

One day a teacher of the Jewish Law came to Jesus and asked him which commandment was the most important. Jesus responded,

***'Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one,
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.
There is no other commandment greater than these.*** - Mark 12:29-31 NKJV

Long before this, God had given Israel 10 commandments to keep, but later the Jews added even more, which ended up being 613 commandments. Man tends to complicate matters, and focus on external requirements. **Jesus came to deal with issues of the heart**, which included **motives**. Jesus spoke simply and clearly so that the common person could understand. Jesus did not abolish the Ten Commandments, but fulfilled and simplified them. - Matthew 5:17. The first four of the Ten were about loving God and the final six were about loving mankind. They were also about respect and honor to God and others. It is unfortunate that most schools do not allow the display of the Ten Commandments. One issue I have about their display is an important omission of the prelude to them. Before God gave the ten to His people, He reminded them of who He is: **'I am the Lord your God who brought out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery'**. - Exodus 20:1. God wants us to always remember first of all, that He is our Savior and deliverer who deserves our respect. God's commandments were given so His people could live in freedom in His protection, provision, pleasure and peace (shalom) in all areas of life. God is love and pure love wants the best for another. **God is a loving lawgiver!** Laws give boundaries in order to protect us from harm. Do you lock the doors of your home at night because you hate the people outside? No, you lock your doors because you love your family that is inside. The same principle applies to borders of countries. Leaders who believe in controlled borders do not hate migrants, but their first role is to protect their citizens. God gives us commands because He loves us. The first of the Ten Commandments is about having no other gods or idols. The Bible tells us that God is a jealous God, for He knows that false gods are harmful to us. - Exodus 20:5, Deuteronomy 6:14-15; 32:16-18,21; Joshua 24:19-24.

'The way of the transgressor is hard' - Proverbs 13:15.

'The sorrows will increase of those who run after other gods. - Psalm 16:4

LIFE IS HARD, IT'S HARDER IF YOU'RE STUPID. - JOHN WAYNE

'I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by Satan's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. - 2 Corinthians 11:2-3 NIV.

The Love Commandment of Jesus shows us what true devotion is. It involves our desire, will, feelings, thoughts, motives, time and energy being focused on what is most important. John was known as the 'apostle of love'. He knew that Jesus loved him! - John 21:20. In his letter of 1 John, he used the word love or loving 46 times. He concludes his letter with these words:

'Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.'

Keeping God's commandments should not so much be seen as a duty but **a delight** that comes from a grateful desire to please Him and bring joy to our heavenly Father who has displayed his love to us. Jesus walked in that mentality as He only sought to do what

pleased the heavenly Father. **Jesus was filled with more joy than any others because he loved righteousness and hated wickedness**- Hebrews 1:9.

God's kingdom 'Consists of and is based on not talk but power (moral power and excellence of soul) - 1 Corinthians 4:20 Amplified Classic
'Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit'. -Romans 14:17.

True Christians should be the happiest and most joyful people on the earth!
Righteousness is being being right and just in God's eyes, based on the goodness of Jesus. In fact, they have the **Robe of Righteousness** - Isaiah 61:10. 2 Corinthians 5:21. They also have the **Breastplate of Righteousness** which **protects their heart** from condemnation and the fiery accusations of the devil. -Ephesians 6:14. When a person knows that the king has made him righteous and accepted in the beloved (Jesus) - Ephesians 1:6, it gives them a desire to live righteously for the king! The old way of life looks empty and unfulfilling, as it surely is. The Christian life is meant to be a joyful adventure. When you read the Gospel stories about Jesus and of the church in the book of Acts, it is certainly not boring. Sure, they faced outward pressure and persecution, but the joy they had on the inside was greater than their circumstances.

Jesus **loved righteousness** but also **hated wickedness**. He expressed love for sinners but opposed evil. The kingdom of darkness includes all manner of sin: spiritual, social, physical, sexual, monetary etc. Jesus dealt with demons, sickness, greed etc. as contrary to God's kingdom of life.

In our next lesson, we will explore what it means to **'love the Lord with all of your heart.'** In so many areas of life, we can forget the most basic things of life. The world has its focus the things they do and have - 1 John 2:16, but God is more concerned about who we have become. When we live a life of love, we are an expression of God who is love.

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Appendix: For further study about Law, scroll to our message, **Woe to the Lawless** which is in the **Beatitudes** section on our website. Here is a sample.....

The following laws must have been made because somebody did these things!

- In Arizona ... it's illegal for a donkey to sleep in a bathtub
- In California.. it's illegal to whistle for a lost canary before 7 AM
- In Colorado ... it's illegal to keep a couch on your porch
- In Indiana ... it's illegal to ride a horse above 10 MPH
- In Kentucky ... a woman cannot marry the same man four times
- In Minnesota dirty tires are banned (hope you don't live on a dirt road)
- In Missouri ... bear wrestling is banned
- In Montana ... it's illegal to give a rat as a present
- In New Jersey ... bullet proof vests are banned while committing a crime
- In New Mexico ... 'idiots' are banned from voting
- In North Carolina ... drunk bingo is banned
- In Oregon...its illegal to go hunting in a cemetery