

What The First Commandment Means

John Isaac Edwards

A scribe came asking Jesus, “Which is the first commandment of all?” Jesus answered, “The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one 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” (Mk. 12:28-30). This reaches back to Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Do you know what the first commandment means? It means...

1) **Keeping His Commandments.** You can’t separate the love of God and His commandments — they go hand in hand! It is written in Deuteronomy: “Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments...” (Dt. 7:9). “Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep

his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway” (Dt. 11:1). As you come to the New Testament, John connected love of God with commandment-keeping. “But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected...” (1 Jn. 2:5). “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 Jn. 5:3). “And this is love, that we walk after his commandments...” (2 Jn. 6). Those who do not keep the Lord’s commandments don’t really love Him!

2) **Fearing Him.** The first commandment means something else — it means fearing Him. Deuteronomy 10:12, the most comprehensive statement in the Bible, asks this question: “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee...” The answer includes, “...but to fear the Lord thy

God...” To fear God is to reverence Him so as to do what He says! The Psalms place much emphasis upon the fear of the Lord. “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling” (Ps. 2:11). “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him” (Ps. 33:8). “Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him...” (Ps. 33:18). “O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him” (Ps. 34:9). “He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great” (Ps. 115:13). Remember man’s whole duty? “...Fear God, and keep his commandments...” (Eccl. 12:13).

3) **Walking In All His Ways.** The first commandment means “...to walk in all his ways...” (Dt. 10:12). Not just some of His ways, but *all* His ways! Why walk in all His ways? “For as

the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways..." (Is. 55:9).

4) *Serving Him.*

Something else is involved in the first commandment — serving Him! Deuteronomy 10:12 adds, "...and to serve thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." Those who do not serve the Lord or try to serve Him half-heartedly don't know what the first commandment means! Among Joshua's parting words to Israel was, "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth..." (Josh. 24:14).

5) *Cleaving Unto Him.*

Deuteronomy 11:22 reads, "For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways,

(now notice) and to cleave unto him..." This word "cleave" is the same word used in Genesis 2:24 in reference to the marriage relationship. To "cleave" is to be firmly fastened to the Lord, and requires commitment! Moses appealed to Israel, "... that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days..." (Dt. 30:20). Remember Barnabas, the encourager? He exhorted first-century disciples, "...that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23). The first commandment means we need to have some stick-to-itiveness about us!

6) *Not Being Deceived By False Prophets.* The law book admonishes, "Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know

whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Dt. 13:3). False prophets are not just a thing of the past! Peter warned, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you..." (2 Pet. 2:1). Thus, we must do some Scripture-searching (Acts 17:11), spirit-trying (1 Jn. 4:1), proving and holding fast (1 Th. 5:21).

7) *Hating Evil.* Psalm 97:10 records, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil..." Some, like Israel of old, "...call evil good, and good evil..." (Is. 5:20). We must know the difference between good and evil, "...Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9). Now read 1 Peter 3:10-12.

Do you know what the first commandment means?

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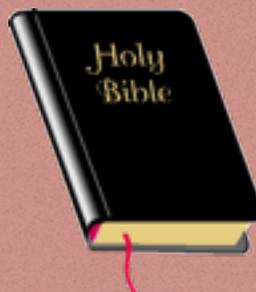
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