

The Two Most Important Things

Matthew 22:34-39 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested Him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus replied," 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 'This is the first and the greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself."

When Jesus answered this question, He established for us as Christians the two most important things required of us.

First, we are to love God with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind. This love is agape love, that love of God that has been poured out of His heart into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

The admonishment is to love God with:

ALL OF OUR HEART - the heart is the seat of our emotions, intellect, will and moral life. Our heart is our point of contact with God, open to Him and subject to His influence.

ALL OF OUR SOUL - the soul is our life, the sum total of us as an individual, the force of ourself.

ALL OF OUR MIND - the faculty of thought and moral understanding, our vain imaginations that we must take captive to obey God (II Corinthians 10:5).

So, to sum: we are to love God so very much that He rules and reigns in our heart; He controls, motivates and empowers us; He is the one that fills our thoughts. This love grows as we seek to know Him better through His Word, prayer and daily fellowship with Him.

The second commandment is like it: to love your neighbor as yourself.

The love needed is again the agape love of God. In other words we really cannot love others without God's love in our hearts.

Who is your neighbor? The one close by, the one in need of love, acceptance or help. It could be a member of your family, the person next door; the one next to us in the market place or someone that God puts in our path who has a great, immediate need, as in the case of the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). What are we to offer this neighbor?

LOVE: John 15:12,13 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

ACCEPTANCE: Romans 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ has accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

HELP: Galatians 6:2 Carry each others' burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

The Word of God sums it all up: I John 4:7 - Beloved, let us love one another; for love (springs) from God, and he who loves (his fellow men) is begotten (born) of God and is coming (progressively) to know and understand God - to perceive and recognize and get a clearer knowledge of Him.

One of the most profound, life changing experiences of my life has been that as I love God with all my heart, soul and mind, I find that I have more love for others.

May I challenge you in this new year to love God more and love others as you love yourself. It will change your life and the lives of those who are your neighbors.