



THIS IS MY COMMANDMENT

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It's in the air...
It's what the world needs now...
It will keep us together...
It's all you need...
Just the way you are...
At last!
February is the month of... LOVE.

Of course, that's only "romantic love," which as most of us know, is only passing, like the swell of a wave, that lifts you momentarily.

At one time in my life, it was the only kind of love that I cared about and dreamt about. The love of my parents, which had sustained and guided me for two decades, was not enough to fulfill me.

And then I met Jesus Christ. He swept me off my feet with another kind of love that completed me, and has filled me again and again for the last (almost) fifty years! Do you know His love today?

You really must! I want everyone to know Him—personally and perpetually.

One of Jesus' disciples, John, came to know Him that way. John was called "the disciple whom Jesus loved." John was not the only one, but he may have been the one most aware of it in the early days.

The love of God that shined through Jesus Christ became a consistent theme of John's letters and books. Jesus was quoted as speaking about it more often by John than others. It moved him. As it moves me. Let me share with you one of my favorite passages on this subject:

John 15:9-17 (NASB)

⁹ *"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.*

¹⁰ *"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.*

¹¹ *“These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*

¹² *“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.*

¹³ *“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*

¹⁴ *“You are My friends if you do what I command you.*

¹⁵ *“No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

¹⁶ *“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.*

¹⁷ *“This I command you, that you love one another.*

His Command... But HOW?

It’s one thing to be told you must do something, and another to know HOW to do it. But Jesus did not leave us without instruction.

“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you.”

The love of God began with the Father, who created all things. Love was His idea. Love was His plan. Because *“God is love.”*

The Son of God came into our world—Jesus was born in Bethlehem—as a direct result of God’s love for humanity. He was the Answer to our confusion and waywardness. And God loved Him throughout His life among us.

He announced it on the day that John the Baptizer introduced Him to the crowd gathered at the Jordan River: *“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased.”*

“Just as I have loved you, you love one another.”

Like Father, like Son.

Jesus, in turn, spread the love of the Father to the people of His day. He mended broken hearts. He healed the sick. He cleansed the diseased. He gave sight to the blind. He restored the crippled. He even raised the dead.

To the penitent, Jesus offered no words of condemnation—only hope and mercy. Only hope and mercy.

He chose twelve men to “be with” Him. For almost four years they lived and traveled together. Day and night He was with them. He patiently taught them. He never forsook them.

They didn’t understand Him. They thought they had better ideas. They became frustrated. They argued. But they wouldn’t leave Him, because He consistently loved them. He accepted them just the way they were. And they became better people.

The result? ***“My joy... your joy!”***

That’s what love—real love—does. It’s like an artesian well of joy. Ask anybody who has fallen in love! The smile doesn’t leave their face. The bounce doesn’t leave their step. Their eyes are bright. Their chin is up. Every day is a gift!

Jesus knew such love. *“Who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, disregarding its shame.”*

If THAT joy—HIS joy—is in you, you, too, will be (in the words of Oswald Chambers) “carefully careless” of life’s disruptions. You will possess resources that others cannot see and may not grasp. You will have *“food to eat that [they] don’t know about.”*

Fullness—even when you appear empty.

“No greater love... for his friends.”

The greatest demonstration of love, however, is not your personal fullness, but your personal generosity. Your life is not measured by what you receive or possess, but by what you manage to give away.

Not your holdings, but the outpouring of your kind service will be the lasting legacy of the life you have lived. What do people speak about at funerals? The houses or cars owned by the deceased? The extravagant meals they consumed, or trips they took? The net worth of the company they founded? Probably not.

Mostly, how they loved people, how they made them laugh, how they improved the lives of those who knew them. The things we’ll never forget.

“My friends... do what I command.”

This is what Jesus’ friends do. And what command was He referring to? We might name any of hundreds, but He summed them all up in one—what He called, *“My command.”*

“Love one another.”

This is His command. This is what He asks of you. This is what He expects from you. This is what he will measure when He returns.

This is your business, as a Christian. So, how's business?

Everybody's favorite passage on this poignant theme is found in Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, Greece.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (GW)

⁴ *Love is patient. Love is kind. Love isn't jealous. It doesn't sing its own praises. It isn't arrogant.*

⁵ *It isn't rude. It doesn't think about itself. It isn't irritable. It doesn't keep track of wrongs. ⁶ It isn't happy when injustice is done, but it is happy with the truth. ⁷ Love never stops being patient, never stops believing, never stops hoping, never gives up.*

⁸ *Love never comes to an end.*

This is a favorite quote during wedding ceremonies. But it's not about romantic love; it's about *agape* (God's love). So, let's take it all the way back to the beginning and consider this a description of the love of God, the way in which God the Father has loved humanity, and especially, how He loved His Son, Jesus.

How the Father loved the Son. Read the passage again from this perspective: *"God's love is patient. God's love is kind..."*

If we don't start here, we will fail to grasp the breadth, the length, the height, and the depth of the love of God in this passage. During Jesus sojourn among us, in the face of weariness, deprivation, opposition, and temptation, the Father was always with Him—guiding Him, strengthening Him, encouraging Him.

Some skeptics have asked, "How could a loving God sacrifice His Son to such a cruel, brutal death?" But they fail to see beyond the span of their own lives, let alone a generation, or the race of humanity. By contrast, Jesus, who *"came from the Father and returned to the Father"* (from eternity to eternity), willingly endured it all *"for the joy that was set before Him."*

How the Son loved you. 1 Corinthians 13 is also the story of how Jesus has loved you. Can you see it? Do you recognize it? Read the passage once more: *"Jesus' love is patient. Jesus' love is kind..."*

Or have you been so focused on the difficulties of your life that your vision of the life in the Spirit has been obscured? Have you been mired in the quicksand of complaint and regret?

Jesus has loved you—with an everlasting love! That’s way more than words! Do you realize it? If not, you need to sit down with John’s first letter to the churches, and meditate on his words.

Then, think back over your life, asking the Lord to point out how He intervened on your behalf, not only when you asked Him to, but even when you were unaware.

How patient, how kind, how faithful He has been! As a Savior, and as our example.

How you love each other.

That is how we are to love one another—*“just as [Jesus] has loved [us].”*

Jesus loves everyone in the same measure, but He doesn’t love everyone in the same way. Because we each have different needs.

Of course, at the heart level, we all have the same need: forgiveness of our sins and a cleansed conscience. But we each recognize love in different ways. We each NEED love in different ways, as the result of our personality and our history.

Let me introduce you to one way of sorting it out:

Five Love Languages

What are the love languages? We all give and receive love in 5 different ways - a concept created by Dr. Gary Chapman through his long-time work as a marriage counselor.

The 5 love languages are: quality time, words of affirmation, acts of service, giving/receiving gifts, and physical touch.

Quality time is about spending time together enjoying each other’s company.

Words of affirmation can be compliments and reassurances that confirm inner love in an outer way.

Acts of service are loving and helpful deeds performed for someone else.

Gifts can be any thoughtful tokens of love from the giver to the receiver.

Physical touch expresses love through hugging, appropriate intimacy, or simply putting a caring hand on someone’s shoulder.

Chapman's book, *The Five Love Languages*, sold 8,500 copies in the first year, 17,000 copies in the second year, and two years later: 137,000! It's been on the *New York Times* Best Seller list since 2009.

Chapman revised his material to meet the needs various groups:

The Five Love Languages for Children

The Five Love Languages for Men

The Five Love Languages for Singles

The Five Love Languages for Teenagers

The Five Love Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace

The most common love language by far is quality time for both men and women. In fact, it's chosen so frequently that it's more than *twice* as common as the second closest response, words of affirmation.

When it comes to second place, it was a tie between physical touch and words of affirmation for most men. On the flip side, there was no tie at all for the ladies, with words of affirmation as their second-most common love language by far.

Moody Publishers have developed a Love Language app, called Love Nudge, which is a free download from the App Store or Google Play. Use the app to take quizzes to determine your primary love language (and watch videos that describe each), discover your primary apology language, learn to manage your anger, learn appreciation language for the workplace, listen to Dr. Chapman's podcasts. You can even link the app with your spouse, and it will "nudge" you with ideas for expressing your affection for one another.

You may think that's unnecessary technology, but history indicates that we are atrociously neglectful of the things that build relationships, which is why they're so often in need of repair, and why the rate of divorce remains so high, and so many marriages suffer an early demise.

As Valentine's Day arrives tomorrow, don't neglect your loved ones. Instead of just throwing a bunch of money down for a hasty gift, think about the language that really speaks to your loved one's heart and plan a simple, but heartfelt, expression around that.

On a broader scale, make the time to have the conversations with your fellow Christians to learn what love language touches their hearts (they're not all the same). Jesus has loved you with understanding, and speaks your personal love language. Do the same for one another.

Some need words of affirmation. Some need a kind touch. Some need a thoughtful gift. Some need your help with a task. And almost everyone needs your focused attention. Let's do it! Love one another. It's Jesus' command.

Make a note to yourself right now, before you leave. Write the names of two people, and the appropriate expression of love for each of them. Then put it on your calendar for this week.

Will you call them on the phone? Take them some food? Send them a handwritten card? Fix that whatchamacallit for them? Give them a big hug? Whatever it will be, write it down, and set an appointment. That's what love requires: forethought.

Don't wait for inspiration to strike you. Be the inspiration! Just do it. His command is power.