

# THE COUNSELOR

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**"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"**



## **Your Relentless Devotion** to Christ Against All Odds

Jesus' Words to Peter that day on the beach were powerful! (John 21:15-19) Imagine how Peter must have felt, reflecting on his relationship and experience with Jesus. He gave up everything to follow Jesus, he believed Jesus was the Messiah, and personally experienced Christ's love. Yet Peter denied Him three times. And then Christ was crucified. Picture this grief-stricken, despondent man, who used to be one of Christ's inner circle, living with the regret of denying Him. He would not make that mistake again. Jesus asked



Peter, "Do you love me more than these?" Jesus' compelling words struck Peter's heart. It troubled him deeply to be asked that question three times. He loved Jesus greatly. The

Lord reinstated, restored, and commissioned Peter that day. He would go on to prove his love for Christ like never before!

Jesus emptied Himself for you and me. He demonstrated His love for us when He left His Heavenly Throne and sacrificed His life here on earth to save us from our sins and damnation. He offers us eternal life through His blood atonement. His love for us is most important; our love for Him is secondary but critical in

following Him. "We love Him because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

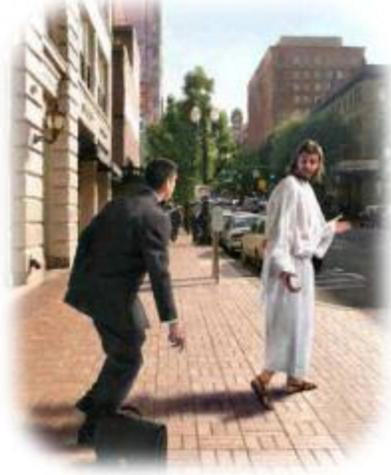
What about you and me? Are we willing to follow Jesus Christ no matter what? What does it really mean to love Christ and how is it supposed to show in our lives? What are those things (the "these") Jesus is talking about, in our lives? What results from loving Him with reckless abandon? The answers to these questions are paramount to our entire existence, purpose, and effectiveness as Christians. Jesus already demonstrated His love for us on the cross. His love for us compels us to love Him. (2 Cor 5:14) Our love for Christ should be the driving force in everything we do. Peter got it that day on the beach with Jesus, and never turned back.

### **The "These"**

"What did Jesus mean by the "these"? Was He referring to Peter's friends, family, fishing career, or ambitions? What are the things (the "these") that prevent you from loving Christ above everything else in your life? Our relationship with Christ and Christian walk should be directly related to our love for Him. How deep is your love for Christ? Do you love Him with reckless abandon? What competes with your love for Him? Are you willing to give up anything and everything for Him?

Do you love Jesus Christ more than:

your wife?  
 your children?  
 your parents?  
 your friends?  
 your ministry?  
 your money?  
 your possessions?  
 your work?  
 your business?  
 your position?  
 your cause?  
 your calling?  
 your pastor, teacher,  
 mentor, prophets?  
 your church?  
 your school?  
 your political party?  
 your hobbies?  
 your self?  
 your life?



We should all take a serious look at our Christian walk and evaluate our love for Christ. Nothing should interfere with our love for Him. There are so many distractions in this life. It is very difficult sometimes to remain steadfast in our love for Christ with all the noise, pressures, demands and responsibilities that surround us. You can lose your focus on Him amidst the concerns of your busy life. You can lose your intensity for God which makes you vulnerable to the world's influence and attacks from Satan. Any number of things (these's) can take your energy, time, attention and love away from Christ, leaving you drained and weak, and setting you up for all kinds of problems. We are designed and commanded to love God more than anything with everything we have, for our own good. "You shall **love the LORD** your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." (Deut. 6:5) "Therefore know that **the LORD** your God, He is God, **the** faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who **love** Him and keep His commandments;" (Deut. 7:9) "And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to **love the LORD** your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil." (Deut. 11:13-14) Anything that takes the place of our love for Christ is an idol and will bring us down and away from Him. We also miss out on Jesus' full power and blessings in our lives when we don't love Him above everything else.

## Loving Him

What does it really mean to love Jesus? It goes far beyond simple human emotional responses. Our love for  
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Christ should be a strong act of the will and profound spiritual connection to our Creator Who loves us! It involves wanting to be with Him night and day and including Him in every aspect of your life. You just can't get enough of Him, there is always more. You think about Him and talk to Him constantly. Your whole world revolves around Him. You know deep down in your heart that He is God the Creator and Savior of your life and soul Who came in the flesh, walked the earth and died for you. You cannot exist without Him. You will do anything for Him. You would die for Him! You don't want to displease or disappoint Him. You obey Him and His commands. There is nothing more important in your life than Him. You desire that deep connection with Him through prayer, reading the Word, and worship. You long to be with Him now and in Heaven. You are moved to tears when you realize the magnitude of what He did for you. He forgave you. You can never repay the debt He paid for you, eternal salvation, freedom from sin and damnation. He gave you everlasting life. He cares about you more than anyone in the whole world He created! You want to show Him how much you love Him. You cannot wait to spend quiet time with Him and experience His Holy presence. You want to build upon your strong relationship with Him every day. You absolutely trust Jesus and believe He can do all things and know that He holds all things together.



Jesus said "**If you love me you will keep my commandments.**" (John 14:15) Our love for Christ should compel us to **obey Him**. We abide in Him and He abides inside us. Jesus does not abide in us unless we abide in Him, which means we obey His commandments because we love Him. (1

John 3:24) We are to **love one another too**. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (John 13:34). " By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35) Jesus talked about this many times. (John 15:12; 15:17). John discussed this in his epistles too. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (1 John 4:7) "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:7) "No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us." (1 John 4:12) If we love Jesus we will also **serve Him**. "And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love **the LORD** your God and **serve** Him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Deut. 11:13)

## Results

A life based on loving Christ above anything is amazing! You will never forget such a person when you meet them. Their actions are remarkable no matter how rich, famous poor, or unknown they are in this world. Their Christ like behavior transcends morality and justice because they love and reflect the One Who is the Standard, Jesus Christ. They approach life, having faith in the Living God, confident, courageous, empowered by Him, and are not overtaken by the worries and fears of this life. They recover from calamities and setbacks. They are passionate about doing the things of God. They are zealous for the Lord and radiate His love in all they do. They speak His truth in love. Everything they do springs forth from their love for Him. No one could ever behave like this unless they loved and followed Jesus with a reckless abandon. You see Christ in them! And He gets the glory! They obey Christ because they love Him. Look at Peter. He was changed forever after that day on the beach with Christ. He poured himself out in everything he did for the Lord afterwards. He became the foundation for building Christ's church. He preached fearlessly the Gospel bringing three thousand souls to Christ at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41). He endured severe persecutions for Christ. He mentored Mark and wrote two powerful epistles encouraging Christians to persevere in the face of all trials. He warned us about the Last Days. Peter is an example of a life that loved Jesus "more than these," a life recklessly abandoned to Christ! Peter was human like you and me.

Absolute love for Christ produces "Peters" all the time. The results are incredible! The Lord uses people mightily who love Him. He has done that since the beginning. He sets you apart when your love for Him produces obedience to His commands. You become relentlessly devoted to Christ against all odds. The devil, world system, and your sinful nature fight against you. You continually face opposition, trials, temptations, problems, and tests in this life, but you overcome. God uses you to witness His Love to a dying world, desperate for solutions, His love, and Good News! You understand what it means to die without Christ! You know that the full final wrath of God is coming to judge mankind (Rom. 1:18), and you feel compelled to tell people about the love of Christ. He makes you prevail against adversities. Peter did. You will. The more we love the Lord the stronger our faith. Faith in Christ and love for Him go together. A person connected to Christ (abiding in Him) produces much fruit (John 15:5). The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. (Gal. 5:6)

The more we love the Lord the greater His work in us will be. He changes us into His image more and our Christ likeness draws people to Him. God's love and power manifests in us as He gives us what we need to accomplish His will, for us and through us here on earth. Abiding in Christ bears fruit, much fruit, fruit that lasts!

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Additional results of loving Christ:

- More faith which produces more works
- A Spirit filled life
- You experience the fruit of the Spirit
- Experience God more deeply
- More easily molded and shaped by Him
- More understanding of His Word
- God doing the miraculous through you
- God's approval matters more than anyone else
- He becomes greater in you and your self (selfishness) becomes less
- Greater ability to endure suffering and hardships
- More power to resist sinning
- More power to resist the devil and the world
- More boldness to stand up for Christ
- You experience God's provision like never before
- You face more challenges and persecution
- More joy, more gratitude
- Experience His abundant life
- Greater witness leading others to Him
- More energy to do His work
- A healthier life, mentally, emotionally and spiritually
- You become more holy as He is Holy

The greatest result of loving and obeying Christ is forgiving others. We cannot say we love God if we don't forgive. This is the hardest thing to do. It is unnatural. Stephen, the martyr, forgave his murderers just like Christ did when He was crucified on Calvary. We forgive because we love Him and He forgave us first! Forgiveness unlocks the work of God in a life. We are to forgive those who hate, despise, and persecute us. We are to forgive our enemies! (Matt. 5:44) This is a good measure of your love for God. Do you forgive those who hurt you? Do you forgive your enemies? Trust God and ask Him to help you forgive. Love Him more deeply, obey Him, and He will give you the power to forgive.

## Live It

Show the Lord that you love Him "more than these." Pursue Him with everything you have. Love Him with ALL your heart, mind, soul, and strength! Pour your life into Christ. Spend more time with Him in prayer and uninterrupted quiet time. Hunger and thirst for His Word. Let your love for Christ compel you to obey Him. Live out your love for Christ in all you do. Let your light shine and be ready to give the reason for the joy and hope you have when someone inquires. Watch God move mountains for you as your faith and love in Him grows! There is no limit to what God can do through you for His purposes. The cost of loving Him is great in this life but the rewards are infinitely greater when we meet Him in the next. Expect great opposition when you live your love for Christ in this world. The more Christ like you are

the more the enemy and this world will hate you. You will stand apart from those who don't really love Christ. Remember the disciple Peter, and how his life was incredibly transformed when he decided to live out his remaining days for Christ after that day on the beach with the Messiah. Live your love for Christ like Peter did. Let Christ continue His church and the saving of souls through you today by your actions towards others in this dying world. Shortly after Jesus asked Peter the third time "Do you love me." and Peter answered, "You know that I love You." Jesus said, "Follow me." (John 21:19) The Lord speaks to you and me today the same way He did to Peter then, and if we truly love Him we will do so "more than these" and follow Him with reckless abandon! Jesus paid the ultimate price for us, one that you and I could never reciprocate. We must choose to love Him and do whatever He wants us to do for Him. Anything. We must do so without reservation, without turning back if we are to be useful in His Hands. Give up everything that blocks you from loving Him today. How serious are you about loving Jesus? Prove your love for Christ. Live it!

## F.Y.I.

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