



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## The Greatest Commandment

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*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 12:30

### Introduction

Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" He replied, "Love the Lord your God."

Biblical principles touch every area of life for Christian believers and non-believers alike. Many who do not profess Christ, nevertheless, live by His moral and behavioral principles because they are a part of the fabric of life even in a post-Christian culture. Loving God moves us beyond principles of living to principles of loving.

In the Mark statement Jesus was expanding on the book of Deuteronomy and many other passages in the Old Testament.

*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

Deuteronomy 6:5

The primary question, of course, is what does it mean to love the Lord your God? Jesus gives us four emphases that point the way: love Him with your heart, soul, mind, and strength. In coming studies we will unpack different nuances of meaning from each of these ideas.

Loving God means we will align our entire beings with Him. We will walk with Him, think His thoughts, behave His way, follow His principles, and, of course, enter into a personal and emotionally satisfying relationship with Him.

Jesus and Scripture command us to move beyond a casual nod to the divine and to embrace God completely. Make Him the focus and the purpose of our thoughts, emotions, actions and moral

decisions. He is first, and the rest of life is ordered according to this priority.

Let's take an expanded look at some other Deuteronomy passages regarding our love for God.

### Loving God is Keeping His Commands

*Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always.*

Deuteronomy 11:1.

*So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul—*

Deuteronomy 11:13.

*For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you...*

Deuteronomy 30:16.

Jesus summarized these thoughts by applying these passages to Himself. *If you love me keep my commands.* John 14:15

### Loving God is Clinging to Him

*...love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life...* Deuteronomy 30:20.

We cannot claim to love God unless our lives and conduct are tuned to Him in personal relationship. God shows His love for us by entering into a permanent and binding covenant with His children.

*The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.*

Deuteronomy 31:8.

Again, Jesus restates the same promise of His presence.

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### BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: MONDAYS, 5:00 PM, ROOM 1425, LIGHT DINNER FOLLOWING STUDY

STAFF: MONDAYS, 12:00 NOON, CHAPEL, 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR LB

# North Carolina

## The Greatest Commandment

*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.* Matthew 28:20.

### The Greatest Sin?

We can state all of this in a negative fashion. What is the greatest and most basic sin we can commit?

Answer: failing to love God completely with everything we have and with our total person.

This is why Paul could say in Romans 3:10, “There is no one righteous, not even one...” A righteous person would love God the way Jesus described in Mark, but all of us fall short. Scripture is not saying that we do not have some level of love for God, but it is saying that we all terribly miss the mark. We are prone to say, “We do the best we can,” but even a moment’s reflection will shred that false notion. We simply do not come close to doing “the best we can.”

Almost every person would claim to be a good person. If someone is asked, “Why should God accept you into his presence?” Or, if God were to ask you, “Why should I let you into my Heaven and enjoy eternity with me?” Most folks would make some comment that they have been basically good, tried to be a good person, and live in a way that is generally pleasing to God.

The gospel of Matthew, verse 5:48 tells us how to earn Heaven. “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

If we are concerned about our eternal destiny we should be very worried because we cannot elevate ourselves to be accepted by God. But, God condescended—He stooped way down to bring us to Himself. Jesus coming into the world is that condescension. It is spelled out in Philippians 2:6-8.

Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to  
be used to his own advantage;

<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.

<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!

The culmination of Jesus’ humiliation and condescension is His willingness to go to the cross and to die in the place of all of us who fall short of the glory of God—who fail to live lives worthy of God’s standards.

Our hope is not in our ability to love God with our entire being, but our only hope is knowing that God loves His people with His entire being and did everything necessary to bring us to Himself—even dying on a cross as the perfect God-Man.

All who renounce their own failed efforts to love God as He commands, and admit they are sinners are the very ones that have hope for salvation. Renounce sin, and receive the gift that Jesus purchased, and offers to all who would receive it in faith and sincerity.

Those who come to Christ will never love God to the extent of earning righteousness, but believers are declared righteous by God because we are covered by the perfection of Christ. Now we can be free to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength even if we fall short. Christ promised to send His Spirit to live in us and with us to help us live more fully committed to Him. We do this without the fear of failure, but move toward a more perfect expression of our love for God.

Joshua 23:11 offers a clear admonition, “So be very careful to **love the LORD** your God.”