

# How to please God in two easy steps

Message for Sunday, July 30, 2017  
by Bruce Fraser

John 14:15, New International Version:  
[Jesus said,] “If you love me, you will obey what I command.”

**Scripture:** Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 14:10-19

Have you ever seen magazines with eye-catching titles on the cover? “Lose ten pounds in one week” or “Five easy ways to improve your love life” or “The seven mistakes people make when buying a home.” People think, “Wow, I could really use those tips!” and so they buy the magazine, or click the link in the web browser.

Well, I’ve got one for you today: “How to please God in two easy steps”! I could have used the title “Christianity for Dummies,” but you might have taken that the wrong way. ☺

Let me show you how easy it is.

**Matthew 22:36-40, Today’s English Version:**  
“Teacher,” he asked, “which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus answered, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’ The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

There it is, from the mouth of Jesus himself. The two most important things are:

- Love God
- Love other people

That’s pretty easy: just two things to remember.

But just what does “Love God” mean? How do you love someone you can’t see or touch? After all, we know how to love ourselves, our families, our friends. We even know how to love our neighbours and our enemies. We may not be good at doing it, but at least we think we know how we’re supposed to do it.

We turn to the Bible for the answers to the all-important questions of life.

So, loving God means following what he tells us to do. OK, check that one off on your to-do list.

Now, what about loving other people? Many times that’s obvious:

- You see someone has fallen down, you stop and see if you can help. That’s love in action.
- Did you ever take supper over to your neighbour when they had a baby, or there was a death in the family? That’s love in action.
- Your sister, trying to be funny, tells a joke about you, but it really hurts your feelings. Later, she apologizes and asks you to forgive her. You do forgive her. That’s love in action.

But what about when it’s not so obvious?

Sometimes it’s not clear what “love” means. What would you do, for instance, in these situations?

*People are seated at tables, about 3-5 per table, like a café. I gave each table a paper with one scenario written on it, and gave them five minutes to talk about it.*

The key question here is “How do I fulfill Jesus’ command to love others in this specific situation? What is the loving thing to do here?”

- Your friend is out of work, and has a good chance at a terrific job in Kingston. She’s out of money, and asks you to either drive her to Kingston, or give her money for bus fare. The reason she’s out of work and out of money is that she has a drinking problem, and shows no desire to change.
- You run your own business, a small gift shop. Shoplifting was once a problem, until you made a policy that all shoplifters will be reported to the police and charged with theft, no matter how small the item. Since, then, the problem has gone down tremendously. Your next door neighbour’s son, however, has made you wonder. You’ve been suspicious of him a few times in the past, but you never actually saw anything. The last time was a few years ago, and he seems to have turned himself around. In fact, he has just been accepted at the Ontario Police

College, and plans to fulfill his lifelong dream of becoming a police officer. He starts at the school next week. Yesterday, one of your staff caught him stealing something for his girlfriend. If he is convicted of theft, he can say goodbye to a career with the police.

- Your son is in his twenties, has no job, lives at home, and spends most of his time playing video games.
- Your father and mother were never happy together while you were growing up. Sometimes you wonder why they ever got married. He never compliments her; but points out all the problems with the housekeeping, which apparently is her responsibility. She, realizing that she will never please him, makes no attempt to make the home more liveable. You left home when you were sixteen, because you couldn't stand it any more: neither his tormenting nor the messy house. Since then, you've married and have your own family, and see how different life can be. You wish you could help them to enjoy their remaining years.
- Your high school age daughter has become a complete rebel; you don't even know her any more. You've been through family counselling, and she's been to a personal therapist. Things just got worse. You make rules that are firm but fair. She deliberately breaks them, seemingly just to provoke you. One morning she announces that she's pregnant. Then she adds, "But having a baby doesn't fit in with my lifestyle. Will you look after the baby?"
- Your co-worker at your company is abrasive, so much so that no one in the company likes him. The only reason the boss keeps him on is that he gets the work done, and no one else knows how to do that job. You love your work, but hate your workplace.
- While you were walking home one night, a man came up behind you and knocked you to the ground. You broke your glasses and your nose was bleeding profusely. The man took your purse/wallet and ran away. People on the other side of the street witnessed it all, and with their description the robber was arrested, convicted

and sent to prison. You've heard those heart-warming stories of people forgiving their enemies, how they even befriended those who hurt them. But you're angry at this man for attacking you.

*For those of you who are reading this, do the exercise. Go back through each situation, and think how you would answer: What is the loving thing to do here?*

What we're seeing here are two things:

1. There is no ONE right answer. Different people come up with different ideas, and they may all be good answers. Also, so much depends on other details which are not included in the brief story.  
The point here is that we have the God's word to us in the Bible, showing us how to live. But it doesn't give a prescription for every possible situation; that would be impossible. So God has also given us minds to think.
2. When someone has a different interpretation of the Bible than you do, or a different way of applying the Bible to a particular situation, don't jump to condemn that person for not being a faithful believer.

**Romans 14:10, 12, 19, New Living Translation:**  
So why do you condemn another Christian? Why do you look down on another Christian? Remember, each of us will stand personally before the judgment seat of God...

Yes, each of us will have to give a personal account to God...

So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.

### **Next Steps:**

- Follow Jesus the best way that you know how.
- Don't worry what others may be thinking about you. What Jesus thinks about you is the most important.
- Likewise, don't look down on others because they think differently than you.
- Aim for harmony in the church, and try to build each other up.