

Serving two masters is hard work – you please one and the other may be offended. It all comes to a crisis when you see one master as God and the other is something you really like. Jesus warned us twice about such a condition.

No one can be slave to two masters; for he will either hate the first and love the second, or scorn the second and be loyal to the first. You can't be a slave to both God and money. Matthew 6:24 & Luke 16:13 (CJB)

In ancient times the problem most often came about when a slave was inherited by two sons when the father died. Should the slave obey one son over the other? The slave is between a rock and a hard spot, because each son owns the slave equally and being a slave he is obliged to serve each son equally.

However, if the sons disagree then who is to be honored and followed? Picture the situation the slave is in. If he follows one son then the other becomes enraged and vice versa.

“Love & Hate” have to be understood in the context of their culture, not in our Western culture. These words in this context both refer to degrees of attachment, not as an emotion as we use the words. Love means attachment and Hate means detachment or alienation.

Can the slave be attached to both if they disagree with each other?

Now our situation becomes similar to the slave if we say we are following Jesus. If we are attached to anything or anyone more than we are attached to Jesus and His instructions for our lives, then we are in essence detaching ourselves from Him. He is no longer NUMBER ONE, which is Idolatry (subject for a later Bite Size Bible Study).

It all boils down to priorities. Who is most important? Who follows behind? When ideologies clash whom do we follow and obey? God our creator or something or someone He has created?

Israel has struggled with this problem throughout its history, as have many others. God knows that this is a big pit that is so easy to fall into, which is why He continually tells us to be careful and not fall into it.

It doesn't even have to appear as a god because anything or anyone that we love (become attached to) in our lives that is of greater or more

importance is our Master. Then God becomes second in importance and we become detached, alienated from Him. He doesn't detach from us – we detach from Him.

So, knowing that it is so easy to slip into putting God into a subordinate level in our lives, how do we keep from making that mistake?

Moses told the Israelites: ... *know today, and establish it in your heart (mind), that Adonai is God in heaven above and on earth below — **there is no other.** Therefore, you are to keep his laws and mitzvot (instructions) which I am giving you today, so that it will go well with you and with your children after you, and so that you will prolong your days in the land Adonai your God is giving you forever.*” Deuteronomy 4:39-40 (CJB)

Paul gave the people of Colossae another part of the answer: *Therefore, put to death the earthly parts of your nature — sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed (which is a form of idolatry);* Colossians 3:5 (CJB)

Again in his letter to the Ephesians: *Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, **but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people,*** Ephesians 6:5-7 (NIV)

It seems to come down to following the instructions God has given us and doing it from wanting to live our lives that way rather than trying to follow the letter of the instruction and hating it or feeling deprived of joy.

To know and have internalized God's instructions we must be familiar with the Bible (all of it), which is where He gives us most of his instructions for living. Living our lives by God's instructions is honoring Him and setting an example for others. If God is first in our priorities then everything else becomes less important; not that it is not important – **just not as important.**

God First, everything else after

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