



[Matthew 22:37-38](#)

(37) Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' (38) This is the first and greatest commandment.

New International Version

This command leaves very little out in terms of our devotion to [God](#). It involves the fear, service, obedience, and worship of the great God who is the Creator. The dictionary definition of *worship* says it involves intense admiration, adoration, honor, and devotion to someone or something. Practically, worship is our response to our god.

If we respect someone greatly, does not our respect cause us to behave differently because of him? If we know he will be in our area, do we not try to spend some time with him or at least see him? Maybe we plan to give him a gift. If we know his habits, do we not try to emulate him, such as copying his manner of dress or his speech? Whole industries are built on this reality, which is why promoters attempt to get celebrities to use and endorse their products. Finally, when we are in his company and he suggests we do something, are we not moved to submit?

In Western civilization, people and institutions reach heights of admiration that drive some to do all sorts of unusual things. Teens, mothers, and even grandmothers will swoon over a crooning singer. Fans will practically tear the clothing from a rock star. Boys and men idolize athletic heroes. At political conventions, grown adults will act like mindless fools in behalf of their candidate.

It is this principle that is involved in keeping the [first commandment](#). The respect and response we give to men, things, or the self should be given to God.

The KJV and the NKJV both translate [Exodus 20:3](#) as, "You shall have no other gods before Me." It is better understood as, "You shall have no other gods *in place of* Me." The term "before Me" allows enough wiggle room that it can be argued that other gods are permitted as long as God comes first. In reality, God permits no other gods at all!

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[Genesis 1:1](#) informs us, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." God is Creator. This is how God introduces Himself in His Book. Paul directs our attention to this very point in Romans 1 as where men stumble by not truly acknowledging Him as Creator God, sovereign over every aspect of what He had made.

But "Creator" can be just as vague as "ballplayer," "rock star," or "actor," if we never show enough interest to study and observe the awesomely beautiful distinctiveness of His character, power, and way He reveals regarding His Person. Do we devote as much time, concern, or effort in admiring God's great ability as Creator as we do the men we admire? Using Himself as the Model, God created the potential for the qualities and abilities we admire in others to be in us, and He has far more and better in Himself than we can comprehend.

[The world](#) has conditioned us to think of worship as something we do once a week. This is woefully inadequate in terms of what God expects. Is God merely on an ego trip to receive "Hallelujahs!" from His worshippers?

No! Everything He asks of us is for our good because of what it motivates us to do and become. American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "It behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping we are becoming." This is true. Because a person becomes or does what his god is, he must be careful regarding his reaction to this commandment because it affects every area of life, thoughts, and action. It is not just a tiny sidebar of life. If kept as it should, it becomes part of the very foundation of what we are becoming.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The First Commandment](#)

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[Worship, Object of](#)

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