

(Joy of Obedience) Jesus' Two Commands: Love & Go

Scripture reading: 1 John 4:7-12

Obedying a command might get you killed.

On the other hand, obeying a command might save your life.

It is important not to confuse the two.

On the 15-hour flight from Hong Kong to Dallas I watched a lot of movies. I watched a movie about wildfire firefighters in California, *Only the Brave* - the Granite Mountain Hotshots. They were fighting a huge fire, constantly monitoring the wind speed and direction. The captain commanded the group to go in one direction, and commanded one man to go in another direction to lookout from the top of a mountain and report the direction of the fire. He didn't want to go. He wanted to stay with the group, but he obeyed. The wind changed direction and the group got caught in the fire and suffocated and died - 19 or the 20 firefighters died. The one man who obeyed the captain's command saved his life.

Obedying the commands of Christ will save your life, in this world and for eternity!

The first command to obey is BELIEVE. 1 John 3:23: "And this is his command: **to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ**, and to love one another as he commanded us." The FIRST command is actually BELIEVE in Christ. We cannot LOVE and GO until we believe in Christ.

Jesus Christ has two essential commands for those who believe: Love and Go. Obedience to these commands is necessary for individual believers and a church to grow and glorify Christ.

First command, love one another.

1. John 13:34-35: "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
2. John 15:12-14: "This is My command: Love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you."

Love one another - a command?

"Love one another" a command? How can love be commanded? Love is an action of free will. Love is freely offered self-sacrifice on behalf of another person. It cannot be commanded. "I command you to love me!" I cannot command my wife to love me, especially after I do something to make her angry and she doesn't feel in love with me.

Jesus commands love because love is an action we can choose to do. The *feeling* of love cannot be commanded, but the *action* of love can be. Love is an action verb. We can still do a loving action even when we don't feel like it. My wife's love language is acts of service. (Are you familiar with the *The Five Love Languages*: gifts, quality time, words of affirmation, acts of service, physical touch?) She feels loved when I serve her. (We have an agreement. She cooks and I clean the dishes and stove.) I can do the loving action - wash the dishes, clean the bathroom, take my wife out for dinner - even if I don't feel like it. Do the action and the feelings will follow. We can choose from a free will to obey the

love command. Anything Jesus commands he gives the desire and power to do. The first fruit of the Holy Spirit is love: Galatians 5:22.

What makes “love one another” a new command?

We are familiar with the two great commandments of the Old Testament: Love God and love your neighbor as you love yourself. The first four of the Ten Commandments are summed up as, *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) The remaining six of the Ten are summed up as, *“You shall not hate your brother in your heart... so you don’t sin against him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”* (Leviticus 19:18) These love commandments were well known to every Jew.

So what makes Jesus’ command new? There are nuances of meaning to the word *new*. The Greek word for new *kainos* means of new quality, like an upgrade. **How many of you have an iPhone? What version is it? What if Apple said, “This is the final iPhone model. No more upgrades.”** It’s like Jesus is saying, “You know about the command to love God and neighbor from the Old Testament. I’m giving it a whole new quality, a new focus. I’m giving that love command a very big upgrade. It will be the final, once-and-for-all version.”

What’s new about Christ’s command is its exclusiveness.

What makes love one another a *new* command is its exclusiveness. When and where did Jesus give this command? Context is essential. Jesus gave this command to his 11 disciples during the last supper (after Judas left to betray Christ). This command is exclusive to the followers of Jesus Christ. It must be exclusive because of the cost, the self-sacrifice it demands.

There are the 2 great commandments of Jewish tradition, love God and neighbor as yourself, are inclusive of all people. All people are commanded to obey the Ten Commandments. Leviticus 19:18 is a summary of the last 6 of the Ten Commandments. It’s a lot of “You shall not do...” to your neighbor. You shall not murder or steal from your neighbor, or lie, or commit adultery with his/her spouse, or covet his possessions. In other words, just avoid doing bad things to your neighbor and that’s love.

Jesus taught it is also doing good things to a neighbor. Read **Luke 10:25-28**. Then Jesus told the Parable of the Good Samaritan. We can all do what the Good Samaritan did for the stranger. All people are commanded to be a good neighbor. It is inclusive of all people.

Christ’s new command to love one another is exclusive to his disciples. I would lay down my life for my wife and children or any other genuine Christians I know in my church, but not just any neighbor. I’m not commanded to lay down my life for just anyone; only other brothers and sisters in Christ.

Christ’s command is new because it is not grounded in the Leviticus love-your-neighbor command, but in something else, something far more costly - the self-sacrifice of Christ to reconcile sinners to God.

What’s new about Christ’s command is its example.

What makes it new is *just as I have love you*. The command comes with a perfect example! 15:13: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you."

The Old Testament commands, "Love God and love your neighbor," are for all people, but there was never a perfect example. Israel failed to love God and neighbor. There are imperfect examples of love your neighbor, like Jonathan loved David, Ruth loved her mother-in-law Naomi, but no perfect sacrificial example until Jesus Christ.

How did Jesus love his disciples? What perfect example did he give them?

Jesus taught and showed them how to love one another for three years.

Jesus settled jealous rivalries between the disciples. When James and John asked to sit next to Christ on his throne, Jesus taught them about the cost of love. Jesus gave James and John the nickname "Sons of Thunder" because of their personalities (Mark 3:17). The "Sons of Thunder" were too loud and selfish. Read Mark 10:35-45. Jesus told them he had a terrible cup of suffering to drink. Jesus told them to be great by serving others. Jesus told them he would serve them by giving his life as a ransom payment. One of the Sons of Thunder, John, changed and wrote more about "love one another" than all the other disciples. Christ showed John how to love. Christ changed that *Son of Thunder* into a selfless servant. John wrote "love one another" six times in his three short letters. 1 John 4:11: "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Jesus washed the disciples' feet as an example of how to love by serving (13:12-14).

Jesus' final and perfect example of "love one another" was his sacrifice on the cross as a ransom payment to save us from our sinfulness and reconcile us to God. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." **What makes love one another a new command is the New Covenant that Jesus Christ inaugurated with his body and blood.**

What's new about the command is the power of its testimony.

John 13:35: "By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Our testimony to the world will be powerful if we have the kind of self-sacrificial love Christ has shown us for one another. The world can see we are Christians by our bumper stickers, crosses, T-shirts, church buildings, traditions, rituals, social justice, pro-life marches, but they will not really KNOW and BELIEVE until they see our love for one another. Sacrificial family love is attractive.

We are commanded to love the family of God! 1 Peter 2:17: *Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the president.*

One of the things I really enjoy about visiting my family in HK is sitting around a big round table and eating together. Everyone is talking, laughing, taking pictures. We are family and we love one another. We may not agree on everything, but we love and support each other and stay together.

Everyone wants to belong to a loving family. I read a story in the news about a black boy who had no father or mother. He went to a church and said, "I just want to be adopted by a loving family." He was immediately adopted! There are lost and hurting people out there who want to be adopted by a loving family of believers.

1 Corinthians 13 is a description of love in the family of God. I've served in a few churches and I know that loving one another takes patience, kindness, forgiveness, self-

sacrifice, every quality described in 1 Corinthians 13. But we must do it so that all people will know we are Christ's disciples. Love for one another is the one characteristic that marks us a Jesus' disciples. It is our most powerful testimony to the world about Christ. (Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus are recognized by their religious rituals. Christians must be recognized by their love for one another!)

I remember when I was a teenager singing around a campfire, "And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes they'll know we are Christians by our love." I can still play it on guitar!



Second command, go and make disciples of all nations.

Living the first command makes doing the second command easier because it makes preaching the gospel more authentic and attractive.

Matthew 28:18-20: *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* We call this The Great Commission.

Jesus said, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."* What's authority got to do with the command? It means we can do it. Jesus was saying, "Because I have earned and possess all authority, you can go and make disciples." Jesus has all authority over the world. Jesus has authority over our Adversary, Satan. Jesus gives us his authority to use as we go and make disciples of all nations. We can preach the gospel with an authoritative command: Acts 2:38: *And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* We have Christ's authority to command an obedient response to the gospel.

Jesus sent out the twelve and then seventy-two to proclaim and demonstrate the Kingdom of God. He shared his power and authority with them. Luke 9:1-2: *And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.* We must never be ashamed to proclaim. Christ shares his authority with us to advance his kingdom in this world.

Why Go? We have a duty to obey Christ like a soldier has a duty to obey the command of an officer. Duty can be the motivation, but our obedience motivated by love for Christ and belief in the power of the gospel is the best motivation. Go and make disciples if you really believe the living Christ has the power to save all who believe in him.

Go where? Jesus said to his disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Jerusalem = Memphis. Judea = Tennessee. Samaria = domestic cross-cultural missions. End of the earth = world missions. Support missionaries who are going to make disciples of unreached people groups. You are a church of multiethnic disciples who love one another with the love of Christ. Keep going and making disciples of all nations!

Someone will say to me, "I've been thinking about going on a mission trip. Should I go?" My response, "Of course! Jesus said go and make disciples. Obey his command and live like the book of Acts."

Sandie and I tried to be career missionaries, but God closed the door. So I go on as many short-term mission trips as time and money permit.

- Domestic mission: Teenage disciples of Christ must go on mission trips! Their faith will be transformed. I have seen this happen many times as I took groups of teenagers on many domestic and foreign mission trips.
- Foreign missions: I went to Burkina Faso with my daughter Tamlyn.
- I have been on five mission trips to Taiwan. We do VBS and teach English. I share testimony in the prisons. The first place I go when I get to Taiwan is to see the first Protestant missionary to Taiwan, Kai Bok-su, Dr. George Mackay. He loved the people of Taiwan so much he married a local woman and raised a family.
- In May I went on a mission trip to Bahrain. I visited the Grand Mosque with a friend who lives there as an "intentional worker". Abdul Aziz gave us a tour of the mosque and tried to evangelize us. We Christians ought to have the same zeal to evangelize!

Christ's commands are not burdensome.

1 John 5:2-4: *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. **And his commandments are not burdensome.** For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*

We show our love for God by keeping his commandments. Christ's commands are not burdensome. Loving one another should never be a burden, but a joy! Go and make disciples is not a burden. It's a joy! Sin is a burden.

When I command Peter to clean his room or do other chores around the house it is sometimes a burden for him.

What can make God's commands burdensome is opposition from the sinful world.

- It may be a burden to love other Christians who have a different theology and practice or when they act in an unsanctified manner. It isn't a burden when we know forgiveness. Love forgives. Forgiveness lifts the burden from the command. Colossians 3:12-14: *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*
- *I Can Only Imagine* is a powerful movie about forgiveness!
- It is a burden to GO and share the gospel and face rejection and ridicule and persecution. But it isn't a burden when you see the joy of someone believe in Christ. The presence of Christ and power of the Holy Spirit lift the burden of fear from the command. Matthew 28: 20: *"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Acts 1:8: *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon*

you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Believe. If you don't believe yet, but are ready to believe, then talk with one of us after the service and we will show you how to believe and pray with you. Obeying this command to believe in Christ will save your life, in this world and for eternity!

Love & Go! Jesus doesn't give a command that he also doesn't give the power to obey. If you already believe, then love the family of God, and GO – share your faith with your friends and go on a mission trip.