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# Commanded to Love ... But How?

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Free media and discipleship resources for pastors, leaders, and growing disciples.

# Commanded to Love ... But How?

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## Day 15

*Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 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." (Matthew 22:35-39)*

Jesus summed up the most important commands in the Old Covenant by pointing to the importance of love. When asked by a Pharisee about the greatest commandment in the law, Jesus responded, "You shall love the LORD your God...." and, "You shall love your neighbor...."

Both the Old and New Covenant emphasize that love is to be our highest calling.

The Apostle John wrote, "For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John 3:11). He said, "And this is His commandment that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23). His admonition was, "If God so loved us, we also *ought* to love one another" (1 John 4:11).

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Let all that you do be done with love" (1 Corinthians 16:14). He encouraged the Ephesians, "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children and *walk in love*, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us" (Ephesians 5:1-2). And to the Colossians Paul said, "But above all these things *put on love*, which is the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:14).

But how do we do the *ought* John spoke of? How do we *walk in love* or *put on love* as Paul encouraged? If we think of these New Testament scriptures as something we are to try in our own strength to do—as commands to be followed in the Old Covenant way—they become impossible to obey.

And to make their impossibility blatantly clear, Jesus raised the bar on love. He said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemy, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:43-44). How can we love like that?

God is love and we were created in His image—to be like Him—to be part of His family and share *agape*.

Jesus came to show people what *agape* looks like in a human form, but His intent was never that we try to copy His actions by designing our own ways to help ourselves become more Christlike.

Jesus came as the living embodiment of love so we could know and believe the love that God has for us. Jesus freely gives us the love that we share with others. Knowing we are loved allows us to love. We radiate *agape* because we have received *agape*.

But I grew up, as many do, not fully understanding this. Somehow I understood that eternal life was mine despite my sins, but at the same time, I thought life on earth was to be lived by following “good,” “Christian” standards to improve myself. In a distorted way, I believed the law-based system of the Old Covenant was still in effect and that, while I was fully saved by grace, it was my job to live life on earth by trying to be honest, obedient, kind ... and most of all loving.

At the time I had no words or understanding for why I was struggling. I knew something wasn’t working, but I just kept trying harder to make my version of the “Christian” life work

God, in His mercy, would show me the root of the problem, but it would be a rough and painful journey ...

## **Ponder for a Moment**

In the past, have you ever felt that something wasn’t right in your life, but had no words or understanding about the root cause? If so, describe such a time.

If you could give your emotional/thought life to a friend, would they want what you have? How would they describe that life?