

How Do We Love God?

Matthew 22:36-38 [NIV] *“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.”*

How can we fulfil this command?

Many Christians experience a sense of frustration generated by the knowledge that they seem unable to work up any emotional thrill over their Lord and Saviour.

They want to, but feelings just will **not** flow.

This can cause discouragement, because of the absence of religious emotion, they conclude that they are **not** really a Christian after all.

This can lead to their religion becoming just an empty ritual.

Many Christians believe in God, even trust Christ as their Saviour, but the love they hoped to feel consistently eludes them.

What is the problem?

How can I love by obeying this command?

You cannot.

No law has ever been made that can compel one moral being to love another, for by nature love must be voluntary.

No-one can be coerced or frightened into loving another person.

How then can we love God?

There are two kinds of love.

1. The love prompted by feelings, centred in emotions.
2. The love prompted by will and centred in willing submission.

Love prompted by feelings is an emotion over which we have little or no control.

Such love comes and goes, rises and falls, flares up and disappears as it chooses, changes from hot to warm then can become cold.

Such emotional love is **not** what was in the mind of Jesus Christ when He commanded us to love God.

An understanding of the Greek word used by Jesus Christ and His apostles will help us to obey this command of Jesus Christ.

The Greek word is “*agapé*” – this is a spontaneous love that is irrespective of the rights or response of the person receiving this love.

A sacrificial love where the selfish desires are set aside in order to show this love to others.

Such love is **not** emotional but a direct act of will.

This is the very love that our Creator God has for us and we can only share such love when we allow God to direct our lives.

Galatians 5:22 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,”*

The agapé love is one of the fruits of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Philippians 2:12-13 [NIV] *“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to **work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.**”*

God working in us through the Holy Spirit will give us a willing spirit to respond to the love God has for us.

1 John 4:19 [NIV] *“We love because he first loved us.”*

The realisation of the immensity of God’s love for us, will prompt us to respond to that love in the same way.

Ephesians 4:15 [NIV] *“Instead, **speaking the truth in love**, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”*

Fulfilling God’s desire for us to speak about God’s love for all humanity to others will help our love for Him to grow.

1 John 4:12, 17 [NIV] *“No-one has ever seen God; but **if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.**” ... “In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.”*

Here we see the key to our love for God to grow.

1 John 4:20-21 [NIV] *“**If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.**”*

Expressing the love, that is the fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit, towards every other human being will enlarge our love for God.

To love God with all our heart we must first of all will to do so and express this will by loving our neighbour.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, **in view of God’s mercy**, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. **Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

It is God’s will that we love Him and we can **only** do this by a complete mind change.

Our natural selfish mind has to be changed to one that is motivated by thankfulness.

Note the words *“in view of God’s mercy,”* that is meditating on this undeserved mercy of God, a natural outpouring of the love He has for all humanity.

This should motivate us, out of gratitude to submit to His will, to seek His love and prompt us to reflect this love in our relationships with all other human beings.