

Your mind is your perception, thinking, outlook and memory, and with it you believe, trust and praise God. To love God is to have 'the mind of Christ' (1 Corinthians 2:16) who is the loving Son of the Father (John 14:31).

And **your strength** is your body, actions, work and service. Your labour is a labour of love 'as to the Lord.' (Ephesians 6:7).

We also love God in the following ways:

By delighting in Him

We are created to delight and desire. To love God is to make him the delight of your heart and the focus of your desire.

**Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.** Psalm 37:4

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Philippians 4:4

By keeping His commandments

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me." John 14:21

To the one who genuinely loves God His commandments are not onerous but are actually a delight.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. 1 John 5:3

...your commandments are my delight. Psalm 119:143

A radical change of attitude towards God's commandments is a sign of our conversion and new birth in the Holy Spirit.

By loving his people

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs...Tend my sheep..." John 21:15-17

The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, and those who love him do the same.

What a blessed commandment this is, and how wonderful that it can be fulfilled in us!

Rod James
March 2014

Permission is given to copy in this form. Quotations are from the English Standard Version.

Five Commandments to Love

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Here are five commandments we find in the New Testament. These five commandments to love interrelate and instruct one another, and the believer will delight to meditate upon them and obey them.

1. **Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.** Mark 12:29-30
2. **You shall love your neighbour as yourself.** Mark 12:31
3. **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.** John 13:34
4. **But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.** Luke 6:27-28
5. **Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.** 1 John 3:18

What is a commandment?

1. It is a **covenant commandment**. I.e. an appropriate directive given in the context of a love-bonded relationship. The ten commandments were not just ten moral standards, they were the 'torah', i.e. the guidance and directives for blessing, given to Israel by their Redeemer-God. God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt, covenanted them to Himself, and was taking them to the promised land flowing with milk and honey.

And God spoke all these words, saying,

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

(Then follow the ten commandments:)

"You shall have no other gods before me, etc. Exodus 20:1-3

2. A commandment is also a **promise**.

God not only gives the command, but he gives the grace needed to obey it. True obedience to God is always an act of faith, not of 'works'.

He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:24

'You shall love...' is a prophetic promise, and in Christ all of these five commandments will be fulfilled in us.

By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world... We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4:17,19

STUDY ONE

The first and greatest commandment

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'" Mark 12:28-30

This commandment is not one of the Ten, but is found in Deuteronomy.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Why should we love God?

God has created all things as the expression of His love-being as the 'one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all' (Ephesians 4:6). When we love it is because we know God and are living in Him.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:7-8

He is 'the Father of mercies and God of all comfort' (2 Cor. 1:3), and it is his nature to love all that He has created. But sin and its resultant guilt has turned the heart of all people into enmity towards God.

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Romans 1:21-23

But the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts when we realise that

it was while we were still sinners and enemies of God that Christ died for us (Romans 5:5-10). Grace, alone, has the power to turn our enmity towards God into genuine love.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:4-7

Thus we have two great reasons for loving God: He is our faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:19) and our merciful Redeemer! As forgiven and cleansed children we are free to love Him whole-heartedly.

What does the word 'all' mean?

It does not mean that we are to love God to the exclusion of everyone else. Rather, it means that there are no other allegiances that rival God's place as the one true God.

"You shall have no other gods before me.

Our love for God is to be whole hearted, not double-minded.

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:8

Idolatry is the reverse of this commandment, and there are many 'carved images' in our materialistic and acquisitive world.

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them..." Exodus 20:3-6

How are we to love God?

The commandment says 'with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength'.

Your heart is your will, and with it you resolve your love for God, to worship and serve Him alone.

Your soul is your life and person, and with it you are in love relation with your heavenly Father. You are known as a person who wholly loves God.