

Wednesday with the Word

Teacher: Rev. Ralph Basui Watkins
Pastor

You Have to Love You: Loving God, Loving Yourself, Empowers You to Love Others

What does it look like to love yourself?

Is it selfish?

Is it self-centered?

I think the key here is the formula, you have to first love God, which empowers you to love God's creation, which is you, which then empowers you to love others. This is a real love that manifest itself in how we live our lives each and everyday in the service of God as we serve others. Love is the foundation of our faith and growth as Christians and as a church.

Mark 12:28-34

28 Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?"

29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This *is* the first commandment. **31** And the second, like *it*, *is* this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

32 So the scribe said to Him, "Well *said*, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. **33** And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

34 Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

But after that no one dared question Him.

Love is the key. Many churches have focused on getting money out of people. They have raised funds, gave tithes and offerings, built buildings but if they don't love all this has been done while missing the key to the faith. The key to our faith is love. God is love and we are to love.

We are to love:

1. Heart
2. Understanding / mind
3. Soul / spirit
4. Strength
5. Neighbor as self

Note: The scribes are always asking questions trying to through Jesus of message and distract and mislead the people. Scribes are not loving people but they are people who are present and always in the mix to make a mess. We have to love them but we are not to follow them. Follow God and what God is doing in your life and the life of God's church.

Luke 10:25-37

25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading *of it?*"

27 So he answered and said, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'"

28 And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

29 But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. **31** Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. **32** Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. **33** But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. **34** So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and **took care of him.** **35** On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' **36** So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"

37 And he said, "He who showed mercy on him."

Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

We have heard people say in church, "now go and do like wise." Many times this has been linked to the raising of money but that is not what that phrase is to linked to. It is linked to the showing of love and compassion. It is about taking care of our neighbor.

Note: The Priest and the Levite are both from the house of God. The Samaritan was an outcast but he of all people showed love. What is God saying about religious folk?

Matthew 22:34-40

34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. **35** Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, **36** "Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?"

37 Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” **38** This is *the* first and great commandment. **39** And *the* second *is* like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” **40** On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

There it goes again: heart, soul / spirit and your mind. Love is complete when we love God with our heart, soul and mind. God loves the mind and the mind informs our love as a logical component of our faith. Love makes sense and helps us make sense or make the right decisions. Our decisions as a church must be rooted in love.

The love of neighbor as self comes up again. There is the reflexive / recursive relationship between love of self and love of neighbor. We can actually tell how much we love ourselves by how we show love to others. If we don't love and show love to our neighbor, we don't love ourselves. We may be selfish and narcissistic but that isn't love, that is actually destructive because if you don't love you aren't lovable. If you aren't lovable you aren't loving and you aren't being loved and if you are not rooted in love you are not rooted in Christ because God is love! This means you are not saved! Our salvation is rooted in God's love (John 3:16) if we don't love we are not Christians.

Matthew 5:43-44

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’”

44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

Now some mess done started....not only do I have to love my God, myself and my neighbor I also have to love my enemy. To love your enemy, if you are in God, means you love them enough to tell them the truth. You see that they are not following the ways of God and you care for them enough not to leave them to themselves. You don't follow them or support them but you do lovingly confront them, care for them, watch out for them and show love to them. You care for them, and this is caring is a caring that holds them accountable.

Romans 13:8-10

8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he / she who loves another has fulfilled the law. **9** For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if *there is* any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” **10** Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law.

Love keeps us in the will of God. Love does not harm, it helps and moves us closer to each other, which moves us closer to God. The more we love each other, our neighbor, the more we love God. Our horizontal relationships enhance our vertical relationships.

Galatians 5:13-15

13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. **14** For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” **15** But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Love is rooted in service. So we say at the end of worship:

Opportunities for Witness and Service

Our love is made real by serving others (outside and inside the church). If we don't love we will fight, bite and devour each other and we and the church will die. That is why it is so important to mark the Scribes and Pharisees in the church because they are the ones who will and have killed the church. We have to lovingly stand up to them and attempt to restore them by loving them and holding them accountable.

James 2:8-9

8 If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; **9** but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

Love doesn't have favorites!