

# Was that really a new commandment?

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**By Dave Havir**

BIG SANDY, Texas—Just before His death, Jesus of Nazareth gave His disciples some meaningful words. In what is now designated as John 13:34, Jesus talked about giving His disciples a new commandment.

Notice what He said: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another . . ."

I ask you, is that really a new commandment?

Many people in society try to paint the God of the Old Testament as some mean, harsh God, while they describe the Father of the New Testament as a loving God.

We have to admit that God worked in a different administrative style in the different sections of the Bible (see 2 Corinthians 3:1-11).

But wasn't "loving your neighbor as yourself" taught in the Old Testament? Sure, it was. Check Leviticus 19:18.

## **Not manipulated**

Before we go any farther here, maybe I should remind you that the concept of "loving your neighbor as yourself" encourages believers to have self-respect. To properly love someone else, you must have a proper self-respect.

I bring this up because many people seek to use the concept of love to manipulate other people.

Here are some examples.

- "Even though our priest sexually abused your teenager, if you love God you must be loyal to our parish."
- "Even though our church leader was divisive, slanderous and unbiblical in his use of church discipline, if you love God you must remain loyal to this church."
- "If you love God and the poor, you will give money to our charity."
- "If you love God and 'the Work,' you will give money to our church."

Jesus willingly expressed His love. He was not manipulated into doing it. Please do not allow people to use their statements about love to manipulate you or control you.

### **What's new here?**

Since "loving your neighbor as yourself" was taught in the Old Testament, what new commandment did Jesus teach just before His death?

Let's go back to John 13:34, and this time let's quote the entire verse.

He said: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

I believe the key phrase in the verse is *as I have loved you*.

From my perspective the new commandment was the depth of understanding to which Jesus wanted them to keep the instruction to love one another.

The students of the law knew that they were instructed to love their neighbor as themselves.

In the New Testament, Jesus used His teachings to reinforce the lesson of love.

### **Actions speak loudly**

Earlier in His ministry Jesus explained to them the depth of love He expected. See scriptures like Matthew 19:16-21 and Luke 10:25-37.

But then He went a step further.

He showed them the way. He said: ". . . as I have loved you."

Shortly before saying the words in John 13:34, Jesus showed His humility by washing the feet of the disciples (verses 1-13).

Shortly after saying the words of John 13:34, Jesus also said the following words: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

And then our Savior proceeded to show His disciples and the rest of the world His love by suffering and dying for them.