

# The Greatest Commandment

How does one go about obeying the greatest commandment, that we love God with all of our heart, soul and mind? I have never been able to conjure up within myself what some would describe as a genuine love for God, at least not in the way that one would expect. Most people envision God as an invisible, male spirit being who lives somewhere up in Heaven and who looks in on us from time to time. Like most fathers, He loves us, but unlike most fathers, He never audibly speaks to us and is for all practical purposes absent from our lives. How does one go about loving a God like that? *Agape*, self-sacrificing love, the kind of love described in the Bible, is not easy to express towards an invisible spirit being who expects a lot, but needs nothing, from us.

In order to correctly understand what Jesus was getting at when He gave us the greatest commandment, we need to expand our concept of God and pay close attention to the corollary that Jesus gave to that commandment. He said the second commandment is like the first, that we love our neighbors as ourselves. What we fail to understand is the reason why the second commandment is like the first. It is not similar to the first because love is involved. It is similar because the object of our love is the same. Loving our neighbors is exactly the same as loving God

You can't have one without the other. If you claim to love God, without loving your neighbor, you are only fooling yourself. According to 1 John 4:20, "*Whoever claims to love God, yet hates a brother or sister, is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.*" That is why, in Matt. 25:40, Jesus said this to the surprised individual at the Kingdom gate, "*whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*"

In order to fully understand why this is true, we need to expand our view of God. God is not just some disembodied spirit who lives in Heaven and occasionally swoops down over us to see what is going on, without directly interacting with us. God is infinitely bigger and greater than that. The broadest definition of God that I can think of is this. God is everything that is, and more. He exists both outside of and within all of creation, including each of us. We are all part of the divine Godhead because we were fashioned from God's own DNA, and God not only lives in each of us, He is each of us. We are each a tiny, but very important part of the Godhead. We are all God's children.

When I look at my children, and my children's children, I have a special affection for them because they are literally a part of me. They have developed separate egos or personalities, but they are part of me, nevertheless. Because we are manifestations of God, He is able to view the world through our very eyes, ears, feelings and emotions. Because He is at the same time greater than us, He is able to connect us with all other created beings.

So the conclusion of the matter is this, when we show love and compassion for ourselves and our neighbors, we are quite literally loving God.