

“Fear the LORD, your God, and keep, throughout the days of your lives, all his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you, and thus have long life” (Dt 6:2). God created us for eternity. Everything we do should keep that saintly goal in mind as we love God and our neighbor. Moses wanted everyone to know what is most important in life and in death. So let’s play that back in slow motion through the lens of our Catholic Faith.

- **Fear of the Lord** is a source of great peace and happiness. We should not confuse it with everyday fears of suffering or punishment. Fear of the Lord is based on love. “We fear to lose God by sin, since we love him, and we have a reverent fear and awe of him because he is so beautiful and great and powerful... It is like the fear of a child who is afraid to hurt the feelings of his father because of their mutual love.”<sup>1</sup> This positive Fear of the Lord even helps us to endure pain and suffering because of our love for Jesus. In love, God invites us to a life of sacrifice for the good of others.
- **Fear the Lord, your God.** Through Baptism, we become the children of God. We are adopted into the royal family and are given the promise of eternal life. Jesus, our brother, teaches us to call God our Father. Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we receive wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord ... that help us to live a moral life.
- **Keep, throughout the days of your lives, all his statutes and commandments.** When we keep something, we hold on to it. We treasure it. We protect it and safeguard it. God has given us commandments to help us love God and our neighbor. They help us to live freely choosing the good and avoiding what is harmful.
  - When Moses returned from Mount Sinai with the stone tablets, he brought back 10 commandments. Throughout the Old Testament and in Jewish tradition, there are 603 other commandments. 365 positive commandments on how to act, and 248 commandments to refrain from harmful actions.
  - Instead of memorizing the fine print for every circumstance and situation, it is a lot simpler to see the big picture and to understand what is most important.
    - “You shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength” (Dt 6:5). “This passage, an expansion of the first commandment, contains the basic principle of the whole Mosaic law ... Since the Lord alone is God, Israel must love him with an undivided heart.” Jesus echoes these words as “the greatest and the first commandment,” embracing the whole law of God (Note: Dt 6:4-5).
- **Keep the Commandments which I enjoin on you.** Unless we are a legal scholar, we don’t use enjoin in everyday speech. Enjoin means to counsel, to advise, to warn, or to urge. Moses has been given authority by God and so his directions to the people of Israel come with the love of God as their underpinning.
  - Saint Paul was another one who urged people to do good. “Brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you” (Phil 4:8-9).
- **Keep the commandments and thus have long life.** Moses lived to be 120 years old. 120 years is a drop in the ocean compared to the eternal life God offers. God created us with an imperishable soul. God loves us from the heart, with all understanding, with all his strength.

God wants to share his divine nature with us forever and ever. He asks us to love him in return and to love our neighbor as our self.

“Fear the LORD, your God, and keep, throughout the days of your lives, all his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you, and thus have long life.” It is easy to lose sight of the purpose in life when everything collapses, and the flood waters are rising. Jesus knows the feeling. He was unjustly condemned to death and crucified for our sake. With love of God and love of humanity, he accepted death that we might share in the promises of eternal life.

Loving God with all of our heart, understanding and strength means trying to do the will of the Father. This is what Jesus did throughout his life and especially in his passion and death. Amidst the cry of the crowd for his crucifixion and the agony of the cross, Jesus still focused on love of neighbor.

- As his mother’s heart was being pierced by a sword, he asked the beloved disciple to care for her. And Jesus asked Mother Mary to care for us as the Mother of the Church.
- Even though he was mocked on the cross by one of the criminals, he reached out in mercy to Dismas, the good thief and promised him paradise.
- And in the case of his enemies who wished him dead, Jesus prayed, “Father forgive them, they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34).

“Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord; and my father will love him and we will come to him” (Jn 14:23). Following the example of Jesus, we are called to unite our own sufferings with His in an act of supreme love ... love of God and love of neighbor.

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<sup>i</sup> catholic.com/qa/fear-of-the-lord-is-a-beautiful-thing