

Loving God Completely

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength (Mark 12:30).

Christianity is a hot topic these days. Much of the conversation revolves around keeping faith separate from everything else. In some countries, Christians are physically persecuted for sharing their faith. In many European countries, people state, "Religion is one of the subjects we do not talk about." In the U.S., politicians tell their constituents to keep "church and state separate." Many consider discussion of faith outside religious meetings as an intrusion of another's rights. "Watch what you say so as not to offend anyone with your belief system. Keep everything separate. If you want to worship your God on Sunday, fine, but keep Him out of Monday through Saturday discussions."

For a truly committed believer in Christ, however, faith cannot be separated from any aspect of life. His Holy Spirit lives within His followers. He should be involved in every thought, every decision, every appointment, and every relationship of life.

A scribe asked Jesus, *'Which is the greatest commandment of all?' Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'* This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'* (Mark 12:28-31 NKJV). Notice Jesus' emphasis on "all." Matthew adds that Jesus concluded with *'On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets'* (Matthew 22:40 NKJV).

Generally, when one thinks of law, it is in terms of obligation. "I must pay my taxes." "There is a fee for this parking space. If I don't pay the fee, I have broken the law and might get a ticket." Although laws are generally created for good and for order in society, often people consider ways to "get around the law." "Maybe I won't get caught running this red light." "Possibly I can claim some deductions on my income tax that I did not really make. The possibilities are slim that I will get audited."

A relationship with God through Jesus redefines how we view law. Christians obey the Lord because they love Him. *We love Him because He first loved us* (1 John 4:19). He lived a perfect life fulfilling the law in Himself. He died a sacrificial death on our behalf. He rose and is interceding for His followers still. *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you* (John 15:12-15 NKJV). - *Love your neighbor as yourself.*

The Lord, our God, the Lord is one. – There are not many gods in this world. There is one God. His person is revealed through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Faith in Jesus, the Son of God, is the only way to have a relationship with God.

Love the Lord your God – You *love* a Person. If God is your Lord, these are the ways you show Him you love Him. He has demonstrated His love for you. God equates your allegiance to Him as your complete love expressed in every part of your being.

With all your heart – Your actions are controlled by what is in your heart. Jesus said that evil deeds come from your heart (Mark 7:20-23). What you treasure in life - what you really care about - is where your heart is (Matthew 6:21). Love Him with all you do.

With all your soul – Your soul is who you are. *And the Lord formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul* (Genesis 2:7 KJV). Some other translations render “living soul” as “living being,” “living person,” or “living creature.” Love Him with all you are.

With all your mind – Choices are made with your mind. Adam and Eve made the wrong choice in the garden of Eden, and God said, “*Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil*” (Genesis 3:22 NKJV). The only way to conquer evil is through Christ. *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ* (2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NKJV). Love Him with all you think.

With all your strength – Your body is the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19). Strength implies bodily powers, but there is also “strength of character.” Being conformed to the image of Christ gives one the strength to carry on through all the trials of life. *I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he has judged me faithful, appointing me to his service* (1 Timothy 1:12 NIV). Trust Him to lead you. Love Him with all your might and perseverance, relying on His resources.

One of Paul’s prayers covered this total allegiance to God. *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to His riches in glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man [with all your strength], that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith [with all your heart]; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge [with all your mind]; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God [with all your soul] (Ephesians 3:14-19 NKJV emphasis mine).*