

# Learning to Walk in God's Love

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## Full Text (for reading on your own)

### *One Commandment and One Commission*

We have been given one commandment and we have been given one commission. In John 13:34, Jesus said *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”* Jesus gave us one commandment: that we would love one another in the same way that He has loved us. Jesus also gave us one commission which we hear in Matthew 28:19-20: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* Jesus commissioned us to share our faith with people throughout the world: to lead them to the Lord and to disciple them. We have been given one commandment and one commission.

If we have but one commandment from the Lord, does it not stand to reason that we should be focused on it ... and not just focused on it today, but all the time?!? Would it not be good for us to be vigilant about doing that commandment? Of course it would be! So what is that commandment? What is that point of great focus? It is to love one another! *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”* We are commanded by our Lord to love one another in the same way that He loved us. The standard or metric for our love is the love with which Jesus loved us.

Now before we go any further in this truth, let me say this. It may be easy in this message to start to feel condemned. It can be easy to feel “I’m not living up to this.” But feeling condemned doesn’t do anyone any good. As you read this message allow it to simply remind us of the target. Everything in this message is simply to make the goal or target clear. This part of the message is the target or the “what” and in later messages we will discuss the “how.” For now, let’s see what the goal, what the target is. Once we have a clear target, we can talk about how to get there.

### *Our Love is God’s Signpost to the World*

Take a look at the next verse in Jn. 13: *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* (v. 35) Our love is *the* signpost for the world to know Jesus! We tend to think that having a really good speaker, a great worship band, or a nice building are the signpost for Christ to the world. We tend to think that doing good works or feeding the poor will be a signpost to the world. All of those things are good, BUT the Lord told us that none of those things will actually tell

the world that we are of Him. There is only one thing about which Jesus says “by this the world will recognize that you are of Me.” *Our love for one another* is God’s signpost to the world.

One of my favorite ministers to listen to is Ravi Zacharias. One of the reasons I love this man’s ministry is that he is so well versed in his subject matter. He simply knows what he is talking about! He is so deep in his thinking that sometimes it is hard to keep up with him unless you listen to his messages a few times. He brings wonderful facts to bear that show us that there is science to back up everything in the bible. He helps make very clear the differences between all other religions and Christianity. Instead of allowing people to have the popular thought that all religions are fundamentally the same with some superficial differences, he teaches how all religions are fundamentally different with some supernatural similarities. So, one reason I love listening to Ravi Zacharias is because he really knows his stuff.

The other reason I love listening to Ravi Zacharias is because he delivers his wonderful thoughts and teachings in awesome love - every time! He is often before big audiences in which there is a lot of animosity in the crowd. In that environment he allows for open microphones and sometimes a person will come up to the microphone and say some really heavy stuff about Christianity. Without fail, he responds by saying how much he appreciates their candidness and how he understands where they are coming from - and you can tell that he truly means it. He never gets offended - no matter how radical someone is. He doesn’t get offended, he just loves them. *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

### *What is God doing right now with all people?*

Loving people is being like God. Consider this simple question: What is the one thing that the Father is always doing with everyone on the planet? Of course, in light of the great diversity of human need and human experience, God is doing a lot of things all the time. But what is the one thing we can know that the Father is doing with *everyone* on the planet *at all times*? He is loving them. God is loving everybody right now.

As children of God, the majority of us are a little confused on this point. We think God is actually angry with the majority of the world. We may run in to people who perhaps live a very unGodly lifestyle, and perhaps not only do they live a sinful lifestyle, but they may be full-on overt haters of God who are even vocal about their disdain towards God and believers. In those extreme circumstances, we may think that God must have some animosity towards that person. And if we think that God has animosity towards that person, we may feel justified or that we are in line with God if we share in that perceived animosity. We reason that God hates evil and God says that we are to hate evil. We see that the bible says Jesus hated evil such that God anointed Him with the oil of gladness because of it. (Heb. 1:9) So we feel very right in hating evil.

The trouble is we do not differentiate between the sin (the evil act) and the person held hostage by it. We have the phrase “hate sin and love the sinner.” That is RIGHT, but do we really do it?!? We tend to use it like a badge for making our subtle hatred of people OK in our minds. It is right that

we should hate evil and know that sinful lifestyles are not of God, that it is evil, and that God hates it. But we are wrong if we conclude ANY animosity towards the person!

But why is that? How could God not have animosity towards them? They are living a lifestyle in direct opposition to God. They may be actual haters of God and curse Him often. Why does God not hate them? Isn't He just in His judgment of sin?

Of course God is completely just in the judgment of sin; God has already punished their sin! *"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him."* (Rom 5:9) God poured out His wrath on Jesus for the sins of the people. *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* (2 Cor 5:21) God is a just judge. He has judged sin once in the body of His Son. God would be unjust today if He judged a sinner for their sin. *"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh"* (Rom. 8:3) God already judged (condemned) sin in the flesh of His Son Jesus. It has been said that we should not be surprised that we have been made righteous, but instead in awe of the fact that Christ became sin for us. Justice for all of man's sin for all time was served when Jesus bore the punishment for it on the Cross.

This is why 1 John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins God is both faithful and just to forgive us of our sins. That scripture is talking about the time a person is giving their life to Christ. The way we give our lives to Christ is to recognize that we are sinner in need of a savior and say to God "I've sinned, forgive me of my sin." The Father says "I have forgiven you of your sin, receive it." They have to receive the forgiveness that God has given to them. God has already forgiven the whole world and that's why He's not angry with them any more. He poured out His wrath on Jesus for them.

Now if someone really preached that strongly, you would be apt to think "well does that mean everybody's saved?" No not everyone is saved - because the Word of God makes it clear in many places that they have to receive that forgiveness. God has already forgiven the sin debt of all people, but they have to CHOOSE to receive that gift. The world is just one step away from all the blessings of God in their life - and that is to receive salvation. But the fact remains that God has already forgiven them. Therefore, God is not angry with them any more (see Isa 54) and we have been given a ministry of reconciliation (not judgment) begging everyone to be reconciled to God! (see 2 Cor. 5)

Therefore, if when we are talking with someone who is living in sin, and we find ourselves having anything but love towards them, we are no longer in agreement with the Father. In that moment, we have just become God's enemy. We have entered into disagreement with the Calvary ruling from the Courts of Heaven.

Look at Jesus - He came to be our model. How did He respond with sinners? He walked with them, loved them, and embraced them. The only time you see the Lord get angry (turning over tables or becoming indignant with his disciples for keeping the children from Him) is when they

were keeping people from coming to God. The religious people were saying “follow me, I’ll lead you to the Lord” but in actuality they were leading the people off a cliff - that is why Jesus came against those religious people. God hates religion in that sense. If we see people walking in sin and we get judgmental towards them, we are being religious. That is not of God. We are not being a friend of God when we do that. If we think otherwise, we are deceived!

What if we had the awesome privilege of walking with Jesus, non-stop for a month. As you were out and about on the town, surely you would run into many people that were unGodly that didn’t want anything to do with Christ. When you ran into those people, what would you see in how our Lord interacted with all of these people? Love, love, love, love, love, love! This doesn’t mean that Jesus doesn’t call out sin. He does call out sin. He told the woman caught in the very act of adultery to “go and sin no more” after he made it clear to her that He did not come to condemn her. Do you think she felt judged and rebuked by Him? No! She wanted to hug Him and kiss His feet because she felt totally loved by Him! The Bible says “speak the truth in love.” That’s another verse we stamp on a nasty attitude in order to make it sound better!

My greatest joy in life is leading people to Christ. I have enjoyed great businesses and great relationships. There are a lot of things that bring great pleasure to life, but nothing touches the joy of leading someone to Christ. I am high for days on it. To whatever extent I’ve had success in leading people to Christ, my success has been commensurate with the love that I have for people. I genuinely love them and they know it.

### *Is Loving One Another really a New Commandment?*

Jesus said “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another ...*” Jesus called it a new commandment, but have you ever thought about the fact that it is not new? Recall that in Mt. 22:37-39 we hear Jesus’ response to a pharisee lawyer that was trying to trip Him up by asking Him what the greatest commandment in the Law was: “*Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*” So that commandment was already there from the beginning, but Jesus said “a new commandment I give to you.” Why did Jesus call it a new commandment?

Think about when Jesus said that He was giving them a new commandment. It was at the Last Supper! Earlier in that supper we see this “*Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.’*” In Ex. 34:27-28 we see God giving the covenant to Moses and God basically says “these are the words of My covenant, the Ten Commandments.” A covenant is always connected to a word. God doesn’t enter into a covenant without a word. If there were no words with a covenant, what would you follow? Every covenant has an agreement in it. A covenant with God is much greater than a contract we might execute for business purposes but a covenant is basically a Holy agreement or contract. Therefore a covenant is not a covenant without a word or agreement or command that goes with it.

So, in Exodus 34 we see that God says “here’s my covenant” and then gave the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were His covenant and the Israelites were to follow them. At the Last Supper, Jesus said “here’s a new covenant” and then in that same meeting with them, He said here’s “a new commandment.” *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”* This is the commandment that goes with the New Covenant! Only this time, there is only one command - there are not ten. The reason for that is because this one commandment takes care of all ten as made clear in Romans 13:8-10: *“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”*

### *Representing God in the Earth*

This is the New Covenant and it is based on one single commandment and that is to love! Jesus first and foremost told his disciples to “love one another.” He was talking to the brethren. He was saying the world will look at that and say “wow - I want to be a part of that!” Our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ should be so great that it is a signpost for the goodness of God that draws yet-to-be-believers into the kingdom!

Another thing I’ve learned in watching Ravi Zacharias’ ministry through the years is that a consistent argument that is brought against Christianity is the supposed hypocrisy of believers and their lack of love. As a result of that indictment, they accuse God saying “if God was a God of love ...” Do you know that the world would have no problem with God being a God of love if they simply had examples of it in the earth? That whole line of thinking would absolutely go away!

If we loved each other like Christ loved us ... If we had a community that was so incredible ... If we had a community like God called us to have - one in which we said to one another “whatever you need man, If I’ve got it, I’ll give it to you.” That would be an incredible thing for other people to witness. Instead we tend to lead busy lives in which we don’t really give to one another. But if we had the kind of lives where we were laying ourselves down for one another, people would come in and they would see that among us and become so overwhelmed because it would be a love they have never seen. And do you know what they would say in their hearts? They would say “I want that so bad; that’s what my heart cries out for!”

The children of God (born-again believers) make up about 1/5th of the entire world population. If we were all walking in that kind of love, we would be far more than 1/5th of the entire world’s population! Everyone would see that love. They would stop saying “if God is a God of love ...” Most people don’t really know what love is or how love operates, but if they saw it they would say “that’s what I want!” and then they would know God.

The world is supposed to know God through us! We are the hands and feet of Jesus in the earth. We are the face of God in the earth. Jesus left - He's seated at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. He's not here. But God's Spirit is here. God Himself is here in us. He is in His children. If we would love like He loves, the world would see it and they would come to Him ... just like they came to Jesus in droves! Not everyone will come to Jesus of course, but those who have a heart for God - those that can be attracted to the things of God - would be attracted to us.

### *Loving Others*

Some people say that they love God but they can't stand the church. They say "I can't stand the hypocrisy. I can't stand the religiosity." That too is a deception. God says that if you don't love your brother, you don't love Me! It would be like saying that you love a married couple but you actually proceed hate and mistreat their child while you think they are not looking. You may tell the parents how much you love them, but they will see the inconsistencies of your actions and know what your heart truly is. You cannot love parents and hate their children. Those parents would say "that kind of love, we can do without!" Much to the contrary, if we truly love the parents, one way we can demonstrate that is by loving their children! This is why God says that if you don't love your brother (My child), you don't love Me!

Look at 1 John 4:7 "*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*" If you love others you will know God! Picking up with the next verse: "*He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*" So when I am not loving, I am not being consistent with God right now and therefore I am not experiencing God - because I am not loving. It is actually in loving others that we first love God and experience God. Jesus told a group of people that they clothed Him when He was naked, fed Him when He was hungry, and visited Him when He was in prison. They were surprised "when did we do that?" What did Jesus say? He said that those expressions were done unto Him when we did it to the least of these! That's how you love the Father - you love all the people He has made.

If you want to have the closest relationship with God, I know of no other way to get you there faster or more fully than to love people. It says exactly that in Ephesians 3:14-19. In these verses Paul prays "*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; 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; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*" You have to be rooted and grounded in love in order to be able to comprehend this. If you want to have the greatest relationship with God, the greatest joy, the fullness of God in your life, you can do it by loving other people! If you really meditate on this scripture, you will see that in order to have the fullness of God in your life, you have to love other people. At a superficial glance you can think the verses are talking about knowing Jesus' love. But they are really saying that you are going to know Jesus' love when you love other people. You have to be rooted and grounded in love. That is

the precursor that allows you to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. When you love other people you will be able to then comprehend the love of God!

But how does that work? When you love other people with agape love - with selfless love that flows from the Spirit of Christ in you - that agape love literally comes out of your Spirit to help the other person ... and guess what happens as it passes from your Spirit through your soul and out of your body? You are experiencing that agape love!!! And, as a result, you get to know that agape love "oh, that's the love of God! Wow! That's the love of God - that's awesome!" You begin to comprehend the love of God and as a result you enter into the fullness of God! Love is how we get there!

### *Abiding in His Love that our Joy may be Full*

This whole love walk is awesome! We have a saying for when we have been very victorious that "we got two birds with one stone." God is such that that he gets 9 birds, 2 horses, a dog, and the postman with one ... but He doesn't use a stone, He does it with a kiss!

In John 15, we see that Jesus says that if you love Him you will keep His commandments. It is probable that the Greek word there for commandments is supposed to be singular. The word in the Greek isn't singular or plural so it could be either way... but I believe it is singular because He only had one command - and that's to love. *"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. 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."* Look at the result of walking in His love - our joy may be full! Does that sound like the fullness of God? It's the same thing we were just reading from Ephesians 3! This is like a mathematical equation. If A=B and B=C, then A=C. So, if you keep His commands, your joy will be full. And what is His command? That we love one another! So if we love others, what will happen? Our joy will be full!

What if someone is reprobate of a person? Remember this: God is the judge of the earth! That means that judgment is off of our backs! Freedom! Throw off judgment - it is none of our business! It's taken care of - God's got it! All we have to do is love! Throw off judgment! This is great! It's total freedom! Judgment is bondage because the minute we judge, we feel God's grace leave. His grace isn't on that. But when you stay in love, His grace is all over it. It's total freedom. Just love! And when we love, they feel loved and now they're blessed. All the while we get to experience God's love coming out of us and now we're blessed! And we get to know God's love and we realize "wow God - that's You! I know you better than ever! Wow, you're awesome; I love Your love!" It's just blessing, blessing, blessing and your joy goes through the roof!

Father, we lift up this word that has gone forth and ask that it would take root and grow in us and produce a 100-fold return in our lives. That it may cause us to be people of love!

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## Text Summary (for reading as a group)

We have been given one commandment and we have been given one commission. In John 13:34, Jesus said *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”* Jesus gave us one commandment: that we would love one another in the same way that He has loved us. Jesus also gave us one commission which we hear in Matthew 28:19-20: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* Jesus commissioned us to share our faith with people throughout the world: to lead them to the Lord and to disciple them.

If we have but one commandment from the Lord, does it not stand to reason that we should be focused on it and vigilant about doing that commandment? Of course it would be! We are commanded by our Lord to love one another in the same way that He loved us and the standard or metric for our love is the love with which Jesus loved us. As you read this message allow it make the target clear. Once we have a clear target, we can talk about how to get there.

*“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* (v. 35) Our love is *the* signpost for the world to know Jesus! We tend to think that having a really good speaker, a great worship band, or a nice building are the signpost for Christ to the world. We tend to think that doing good works or feeding the poor will be a signpost to the world. All of those things are good, BUT the Lord told us that none of those things will actually tell the world that we are of Him. There is only one thing about which Jesus says “by this the world will recognize that you are of Me.” ***Our love for one another*** is God’s signpost to the world. For example, one of the reasons Ravi Zacharias’ ministry is so effective is because he delivers his wonderful thoughts and teachings in awesome love - every time! He never gets offended - he just loves people.

Loving people is being like God. Consider this simple question: What is the one thing that the Father is always doing with everyone on the planet? He is loving them. As children of God, the majority of us are a little confused on this point. We think God is actually angry with the majority of the world. And if we think that God has animosity towards a person, we may feel justified or that we are in line with God if we share in that perceived animosity. We feel very right in hating evil. The trouble is we do not differentiate between the sin (the evil act) and the person held hostage by it. We have the phrase “hate sin and love the sinner.” That is RIGHT, but do we really do it?!? It is right that we should hate evil and know that sinful lifestyles are not of God, that it is evil, and that God hates it. But we are wrong if we conclude ANY animosity towards the person!

But why is that? How could God not have animosity towards them? They are living a lifestyle in direct opposition to God after all. The answer is that God has already punished their sin! God is a just judge. He has judged sin once in the body of His Son. God would be unjust today if He judged



a sinner for their sin. God already judged (condemned) sin in the flesh of His Son Jesus. It has been said that we should not be surprised that we have been made righteous, but instead in awe of the fact that Christ became sin for us. Justice for all of man's sin for all time was served when Jesus bore the punishment for it on the Cross.

Now if someone really preached this strongly, you would be apt to think "well does that mean everybody's saved?" No not everyone is saved - because the Word of God makes it clear in many that while God has already forgiven the sin debt of all people, they have to CHOOSE to receive that gift. The world is just one step away from all the blessings of God in their life - and that is to receive salvation. But the fact remains that God has already forgiven them. Therefore, God is not angry with them any more (see Isa 54) and we have been given a ministry of reconciliation (not judgment) begging everyone to be reconciled to God! (see 2 Cor. 5)

Therefore, if when we are talking with someone who is living in sin, and we find ourselves having anything but love towards them, we are no longer in agreement with the Father. In that moment, we have just become God's enemy. We have entered into disagreement with the Calvary ruling from the Courts of Heaven. Look at Jesus - How did He respond with sinners? He walked with them, loved them, and embraced them. This doesn't mean that Jesus doesn't call out sin. He does call out sin. He told the woman caught in the very act of adultery to "go and sin no more" after he made it clear to her that He did not come to condemn her. But do you think she felt judged and rebuked by Him? No! She wanted to hug Him and kiss His feet because she felt totally loved by Him! Our success in leading people to Christ, will always be commensurate with the love that we have for people.

Now, why did Jesus call what he shared in Jn. 13 a new commandment? At the Last Supper, Jesus said "here's a new covenant" and then in that same meeting with them, He said here's "a new commandment." *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."* Like with Moses in Exodus 34, this is the commandment that goes with the a covenant! Only in the New Covenant, there is only one command - there are not ten. The reason for that is because this one commandment takes care of all ten! *"Love is the fulfillment of the law."* (Rom. 13) This it the New Covenant and it is based on one single commandment and that is to love!

If we loved each other like Christ loved us, everyone would see that love and they would stop saying "if God is a God of love ...". The world is supposed to know God through us! We are the hands and feet of Jesus in the earth. We are the face of God in the earth. He's not here. But God's Spirit is here. God Himself is here in us. If we would love like He loves, the world would see it and they would come to Him ... just like they came to Jesus in droves! Not everyone will come to Jesus of course, but those who have a heart for God - those that can be attracted to the things of God - would be attracted to us.

Some people say that they love God but they can't stand the church. But God says that if you don't love your brother, you don't love Me! You cannot love parents and hate their children. This is why God says that if you don't love your brother (My child), you don't love Me! If you love others you will know God! It is actually in loving others that we first love God and experience God. When you love the people God has made, you love Him!

If you want to have the greatest relationship with God, the greatest joy, the fullness of God in your life, you can do it by loving other people! You are going to know Jesus' love when you love other people. You have to be rooted and grounded in love. That is the precursor that allows you to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. When you love other people you will be able to then comprehend the love of God! But how does that work? When you love other people with agape love - with selfless love that flows from the Spirit of Christ in you - that agape love literally comes out of your Spirit to help the other person ... and guess what happens as it passes from your Spirit through your soul and out of your body? You are experiencing that agape love!!! And, as a result, you get to know that agape love "oh, that's the love of God! Wow! That's the love of God - that's awesome!" You begin to comprehend the love of God and as a result you enter into the fullness of God! Loving others is how we get there!

If you keep His commands, your joy will be full. And what is His command? That we love one another! So if we love others, what will happen? Our joy will be full! What if someone is reprobate of a person? Remember this: God is the judge of the earth! That means that judgment is off of our backs! Throw off judgment - it is none of our business! It's taken care of - God's got it! All we have to do is love! It's total freedom! Judgment is bondage because the minute we judge, we feel God's grace leave. His grace isn't on that. But when you stay in love, His grace is all over it. It's total freedom. Just love! And when we love, the other person feels loved and now they're blessed. All the while we get to experience God's love coming out of us and therefore we're blessed as well! Through this process we get to know God's love and we realize "wow God - that's You! I know You better than ever! Wow, you're awesome; I love Your love!" It's just blessing, blessing, blessing and your joy goes through the roof! May we be a people of love!

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## Points to Ponder . . .

- What makes "loving one another" a new command?
- How will our love be a signpost to the world for Christ?
- Why do we not need to worry ourselves with judgment for sin?
- How does our love for one another indicate our love for God?
- In what ways does loving others allow us to more fully know God ourselves?