

# The Greatest Commandment - Love People

People are all different. We have different likes and dislikes, different tastes and preferences, different annoying habits and we are annoyed by different habits, different successes and failures...tell the person next to you "You're different"

Our differences can attract or they can repel others. And our differences sometimes are what makes it easy to love one another or very hard to love one another.

Sometimes you might see someone and think "We could be great friends" or maybe the opposite, like "I could only be around that guy for so long..."

Well the good news is that the bible never says you have to be friends with everyone, you just have to love them!

## **Mark 12:29-31 (NKJV)**

Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 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. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

So you have the first commandment...Love God with all you've got...and the second is **like it**.

Have you ever thought about the fact that they asked what is the greatest commandment and Jesus gave them the first AND the second?

Do you know people that can never name their favorite thing? You ask for their favorite candy bar and they give you a top 5. Ask them their favorite tv show and they tell you their entire playlist. Do these people have a hard time deciding which is actually their favorite or they just really like a lot of things a little too much?

This is NOT what Jesus is doing here. It's not that He can't just give you one commandment. He could do one. In fact, Jesus could actually eat just one Lay's potato chip. He's the perfect picture of self control. He doesn't have trouble making decisions. He's perfect in all He does!

But He gives the greatest commandment AND the second...which is **like it**.

It's like it means it resembles it...so it looks or appears the same.

If you were to look at two people who are closely related, they will look similar, resemble one another, they may even appear the same.

Jesus is saying that loving your neighbor as yourself looks like loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

Why?

**1 John 4:20 (NKJV)**

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

You can't love God and hate your brother. The Scripture says it's not possible. If you say that it is, you are a liar.

So let's think about this...

What is love?

There are 4 different Greek words used in the bible that are translated to the English word "**Love**". In this case it's the word "**Agape**".

Agape means: *affection, good will, benevolence*...basically a desire to do good to others

What is hate?

Hate is an intense or passionate dislike. It's more than just not liking someone, it's an extreme dislike. It's over the top. But the definition goes even a little further when it says - **to be unwilling**

To love means to desire to do good to others, to hate means to be unwilling to love, unwilling to do good toward them.

Now...can you love God and hate your brother? NO...because if you love God, if you know Jesus, if you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, born again...you've been changed, friend!

And what is it exactly that you've been changed by? **L-O-V-E**

**1 John 4:7-8 (NKJV)**

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

So love is the determining factor of if we know Jesus. Because God is love. It's not something He does, it's who He is.

And we don't love because it's something we do, but we love because of something He did!

**1 John 4:9-10 (NKJV)**

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

So Jesus...is the manifestation of God's love. You know Jesus is eternal, right? Like not just going forward but going backwards. He always was...and always will be. He was, and is, and is to come. Eternal. Not created. Didn't begin in a womb...that's how His Spiritual presence manifested physically.

His coming was His love on display. And the reason was not JUST to show us...but that we might live through Him. Because He paid our debt.

He was the propitiation for our sins. One of my favorite words in the bible. This word means it satisfied God. When Jesus died on the cross, His sacrifice for our sin satisfied God's wrath toward our sin. Propitiation is the turning away of wrath because He was satisfied with the payment.

It was evident in the resurrection. And now we can live through Jesus. It's love that made a way.

It's love that changes us. And love is the evidence of that change.

**1 John 4:11 (NKJV)**

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Jesus loved us. He did good to us. Even though we didn't deserve it.

This is a key that we often lose sight of...while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

I think we let ourselves off the hook at times because we were all sinners. But who did YOU sin against? Jesus...

And if you sinned against Him, it means you were in opposition to Him. It means you were on the other side...

How often do sports fans hate those on the other side? And if they show that...what does the other side do? Show hate right back...

What did Jesus do? He loved. Even though we were against Him, He loved us.

And if He did that...we should be able to love one another...

There's not a single thing that anybody could possibly do to you that is worse than sin is to God. I mean nothing. I know you got a few possibilities...but I'm telling you, as horrible of a thing that people can do to other people, none compare to sin against God.

And He loved us.  
And if you love Him, you can love them.

Loving people is LIKE loving God. The second is LIKE the first. It looks like it.

Because it's the same love. What God has done IN you, He does THROUGH you. He is the center of it all.

Think about a wheel. Like a bicycle wheel. As the spokes get closer to the center of the wheel, they get closer to one another. Likewise, as we get closer to the Lord, who is love, we get closer to our brothers, and love them more.

I've heard it said that we actually do not love the Lord a bit more than we love the humblest of His followers.

Some of you have caught on that I've been talking about brothers, and followers of Christ and you may think they are easier to love...and that SHOULD be true...it's not always but it should be. Because they too have been changed by love and should be loving you.

But the command was actually to love your neighbor as yourself...I just used these verses to show you WHY the second is like the first. The root of love...but for all you technical people who think it only applies to your brother:

**Galatians 6:10 (NKJV)**

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Say "Do Good To All" that word good has the same core meaning of agape love that means to desire to do good to others.

So other believers...yes of course...but also other people in general.

But what about bad people and mean people?

**Matthew 5:44 (NKJV)**

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

Do Good.

See there's really no exceptions. It's all people. Love them. Desire to do good to them.

And if you're thinking it's not possible because no one knows what so and so has done or said to you.

Advice nugget: it doesn't matter what someone says to you or about you...you don't march up on stage and slap them. First of all I'm pretty sure it's against the law of every state. Second of all, I KNOW it's against God's law (commandment) to love Him and love your neighbor as yourself.

That just might seem like an impossible situation, especially if they say something about someone you love. And you might think, "I couldn't do it" and you might be right...unless you are close to Jesus.

**Romans 5:5 (NKJV)**

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Loving when it's impossible for you, is not so much about you, it's more about Him...

Ask Him to love through you. Remember it doesn't mean you have to hug them and give them a heart full of chocolates...it simply means to desire to do good to them.

And if you are unwilling...then by definition that's hate...

So you at least have to be willing to LET the Holy Spirit love through you. It's literally something that He produces through you

**Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV)**

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Love is the first of the fruit because it's the most critical...it's the one that all of the others hinge on. If there's no love...the rest is useless.

So you CAN love...if you'll be willing to let the Holy Spirit love through you.

Back to the neighbor. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Who is your neighbor? It's any other man irrespective of nation or religion with whom we live or whom we chance to meet. It's just people...people are your neighbor.

Now love them as yourself...meaning in the ways that you love yourself.

Just desire to do good to them...to people...all people. Because here's the deal. They were created in God's image. Maybe they don't resemble God very much right now. But neither do you and I if we don't love them.

Jesus told the story that we know as The Good Samaritan, where a man gets robbed, beat up, thrown in the ditch

Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 On the next day, [when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'

So which of these three do you think was a neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"  
And he said, "He who showed mercy on him."  
Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Not go and BE likewise...go and DO likewise...

At the end of the day, the question to ask is not who is my neighbor, but how can I be a neighbor to the people in my life. How can I go and do likewise....

That's when we love people. When the love of Christ that was poured out at the cross, runs through us, changes who we are, and the Spirit of God changes what we do...

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.