

Valentine's Day. The history behind this day seems a bit mysterious. Ranging from honoring a saint named Valentine to a medieval knight with the same name, it has become a day that is observed across the Americas and into Canada and beyond. Traditionally, a small note of affection was written – the first dated in the 1700's and now settled in a museum. Love is the modern message of Valentine's Day.

Celebrating love is a good thing! Love between family and friends and spouses is encouraged and valued. Love, however, in our human limitations is largely based upon feeling and often grows weary and fleeting. The true source of love is God. In Him, love is perfected. The love of God is greater than any human love. Celebrate the love that caused a crimson stain to flow out for the forgiveness of sin. True love is beheld in our Savior.

De 6:3a you should listen and be careful to do [it],

De 6:5 "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

The phrase in Deuteronomy 6:3 above comes from the word *shamar* which is translated to 'observe' in the *KJV*. **What do you think of when you read the word 'observe'?** This is so much more than just seeing with our eyes. It is paying close attention to something. The *NAS* translation of this verse spells it out for us – you should ***listen and be careful to do it!***

The idea of guarding or protecting is used in the *Strong's Concordance* translation for this word. It is a quest to take heed of information, to attend to the understanding given you, and to regard it carefully. All this is marked with action. The relationship we have with God through Jesus is not passive. It is a union which requires our attention. Salvation is not something that has just happened **to** us, it has been secured **for** us through Jesus' death and resurrection. **What is our response?** A heart of gratitude will lead us to obedience and service.

And you shall love the LORD your God

What does it mean to love God?

We are to have a tender affection for God. This is a love that moves us to action because of who He is. It is a love that is an entire giving of self. The love we have for God needs to be complete in our loyalty. He is not amongst the list of many things we enjoy or pursue – God is who we live for, the head, at the top. Before family, friends, careers, pursuits and anything else you may think of.

Mt 10:37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

"For, to own him to be the only God, the author of our being and of all things, doth necessarily include in it a love of him above all things whatsoever, which requires us to love him, who hath made them so lovely. This is another principle or spring of obedience, inseparable from the fear of God before mentioned: which doth not drive us away from him, but draws us to him; being such a reverence towards him as children have to their kind parents, which is ever mixed with love to them. *Patrick/Lowth/Whitby/Lowman Commentary*

What is the basis of this love? Think upon who He is and what He has done for you. His mercy keeps those who believe in Him from an eternal destiny of pain and separation from Truth. His grace pours lavish blessings, all undeserved, on those who call upon His name. His patience is unmatched as He desires all to be saved. Everything that is true

and good and beautiful and worthy comes from Him. We are the recipients of unmerited favor from God.

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Ex 34:6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

Who is 'the LORD your God'?

The LORD – Jehovah – the self-Existent or Eternal
God – Elohiym – the supreme God, God Almighty

De 10:17 "For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality, nor take a bribe.

De 10:20 "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name.

Even a small understanding of who God is must lead us to love and serve Him. The fear of God is born out of reverence for who He is and what He has done and can do. He is Lord of lords and God of gods, there is no higher, there is no greater.

CONSIDER. The Supreme God of all creation has, in His mercy, reached down and touched your heart to see Him with unveiled eyes. Amazing!

With all your heart.

CONSIDER. We are only able to love God with all our heart because He has changed us. The heart without regeneration is wicked (Genesis 8:21). This truth should fill our hearts with praise for what He has done! The magnitude of our salvation is truly the catalyst for loving God with all our 'new' heart!

Eze 36:26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Ps 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

1Jo 3:18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

CONSIDER. Either our heart is changed by God or it is hardened by our rejection of Him. *Easton's Bible Dictionary* says this of a hardened heart. "Hardness of heart evidences itself by light views of sin; partial acknowledgment and confession of it; pride and conceit; ingratitude; unconcern about the word and ordinances of God; inattention to divine providences; stifling convictions of conscience; shunning reproof; presumption, and general ignorance of divine things."

Are you moved toward obedience? In our heart resides the purpose of all our actions, our will and choices, and our decisions and intentions. **Do we purpose to love God?** If so, recognize your changed heart is because of His love and praise God and love Him with all your heart!

1Jo 4:19 We love, because He first loved us.

We make decisions all the time. **Is it our conscious choice and intention to purpose to follow God in all things?** The answer to this question comes from our heart.

Loving God with all our heart is being entirely devoted to Him. Our will is set on loving Him through our obedience to His commands. This means even when our feelings do not align with what we ought to do, we are able to choose that which is honoring to God above our own fleshly desires. All our affections are centered on God. This love of God is a sincere devotion that easily lends itself to obedience in all things. It is born out of reverence for who He is.

“...the more we love him, the more we shall regard his authority, reverence his majesty, fear to offend or dishonour him, and be careful to render unto him that worship which he requires.—Human laws can only take cognizance of the outward conduct; but the law of the heart-searching God requires LOVE, the seat of which is in the inmost soul. That love comprises a supreme valuation of his infinite excellency and amiableness; an entire desire. of the knowledge and enjoyment of him as our felicity; cordial delight in contemplating his manifested glories, and in worshipping and obeying him; lively gratitude for all his innumerable and invaluable mercies; zeal for his glory, and an ardent desire that all our fellow-creatures, in conjunction with us, may thus know, love, worship, obey, and serve him.” *De 6:5 Thomas Scott*

1Jo 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

With all your soul. Our soul, it is who we are, what makes us, us. It is my very breath, my desires, my heart, my life. It’s what makes me an individual, different from anyone else. We are to love God with our warmest affection. This affection however is not based on our feelings but rather on His Truth. We can define our heart. It is a viable organ with shape and has direct consequence for our functioning body. We also have a good understanding of our mind or at least the brain that seems to be the center of our intellectual thoughts. Even our might or strength is tangible to our understanding. But our soul is different. It is immaterial but essential. *WordWeb* says it is the ‘actuating cause of an individual life. What does it look like? Where is it located? It is that part of us that is God breathed, that gives us life. Our very soul is a mystery that God alone understands. To love God with all my soul must come from Him. The desire comes from Him. The ability comes from Him.

In the book of Mark and Luke, we see the command in Deuteronomy repeated.

Mr 12:30 AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'

Lu 10:27 And he answered and said, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

Phillip Doddridge New Testament Notes says this: “thou shalt unite all the faculties of thy soul to render him the most intelligent and sincere, the most affectionate and resolute service.”

Our soul is the part of us that lives on, it is immortal. It will return to the Creator either in glory or condemned. Even when our physical body finally fails, our soul continues.

Ec 12:7 then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Mt 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

2Co 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

We are to love God with all our heart – our will, our purpose; we are to love God with all our soul – our very being, the center of our existence; and we are to love God with all our might.

With all your might.

Might. What a great word! Read what is included in the definition from *Strong's*: properly, vehemently, wholly, speedily; diligently, exceedingly, greatly, louder and louder, mightily, quickly, utterly, very well.

Wow. Where do we even start! We are to love God with so much fervor that we are inept to truly explain what this means let alone what it looks like. Each description above carries its own weight of urgency and entirety. I think it is fair to say we are to be sold out to God! Jumping in with two feet, all in or nothing. Several questions come to mind as I contemplate the enormity of loving God with all my might.

In all our decisions do we seek God entirely, in each aspect of every point?

Are we totally engaged in our desires to please Him alone, irrespective of our own pleasures?

Is our devotion to God growing as each layer of sin is peeled away and we see Him more clearly?

Is our focus on this world and its offerings or on God's eternal plan?

We are to love God properly. Consider who He is. The fear of God goes hand in hand with the idea of loving Him properly. It is His right to receive our entire love and our reverent love. We are drawn closer to God when we love Him in the right manner. None of our approach to the living God is based on outside looks or certain buildings or following man-made rules or rituals. It is our heart that perceives God as He truly is – a loving God who sacrificed all for the children He loves, and a just God who will punish the guilty. For the believer, there is a fear in knowing that God is all powerful. Yet this power is the same that protects those who draw near to Him. It is wonderful and chilling all at the same time! This fear of God produces a desire to come under His protection and to share His truths with those who do not believe. For those who have rejected God, the fear of Him will drive them away. And rightfully so, for His wrath will be complete towards those who refuse to accept the sacrifice of His Son.

De 10:20 "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name.

Look at the words speedily and quickly used in the definition of might. The opposite of procrastination, we are to respond to God immediately. **How often do we stop and weigh the 'cost' of serving another? What might we have to give up or change?** When there is a need present and we are able to help, we need to jump!

Consider the same words when it comes to temptation. **How quickly do we flee? Or do we hang around just a bit thinking we are strong enough on our own to avoid sin?**

Several other applications come to mind. **Do we speedily turn to God in times of trouble, and in times of rejoicing?**

We are to love God with all the will in our heart, with all the affection in our soul, with all the strength we have to serve. God will accomplish His work in our lives as we trust in Him. Love God, love what He has done, love what He is doing and love what the future holds in His presence.

Joh 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.