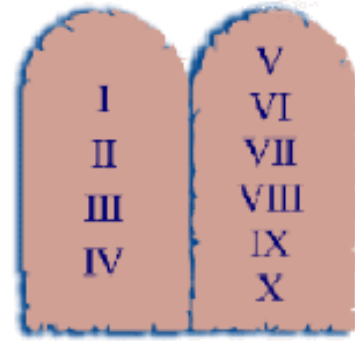


How Important is This?



The 1st Commandment

"You shall have no other gods before me."

Ex. 20:3, ESV

The 10 commandments given to Moses on Mt. Sinai are traditionally divided into 2 sections – the first 4 commandments make up the first of those sections for they deal primarily with our relationship to God while the last 6 make up the second section because these commandments deal primarily with our relationship to one another. When Jesus was questioned about the commandments he affirmed this and summed them up along this division:

*You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart, soul and mind,
and
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

But even as we think of these things we must remember that our obedience to these Commandments are not something we do simply to get God's attention or earn his approval. The law of God is not opposed to the grace of God: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* (Eph. 2:8-9, ESV) The Commandments do not first tell us what to do, they first tell us who Jesus himself is and what he did. It was Jesus who lived the Moral Law of God perfectly, his food and drink were to do

*For the Christian, obeying
the First Commandment
is a choice you make.*

the will of the Father. And for the joy set out before him – the joy of saving you from your sins and bringing you to himself – for that joy, he endured the cross, despising its shame and gained the victory for you and me and sat down at the right hand of God the Father. Our greatest joy is knowing that by our faith in Jesus, his righteousness has become our own – we didn't earn it, he did, and therefore, our obedience unto Jesus, by following his law, is out of our gratitude and zeal to live the life that Christ has given us to live. *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* (v. 10)

That's what you should think of when you come to the 1st Commandment: *You shall have no other gods before me.* This is not some-thing you must do if you want to go to heaven, this is what you choose to do because of what Christ has done for you. In other words, for the Christian, saved by the grace of God, obeying the 1st Commandment is a choice you make.

“I Do”

Let me give you an analogy from the vows a person takes for marriage. When a man and woman get married, they make certain vows before God.

1) The man and woman make a choice to be one with one another. The woman doesn't marry the man in hopes that by doing so he might one day love her back. They make the vow because they already do love one another. They won't merely live together in one place, they choose to be one with one another - everything in their lives will be shared. You won't be able to think of the one apart from the other. In much the same way, the Christian chooses to be one with his Lord. He chooses to love the one who first loved him. He chooses to be identified totally with God in his life - nothing in his life is separated from his bond with the Lord.



Mr. & Mrs. Joe Reallyhappy

2) The man and woman make this choice to the exclusion of all others. When this man and woman choose one another in marriage they are also rejecting all other possibilities and choices they could make. No one else may ever share in this marriage in any way - they belong

*The greatest way God can say
“I love you”
is to show you Jesus.*

totally and completely to one another. When Joshua spoke to the Israelites, he said: *choose this day whom you will serve*, (Josh. 24:15b, ESV) He said that because choosing for God meant rejecting all others. And he didn't mean “just then” or “for a while”, he meant from now on and for ever more.

Love is All Encompassing

Now, what does it mean to love the Lord? It means much the same as it does to love someone else in marriage.

1) **The emotion of devotion.** Love is not always feelings. Feelings are fickle, they come and go. Hollywood says: “Listen to your heart, listen to your feelings.” The Bible says: “Don't trust your heart, do not be self-deceived.” Nevertheless, there is an emotion to love, isn't there? If there wasn't, not too many people would ever get married. There is a feeling of attachment, of security, of “warm fuzzies” that is supposed to be there and will grow deeper over time.

2) But more than emotions, **love means commitment.** Your choice for this person, for your Lord, is for keeps. When Elijah faced the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel it wasn't just a debate or contest. Both sides knew that the one worshipping the false god would die. When you choose whom you will love - when you choose who will be your God - it is more than just choosing what team you will root for this year. This choice is who you are, who you will be.

3) You demonstrate your commitment every day by **honoring your Lord.** When you commit yourself to your spouse everything in your life is oriented around his/her well-being. You seek to honor him/her in everything you do. When you choose to love the Lord, you yield your will to him. Jesus said, *Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.* (Jn. 14:23, ESV)

4) Love means to **trust** your life to the other. There are many routine ways this is true, of course. Whenever you ride in a car with someone else driving, you are entrusting your life into his/her hands.

*If you are a Christian,
it is because Jesus kept this commandment
perfectly.*

But we also see other ways in which this is much more dramatic. A spouse's life is literally entrusted to the other who makes decisions on that person's behalf. When we say we love the Lord we are saying we trust our lives, now and always, into his hands. We are not our own, we are his.

Finally, how can we love God with all our heart, mind and strength? Jesus tells us what this means in Mt. 5:48: *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* The word "perfect" in Scripture doesn't mean without any mistakes or imperfections at all as much as it means "whole", not compartmentalized. In other words, your choice to love God effects everything else – how you live, how you choose your friends, your job, the place where you will choose to live. It even effects how you will go about looking for a person to marry and the commitments you will one day make to that person in marriage.

The 1st Commandment, to have no other gods in your life, is the greatest and most comprehensive commandment of all. It effects everything else. You can't understand or obey the other commandments until you first embrace this one. If you are a Christian it is because Jesus kept this commandment perfectly and gave you the gift of his righteousness by his grace. And that means that you now must choose to respond to that grace and make your life one with your Lord and Savior.

From *Studies in the Book of Exodus*, by Pastor Dave Barker, November, 2000.

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