

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

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Mark 12:28-31

28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" 29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 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.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

NIV

There are so many commandments of God in the Bible Jesus taught us in this story that the greatest of them all is to love God. Love for God is vital because love is all about relationship. And you can't obey the one you don't have relationship with. Full and willing obedience is only possible in a loving relationship. That is what God is offering us through Jesus Christ: a loving relationship.

In the Old Testament, the Jews lived under the law. One of the laws God gave them is to love the LORD their God. They didn't take it serious. When Jesus came, he emphasized love for God and for our fellow men. When there is love, obedience is inevitable and stress free.

When there is love, obedience is not done out of a cold sense of duty, but out of a willing and loving heart. Jesus made us to understand that when there is love in the heart for God, the commandment of God is not too burdensome.

1 John 5:3

3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

NIV

God wants us to love him with our entire being. He wants you to love him:

- 1.** With all your heart (spirit),
- 2.** With all your soul (mind, motions and will),
- 3.** With all your mind (intellect),
- 4.** With all your strength (entire personality physical, education, talent, gift, skill and financial strength).

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, you have love living in you, because everyone born of God is born of love, for God is love.

1 John 4:7-8

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

NIV

Because Love is in your spirit, it is possible for you to love God. God demands love from the whole of your heart. He wants total love. He demands that your emotions be involved. You can't love without emotions he wants you to be affectionate towards him. Emotion is the ability to express what is in your spirit and mind. He wants you to express your love towards him.

He wants your will involved. Your will is your ability to make decisions. He wants your decision to follow, obey and serve him to be motivated by love. Love him enough to decide willingly to serve and obey him. God does not force people. It is always "*whosoever believes shall not perish but have everlasting life.*" (Jn. 3:16). Let love control your will. Love God with your will.

God wants you to love him with your mind, which is the center of your thoughts, reasoning, imagination and memory bank. He wants you to think often about him and his love for you. He wants you to reason in line with his revealed will in the word of God. He wants you to see as it were, with the eyes of God. He wants you to see every man's situation, circumstance, problem, habit and character from his own angle, hence, love with the whole of your mind.

He wants you to use your imagination rightly to please and glorify him. If you love God with your imagination, you will imagine or picture things that will glorify him. God also wants you to love him with your memory by storing up-building and holy things in your mind. He wants you to dwell your mind on the positive past and not on the negative past. If you will love God with your mind (thoughts, reasoning, imagination and memory), you will please him and radiate his life and glory.

God wants you also to love him with all your strength. Your strength includes: your physical strength, your education, your talent, your spiritual gifts, your skills and financial strength. Your strength is everything that makes you who you are. It is your entire personality. God wants you to love him without reservation. He wants your energy involved. He wants your education and training involved. Your job or business should not be a barrier. If you understand this, your job, business or education cannot stand between you and God. God will be always number one in your life before your job, business or education. God wants you to use whatever he has gifted you with to serve him. To refuse to do so is only a proof of lack of love for God. Remember, love is practical; hence, he is giving us practical ways of loving him. Your education, skill and talents should be used to the glory of God in service. Prove your love for God now.

Your finance also should be used to love and serve God. You cannot love without giving.

John 3:16

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

NIV

Your financial strength should be used in loving God. God lovers are tithers. Non-tithers don't love God. Non-givers are non-lovers because lovers are givers. Invest your money into the kingdom of God. Tithe regularly and willingly. Donate towards church and ministry projects that will impact lives. Give to and support men of God. Give to the needy, especially those of the household of faith. Prove your love for God

Mark 12:30

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.'

NIV

WHY LOVE IS THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

1. God is our Creator – we all come from him.

Gen 1:26-28

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

NIV

As our Creator and the Source of our lives, we should love him and have a good relationship with him. Not to love God who is your Creator and Source is to be confrontational. We owe our Creator our love for He gives us life.

2. We can't obey the one we don't love.

John 14:15

15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

NIV

John 14:21-24

21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." 22 Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" 23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

NIV

Love is the greatest commandment because you can't obey willingly one you don't love. Obedience is the proof of love. When love is in the heart, obedience is possible and

enjoyable. Without love in the heart, obedience is a big struggle and burden. Love God and you will be able to willingly and promptly obey him at all times.

3. If we please him, he will bless us.

Deut 28:1-2

28:1 If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. 2 All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:
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Read vs 3-14 for the full list of blessings pronounced by God on the obedient.

Prov 16:7

7 When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.

NIV

Love is the greatest commandment, because, it takes love to obey God, and it takes obedience to please God, and when we please him, he blesses us. To keep the blessing flowing, we must please him continuously.

To please God we must keep obeying him. To obey him we must love him.

3. He created us for his pleasure- to fellowship with us and that we will bring Him joy by the way we interact with Him and with one another.

Rev 4:11

11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

NIV

If we were created to give God pleasure, common sense demands that we love Him. Our creation is for fellowship with the Almighty. And you can't fellowship with one you don't love. His love for us is not in doubt for he showed it by creating us and sustaining us, and sacrificing his only begotten Son Jesus Christ. Our duty now is to love him to enable the purpose of creation-fellowship – be actualized. Our lives must be so lived that all we do will bring him joy and glory. It therefore means that we were created to live for His glory and praise and not for our selfish interests. Be mindful of this, and let the love of God in your heart be so strong that you can bring Him pleasure by all that you say and do.

4. He provides and Cares for us.

James 1:17

17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

NIV

The final reason why love for God is the greatest commandment is that he is the one that provides and cares for us. It will be foolish of anybody to hate or disrespect the one that provides and cares for him. To bite finger that feeds you, is to cut off provision. Love for God enhances the grace for provision and care; it keeps the windows of heaven open.

In conclusion, we are to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and strength, because God created us and he is our source. Without love we cannot obey him willingly and promptly. If we don't obey him, we can't please him, and when we please him, he blesses us. As we are blessed, our fellowship with him is strengthened. As our love for him grows, his provision and care increases.

PRACTICAL WAYS OF SHOWING LOVE

1. Start everyday with God by communing with him in worship, prayer and study of the scriptures.
2. Think often on his love- Be fond of him.
3. Mediate on his word daily- (Josh 1:8).
4. Put God first in all that you do. Seek for his glory and not for yours- Matt 6:33; 1 Cor 10:31; Col. 3:17.
5. Obey any and every command of God willingly and promptly- Jn 14:15-24
6. Give regularly to him your tithes, offerings; kingdom building investments give to his servants and his children in need.
7. Witness for him- Acts 1: 8; Matt 28:18 –20
8. Be regular and punctual to service- Heb 10:25; Ps 122: 1.
9. Be excited about the things of the Lord.
10. Use your gifts, talents, skills and education to serve God in one department or the other in your local assembly.
11. Do only what you know will make him happy.
12. Say only what will make him happy.
13. Practice thanksgiving, praise and worship- 1 Thess 5:18; Ps 22:3.
14. Trust in the Lord. Have faith in God- Mk 11:22; Ps 125:1; Heb 11:6.
15. Always share the testimony of what God is doing in your life.

CONCLUSION

Rom 12:1-2

12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.

NIV

Reciprocate God's love and mercy by loving God practically. Change your mental view and attitude by receiving this teaching into your heart. In practical ways, daily prove your love for God. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Give your life to Jesus Christ now, if you have not received him into your life. Pray this prayer out loud with all your heart: Jesus Christ, I call upon you now to save me from my sinful life, and give me your nature and Spirit to enable me live for you. I renounce my sinful past and ways. I surrender my life to you. I renounce the devil and all covenant with him. Jesus. You are now my Saviour and Lord. I am now a child of God. Thank you for saving me.

Go ahead and love God as instructed in his article. Write me and let me know you have made this decision and I will send you more material to help you grow in Christ. God bless and keep you in his love forever in Jesus name. Amen.