



WOW: Word Of the Week

Niche, Niche-God

November 19, 2025

In Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Moses challenged Israel. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." When confronted by a law expert, Jesus said that Moses's statement was "the most important command" (Mark 12:29).

For 3500 years since Moses, for 2000 years since Jesus, people have been trying to figure out how to love God like Moses and Jesus described. What does it mean to love God with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength? If I love God too completely, what is left for me?

Moses explains Deuteronomy 6 in the rest of Deuteronomy. Loving God is demanding—it pushes us away from our idols of self, status, entertainment, sports, comfort, wealth, and whatever we are tempted to make a priority in our lives besides God. Loving God is whole-hearted or no-hearted. There is no lukewarm middle ground.

Jesus calls people to follow him on the path of discipleship, a path of sacrifice, self-denial, and service. Bruce Green describes the challenge to the contemporary church. Most modern day Christians think of God as a "niche God" who controls only a small part of our lives. Give God his little "niche" and all will be OK. God will never be satisfied to be only part of the picture of your life. He is the whole picture, or he isn't in the picture at all.

Our word "niche" comes from the same French word, which originally meant "recess," likely from the verb *nicher* ("to nest"), related to the Latin word *nidus*, meaning "to nest". The ideas of "a suitable position" developed about 300 years ago, based on the architectural sense of a wall recess. I think of niches in the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Today, in a figurative sense, the word refers to a "suitable position or opportunity."

A "niche god" is a god with a very specific or limited domain, such as the Roman god of hinges, Portunus, or the Greek god of beekeeping, Aristaeus. The term can refer to a specific, lesser-known deity from a pantheon or to a fictional deity created in a specific context like for a video game or story. The point is that a "niche god" has limited power, or is limited to a certain area.

Think about the niches of your life—the secret places, the things you never confront, the areas you reserve for yourself, the personal activities that take time away from your God-time.

God is not a niche God. He does not want to control only part of your life.

God is an everything God. He wants to control every aspect of your life, even the smallest niches—your time, your treasures, your talents. Regardless of how small the area you want to try to reserve, God says, "If I cannot control that area, you cannot be my disciple." Being a disciple means turning everything over to God.

Not a bad exchange when you think about it. We give up our everything (which is not much in the bigger scheme of things) in exchange for his everything, which really is everything.

He is my everything, he is my all. Christ, who is all and in all.