**Love God, Love People**

In response to the question, “Which is the great commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied, “’You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37-39). This is truly the ultimate and all-encompassing mission statement for the Christian.

Jesus further makes it clear in Luke 6:27-28 that the term “neighbor” is broad enough to include our enemies! Because of that, I have heard agape love described as an obligatory active good will almost devoid of emotion. After all, how can I feel love for someone who hates me? (I have to treat him well even though I can’t stand him.) When Jesus told me to love others, what did He have in mind?

You know, the command to love God is an obligation; but God is not simply demanding some outward show of devotion because He is holding all the cards. The fact is that He has earned our supreme love and devotion by the profound love His has demonstrated toward us.

Ask yourself a few questions to put things into perspective. What did an all-powerful God owe you? Why would an almighty creator choose to serve His creation? What did His Son suffer on your behalf? How do you feel about God wanting to dwell with you eternally?

John said it best: “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). When I meditate on all He has done for me for no reason other than His inexplicable love for me, I cannot help but love Him more that anything or anyone else.

When I consider, in turn, the love God has for the guy who hates me, whatever natural animosity I might have felt is tempered by my profound love for God. There is nothing that would please me more than for the love of God to transform his heart like it did mine and my kindness is my greatest contribution to that end.

There is one more critical component to my overwhelming love for God: a desire to please Him. Jesus put it this way: “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15). If I say I love Jesus but I lack the motivation to learn His will and to conform my life to His teachings, I am offering up nothing but lip service.

A true Christian will love God more than anything or anyone else and mirror His love for all of mankind in heart and actions. Christ’s disciple will learn from Him and exhibit the utmost respect for His authority. Only then will the slogan “Love God, Love People” convey any real meaning.

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