

## Is This *Really* a New Command?

Although the Lord Jesus plainly said that the Lost Commandment was “new,” a surprising number of people say they find no difference between the Lost Commandment and the Golden Rule. Chapter 2 of *The Lost Commandment* explains how these two commandments are different, but due to space limitations and the fact that the book is not primarily academic in nature, I didn’t include quotes from Bible commentaries or study Bibles that talk about this difference. Below are excerpts from a dozen commentaries.

As you’ll see, some commentators perceive clear differences between the two commandments of love. Other commentators begin by suggesting that the two commandments of love are the same, but then proceed to describe how the new command is different from the old command. In the final analysis, most commentators see the two commands as different.

In my view, this difference, among other considerations, demands that we teach the Lost Commandment explicitly and prominently in Christ’s church. After all, the Lost Commandment is the *only* teaching that Jesus specifically called “my command” (John 15:12). How can we fulfill the Great Commission to teach Christians to obey all that Jesus has commanded us (Matt. 28:20) if we don’t explicitly teach the one “command” that Jesus characterized as his?

**Text note, John 13:34–5, *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2007 Ed.), 2052:**

**Love** must be the distinguishing mark of Jesus' disciples. Jesus' "new command" takes its point of departure from the Mosaic commands to love the Lord with all one's powers, and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Lev. 19:18; cf. Deut. 6:5; Mark 12:28–33), but Jesus' own love and teaching deepened and transform these commands. Jesus even taught love for one's enemies (Matt. 5:43–48). The command to love one's neighbor was not new; the newness was found in loving one another as Jesus had loved his disciples (cf. John 13:1; 15:13). In light of Jesus' subsequent death, **just as** implies a love that is even willing to lay down one's life for another (see 15:13).

**Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1993), 298:**

**Glory and Love Defined**

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**13:34–35.** The Old Testament had commanded love (Lev. 19:18); what makes Jesus' commandment new is the new standard and example: "as I have loved you" — in the context, to the point of laying down one's life for others.

**D.A. Carson, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 377:**

It is not just that the standard is Christ and his love; more, it is a command designed to reflect the relationship of love that exists between the Father and the Son (*cf.* 8:29; 10:18; 12:49–50; 14:31; 15:10), designed to bring about amongst the members of the nascent messianic community the kind of unity that characterizes Jesus and his Father (Jn. 17). The new command is therefore not only the obligation of the new covenant community to respond to the God who has loved them and redeemed them by the oblation of his Son, and their response to his gracious election which constituted them his people, it is a privilege which, rightly lived out, proclaims the true God before a watching world. That is why Jesus ends his injunction with the words, *All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.* Orthodoxy without principal obedience to this characteristic command of the new covenant is merely so much humbug.

**Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Commentary on John 13:31-35.**

Before Christ left the disciples, he would give them a new commandment. They were to love each other for Christ's sake, and according to his example, seeking what might benefit others, and promoting the cause of the gospel, as one body, animated by one soul. But this commandment still appears new to many professors. Men in general notice any of Christ's words rather than these. By this it appears, that if the followers of Christ do not show love one to another, they give cause to suspect their sincerity.

**Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database, Commentary on John 13:31-35, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1991).**

As I have loved you. It is this that makes it a new commandment - that this rule and reason of love (as I have loved you) is perfectly new, and such as had been hidden from ages and generations.

**John Calvin, Commentary on John, Vol. II, (Public Domain), Text Note on John 13:34.**

It is the highest degree of brotherly love, therefore, that is here described by Christ; but we ought to believe, on the other hand, that, as the goodness of God extends to the whole world, so we ought to love all, even those who hate us.

**John Wesley, Notes on the Whole Bible, Text Note on John 13:34**

A new commandment - Not new in itself; but new in the school of Christ: for he had never before taught it them expressly. Likewise new, as to the degree of it, as I have loved you.

**Barton W. Johnson's Bible Commentary, Text Note on John 13:34.**

The commandment to love was not new, but such love as Christ commanded was new.

**John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Text Note on John 13:34**

*A new commandment I give unto you,....* As parents, when they take their leave of their children, in their dying moments, give them proper instructions and orders, and lay their dying injunctions on them, so Christ taking his leave of his disciples, gives them his; which were, that they

*love one another:* as brethren in the same family, children of the same Father, and fellow disciples with each other; by keeping and agreeing together, praying one for another, bearing one another's burdens, forbearing and forgiving one another, admonishing each other, and building up one another in faith and holiness: and this he calls "a new commandment"; that is, a very excellent one; as a "new name," and a "new song," denote excellent ones; or it is so called, because it is set forth by Christ, in a new edition of it, and newly and more clearly explained, than before; and being enforced with a new argument and pattern, never used before,

as I have loved you; and to be observed in a new manner, not "in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit": besides, though this commandment, as to the matter of it, is the same with that of Moses, [Leviticus 19:18](#); yet it takes in more, and "new" objects; since by "neighbour" there, seems to be meant "the children of their people," the Jews; and so they understood it only of their

countrymen, and of proselytes at furthest, whereas this reaches to any "other" person; see [Romans 13:8](#); and as the measure, as well as the motive is new, for it is not now "as thy self," but "as I have loved you," the Jew has no reason to object as he does {m}, to its being called a "new commandment": and its being "new," carries in it a reason or argument, why it should be observed, as does also the following clause;

*as I have loved you, that ye also love one another*; than which, nothing can, or should, more strongly engage to it: as Christ has loved his people freely, notwithstanding all their unworthiness and ungratefulness, so should they love one another, though there may be many things in them observable, which are disagreeable; as Christ loves all his children without any distinction, so should they love one another, whether poor or rich, weaker or stronger, lesser or greater believers; and as Christ loves them not in word only, but in deed and in truth, so should they love one another with a pure heart fervently, and by love serve one another.

### **John Darby's Synopsis, Summary of the Gospel of John, Chapter 13.**

Brotherly love was, in a certain sense, to take His place. They were to love one another as He had loved them, with a love superior to the faults of the flesh in their brethren-brotherly love gracious in these respects.

### **Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Commentary on John 13:34* (Biblesoft, Inc. Electronic Database, 1997, 2003).**

See 1 John 3:23; 1 Thess 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Thess 1:3; Gal 6:2; 2 Peter 1:7. In all these places the command of Jesus is repeated or referred to, and it shows that the first disciples considered this indeed as the special law of Christ. This command or law was, moreover, new in regard to the extent to which this love was to be carried; for he immediately adds, "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another." His love for them was strong, continued, unremitting, and he was now about to show his love for them in death. John 15:13: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." So in 1 John 3:16 it is said that "we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." This was a new expression of love . . . .

Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary* (Biblesoft, Inc. Electronic Database, 1996, 2003).

In what sense are we to understand that this was a new commandment? Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, was a positive precept of the law, Lev 19:18, and it is the very same that Christ repeats here; how then was it new? Our Lord answers this question, Even as I have loved you. Now Christ more than fulfilled the Mosaic precept; he not only loved his neighbour as himself, but he loved him MORE than himself, for he laid down his life for men. In this he calls upon the disciples to imitate him; to be ready on all occasions to lay down their lives for each other. This was, strictly, a new commandment: no system of morality ever prescribed anything so pure and disinterested as this. Our blessed Lord has outdone all the moral systems in the universe in two words:

1. Love your enemies;
2. Lay down your lives for each other.