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## **The Greatest Commandment**

Definitions in **bold** letters are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance  
Other definitions are from **Webster's** Dictionary, 1828 Edition  
or Roget's Thesaurus – **May 25, 2014**

## **Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Mark 12:28-34**

**Introduction:** This great chapter is the O.T. equivalent of the N.T. Sermon on the Mount, or the practical phase of living the **holy life** as outlined by Paul in the **Rom. 12**. At no other place in the O.T. is there achieved so high a plane of morality as that which appears here, where Israel was commanded to "Love thy neighbor as thyself," and to include also the alien **stranger** in the same affection. Coleman wrote that, "it is one of the greatest chapters in the O.T., a Mosaic anticipation of the Sermon on the Mount."

The appearance of "I am the Lord your God" no less than sixteen times in this single chapter shows the relationship of the material in it to the Decalogue and other covenant portions of the Pentateuch, and precepts here are in several instances extensions of Commandments I, II, III, IV, V, VII, VIII, IX, and X. In fact, IF "Love thy neighbor" is looked upon as the antithesis (opposition of words) of "**Thou shalt not kill (murder)**," then there are echoes herein of the entire Decalogue. In spite of such close connection with other portions of the Pentateuch, however, the chapter remains in a practical sense "a repetition of sundry (various) laws," most of which have received full comment in this series in Exodus and previous chapters of Leviticus.

Many thoughtless commentators have mentioned the disconnected and haphazard arrangement of the various admonitions in it, making of it a mere hodgepodge of rules and regulations without rhyme or reason, but we are indebted to Gordon J. Wenham for a remarkably sufficient outline of it. There are **sixteen paragraphs** in it, each one of them ending with the message "I am the Lord (your) God"; and these paragraphs fall into **three divisions**, the first detailing religious duties, the second stressing obligations to "thy neighbor," and the third mentioning miscellaneous duties directed mainly to the purpose of keeping Israel "separate" from the heathen. The sixteen sub-paragraphs fit into this larger structure in a 4, 4, and 8 arrangement...

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

**Leviticus 19:18**, Thou shalt not **AVENGE**, nor bear any **grudge (cherish anger)** against the children of thy people, but thou shalt

**LOVE (have affection for) thy neighbour AS thyself: I am the LORD (Jehovah [Yahweh]).**

**Avenge defined 5358, avenge or punish: -- revenge self, take VENGEANCE.**

VENGEANCE, n. The infliction of pain on another, in return for an injury or offense. Such infliction, when it proceeds from malice or mere resentment, and is not necessary for the purposes of JUSTICE, is revenge, and most heinous CRIME. When such infliction proceeds from a mere love of justice, and the necessity of punishing offenders for the support of the laws, it is vengeance, and is warrantable and JUST. In this case, vengeance is a JUST retribution (repayment), recompense or punishment.

**Romans 13:1-4**, Let every soul be subject unto the higher **powers (magistrate [ruler])**. For there is no **power (authority)** but of God: the powers (rulers) that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For **rulers** are not a terror to **good works**, but to the **evil**. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the **sword** in vain: for he is the **minister (servant)** of God, a **revenger** to execute wrath upon him that doeth **evil**.

**NOTE: ...but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**; sincerely and heartily, as a man loves himself, doing all the good to him as a man does to himself, or would have done to himself, and hindering all the mischief done to him he would have himself preserved from: Jarchi observes, that it was a saying of R. Akiba, that this is "the great universal in the law," and it does indeed comprehend the whole of the second table of the law, and is the summary of it, and is pretty much the same our Lord says of it, that it is the second and great commandment, and like unto the first, on which two all the law and the prophets hang, ( Matthew 22:37-40 ); and so the Apostle Paul makes all the laws of the second table to be comprehended in this, ( Romans 13:9 ); **I [am] the Lord**; the Creator of ALL MEN, and who has commanded them to love one another, and to whom alone vengeance belongs, and who **expects obedience** to the above laws of his.  
(Source: [biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/](http://biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/))

**NOTE: ...the great deficiency in Israel regarding these rules was due to their false understanding of "neighbor" as meaning merely a fellow Jew.** It was precisely to that problem and with the design of correcting it that our Lord spoke the parable of the **Good Samaritan (Luke 10)**. That the fault lay not so much in God's law as in the false interpretation of it by the Jewish religious hierarchy is evident in this chapter, where, in Lev. 19:34, loving "the stranger and sojourner" is also shown to be part of God's law. In fact, Jamieson affirmed that, "Neighbor, as used here, is synonymous with fellow-creature."  
(Source: [Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studydrive.org/com/bcc/](http://Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studydrive.org/com/bcc/))

**Leviticus 19:33-34**, And if a stranger sojourn (live in a place as a temporary resident) with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you **AS** one born among you, and thou shalt **love** him as **thyself**; for **YE** were **strangers** in the land of Egypt: I am **the LORD** your God.

**Luke 10:25-37**, And, behold, a certain **lawyer** stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, **What is written in the law?** how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And **WHO** is **my neighbour?** And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain **priest** that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a **Levite**, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain **Samaritan**, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, **he had compassion (feel sympathy)** on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

Which now of these **three**, thinkest thou, **was neighbour UNTO him** that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that **shewed mercy** on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and **DO thou** likewise.

**Deuteronomy 6:1-3**, Now these are the **commandments**, the **statutes**, and the **judgments**, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might DO them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest **FEAR (reverence)** the LORD thy God, to keep ALL his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may **be prolonged**. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may **BE WELL** with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath **promised thee**, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

**NOTE:** Deut. 5 presented the Decalogue; "Deut. 6 is a dissertation (commentary) on the first and great commandment." "The words statutes and ordinances in Deut. 6:1 are explanatory of and in apposition (addition) to commandment." What we have in this chapter is "actually turning the thought in the **first two commandments** of the Decalogue from negative to positive form." (Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

**Thought 1.** As some of you may have know, the words "fear (reverence)" caused me to remember it's the ONE reason WHY people obey God, as revealed in Proverbs 14:2.

**Proverbs 14:2**, He that walketh in his uprightness **feareth** (REVERENCE) the Lord: But he that is **perverse (turn aside)** in his ways **despiseth** (disrespects) him.

Reverence, **1. deep respect** and esteem (high value, regards) mingled with FEAR and affection (**LOVE**). (1913 Webster's) **2.** The fear acceptable to God, is a filial [child in relation to his parents] fear, an awful reverence of the divine nature, proceeding from a just esteem [high value] of his **PERFECTIONS** [infinite power, holiness, justice, benevolence and wisdom], which produces in us an inclination (leaning of the MIND or WILL) TO his service and an unwillingness to offend him.

**Deuteronomy 6:4**, Hear, O Israel: **The LORD (Jehovah [Yahweh]) our God is one (alone) LORD (the self-Existent or Eternal) ...**

**Thought 1.** As you see, I defined "the LORD" and "LORD" differently, even though they are the exact same Hebrew word. Some commentaries, or theologians define both to mean "Jehovah." However, since they have more than one meaning, reason says choose the word that best conveys the meaning that the Holy Spirit intended. Below is the entire definition, so you can see how I arrived at the meaning I believe is intended.

**The LORD / LORD defined 3068 Yhovah pronounced yeh-ho-vaw' from 1961; (the) self-Existent or Eternal; Jehovah, Jewish national name of God:-- Jehovah, the Lord.**

**Thought 2.** It's agreed and obvious that the Holy Spirit is making clear that "Jehovah, meaning, "Yahweh" is the only God, which means, Supreme (highest) authority. (Eph. 4:6) In some verses of scripture he's known as: "the Highest" or "the Most High."

**Psalms 83:17-18**, Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: that *men* may know that thou, whose **name** alone is **JEHOVAH** (Yahweh), *art* the **Most High** over all the earth.

**Luke 1:31-32**, And, behold, thou shalt **conceive** in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the **Son of the Highest (the Supreme (highest) God)...**

**Ephesians 4:4, 6**, There is... **...ONE God** and **Father** of ALL, who is **above** (higher in place, greater, exceeding) all, and through all, and **IN** you all.

**God defined 2316 theos theh'-os, a deity** (divinity [the state of being divine]), **the supreme** (Highest in authority, Highest) **Divinity**.

**Deuteronomy 6:5**, *And thou shalt **LOVE** the **LORD** thy God with all thine **heart (MIND)**, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

**NOTE:** *...thou shalt love the Lord thy God..* Which is the first and chief commandment in the law, the sum and substance of the first table of it; and includes in it, or at least has connected with it, knowledge of God, esteem of him, delight in him, faith and trust in him, **fear** and worship of him, and **obedience** to him, which when right **springs from it**. God is to be loved because of the perfections of his nature, and the works of his hand, of nature, providence, and grace; and because of the relations he stands in to men, and especially to his own people; and because of his peculiar love to them; and, indeed, he is to be loved by all men for his care of them, and blessings of goodness bestowed on them; the manner in which this is to be done follows: **with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might**; with a superlative (highest in degree) LOVE, above all creatures whatever; with the whole of the affections of the heart, with great fervency and ardour (warmth, or heat, applied to the passions and affections; eagerness) of spirit, in the sincerity of the soul, and with all the strength of grace a man has, with such love that is as strong as death. Jarchi interprets loving God with all the heart, that is, with thy heart not divided about God, a heart not divided between God and the creature; "all thy might" he interprets of mammon or substance; and, indeed, that is one way in which men may show their love to God, by laying out their substance in his service, and for the support of his cause and interest in the world. Aben Ezra by "the heart" **understands knowledge**, and by the "soul" the **spirit** of man that is in his body, and by might perfect love in the heart. (Source: [biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/](http://biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/))

**Deuteronomy 6:6-7**, *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine **heart (MIND)**: And thou shalt **teach** them diligently unto thy **children**, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

**NOTE:** Care and diligence are to be used, and pains taken, to instruct **children**, as soon as they are capable, in the knowledge of God, and of his commandments; that they are to love him, fear him, serve, and worship him; this is to bring them up in the **nurture** and **admonition** of the Lord, (Ephesians 6:4), it may be rendered "thou shalt whet or sharpen them", the words or commandments; it is expressive of diligence and industry in teaching, by frequent repetition of things, by inculcating (drive) them continually **into their minds**, endeavouring to imprint them there, that they may be sharp, ready, and expert in them...

(Source: [biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/](http://biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/))

**Deuteronomy 6:8-9**, *And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine **hand**, and they shall be as frontlets between thine **eyes**.*

*And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy **house**, and on thy **gates**.*

**NOTE:** Deut. 6:8,9. From the earliest days, the Jews understood these verses as **literal** requirements. The "frontlets between the eyes," the binding of the commandments upon their hands, and their putting them on the door-posts and their gates, led to **three kinds** of devices by which these instructions were honored: One was the [~tsitsith], or fringe at the four corners of the outer garment; the others were the [~tephillin] and the [~mezuzah]. The [~tephillin] were **two small boxes** about one cubic inch in size, containing the Scriptures (given in the above quotation). Dummelow tells us that there were four

Scriptural passages inside these small containers: Exo. 13:1-10 and Exo. 11:13, also Deut. 6:4-9, and Deut. 11:13-21. The devices called by Dummelow the [~tephillin] are referred to as "**phylacteries**" by the Lord Jesus in **Matt. 23:5**, but that is the only appearance of that word in the Bible.

The [~mezuzah] (or medusah) were similar containers and were placed upon every right-hand **door-post** in **Jewish houses**. They were also for "door-posts" and for "your **gates**." "The sign was to be on the door-post of the house, representing the family unit, and upon the `gates,' representing the community or village." "The pious Jew **touches** the [~mezuzah] on each occasion of passing, or kisses his finger and says Ps. 121:8 in Hebrew, `Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and forevermore.'"

Of course, it is almost universally agreed today that the Jews were **mistaken** in **literalizing** these instructions which were no doubt merely metaphorical commandments meaning that the Jew should keep all these instructions in **mind** and **heart** **always**. However, it is easier to criticize the Jews than it is to do the real thing intended here, namely, to **REMEMBER** to **do** and to **teach** the word of God continually. (Source: *Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/*)

**Mark 12:28**, And *one of the scribes* came, and having heard them *reasoning* together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the **FIRST (foremost in importance)**-- **chief**) commandment of all?

**NOTE:** When Matthew (Mt 22:35) therefore says he came "tempting," or "**trying him**," as one of the **Pharisaic** party who seemed to enjoy the defeat He had given to the Sadducees, we may suppose that though somewhat priding himself upon his insight into the law, and not indisposed to measure his knowledge with One in whom he had not yet learned to believe, he was nevertheless an honest-hearted, **fair disputant**.

**Which is the first commandment of all?**-- first in importance; the PRIMARY, LEADING commandment, the most fundamental one. This was a question which, with some others, divided the Jewish teachers into rival schools. Our Lord's answer is in a strain of respect very different from what He showed to cavillers (one who frame sophisms [false reasoning], for the sake of victory in an argument)-- ever observing His own direction, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine; lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Mt 7:6).

(Source: *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary classic.studylight.org/com/jfb*)

**Mark 12:29-30**, And Jesus answered him, The **FIRST (foremost in importance)**-- **chief**) of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is **one (ONLY) LORD**; And thou shalt **LOVE** the **LORD** thy **GOD** with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the **first** commandment.

**Lord defined 2962, kurios pronounced koo'-ree-os from kuros (supremacy); supreme** (highest) **in authority, i.e. by implication, God** (Supreme [highest] Being and the sovereign [Supreme in power; possessing supreme dominion] of the universe.

**God defined 2316 theos theh'-os, deity** (divinity [the state of being divine]), **supreme** (Highest in authority, Highest) **Divinity**.

**Love defined 25, agapao pronounced ag-ap-ah'-o; to love (in a SOCIAL or MORAL sense).**

Social, social DUTIES. True SELF-love and social are the same.

Moral, **1**. conformed to accepted rules of right; acting in conformity with such rules (1913 Webs. Dict.)

**Thought 1.** Even though Jesus is raised from the dead by his Father and exalted to be "God" the Son again, his Father is still the "highest authority", and will always be.

**John 20:17**, Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am NOT yet ascended to my Father: But go to my brethren, and say unto them, **I ascend** unto **MY Father**, and your Father; and to **MY God**, and your God.

**Ephesians 4:4, 6**, There is... **ONE God** and **Father** of ALL, who is **above** (higher in place, greater, exceeding) all, and through all, and IN you all.

**NOTE:** This is actually the **goal** of all God's dealings with the human family, namely, that they should love God. This purpose of the **Almighty** explains everything in the Bible. When Adam and Eve were placed in the paradise of Eden, God could have created them so that it would have been impossible for them to have violated his will, just as **animals cannot sin**. God, however, desired that his human creation should love him; and, because love that is coerced or forced is **not** actually **love**, God made the principle of freedom of the will operative in humanity; but with that freedom of choice, the consequences of the wrong choice became inherent in human life. From the Adamic fall there came the need for redemption, and the whole drama of human salvation was set in motion. God's purpose, however, has never wavered, the great intention continuing to be that men shall love their Creator. **Love** of God is a **far greater** thing even than **faith**; for if men love God, they will also invariably obey him (John 14:15), something that is not true of faith at all. It is in this supreme truth that the justification is found for Paul's declaration that "**the greatest of these is love**" (1 Corinthians 13:13); and it is the undergirding of Jesus' declaration that the first and greatest commandment is to love God. (Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

**Mark 12:31**, And the **second** is like, namely this, Thou shalt **LOVE** thy **neighbour** as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

**Thought 1.** The Holy Spirit led Paul to write that husbands were to love their wives AS (like) Christ loved the Church, his body. (Eph.5:25-30) This, as you know, leads us to the new commandment that Christ first gave to his apostles, as well as his body.

**John 13:34-35**, A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **love** one another; AS (like) I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men **know** that ye are my disciples, if ye have **love** one to another.

**Mark 12:32-33**, And the **scribe** said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is ONE **God (supreme [highest] Divinity)**; and there is none other but HE: And to **love** him with all the heart, and with all the **understanding**, and with all the **soul**, and with all the **strength**, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

**NOTE:** The inherent truth of Jesus' words **fully convinced** the **scribe** of all the Lord had said; and his repetition of Jesus' teachings indicated the profound impression the Lord had made upon his heart.

(Source: Coffman Commentaries on the Old & New Testament classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/)

**Mark 12:34**, And when Jesus saw that he answered **discreetly** (wisely), he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

**NOTE:** ...our Lord's sense is, that he was not far off from the **Gospel dispensation**, and was in a fair way of entering into it; his sentiments were very near to such, who became followers of Christ, and embraced the doctrines, and submitted to the ordinances of the Gospel state: since he preferred those things, which related to the **knowledge** of the being and perfections of God, to the **love** and **worship** of **God**, and to the good of his neighbour; before the ceremonies of the law; which were quickly to be abolished, and make way for the setting up of the kingdom of God, or of the Messiah, in a more glorious and visible manner. (Source: biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/)