorry you have to sell these trinkets. What a sacrifice!" He would laugh, "Sacrifice? This junk is *nothing* compared to the pearl I am buying." What has happened? He has fallen in love with something of great value.

Perhaps you read this and realize, "I'm a Christian, but I can't say that I am deeply in love with Jesus. Our relationship has become routine." Let me encourage you: God *wants* to give you a love for Himself. He wants to build a deep relationship with you.

One of the keys to growing in our love with Jesus is to spend time with Him. When a husband and wife fail to nurture their relationship, they drift apart. It is as we spend time with God that our love deepens.

If you want to love God more deeply, spend time with Him. Spend time in His Word. Read the Psalms and meditate on His attributes. Read the Gospels and see the beauty of God revealed in the life of Jesus.

If you want to love God more deeply, ask God for an ever-deepening love for Him. Jesus said that God is a loving Father who delights to give good gifts to His children.

George Croly wrote this prayer, "Teach me to love you as your angels love; one holy passion filling all my frame." That's what it means to be in love with God. Do you love God?