



The Two Greatest Priorities of Life

Jesus reduced life's significant priorities to just two: **Loving God**—with all your heart, soul, and mind—and **loving others**, as you already do love yourself (Matthew 22:36-40). Contrary to an avalanche of humanistic propaganda, there is no third commandment to “love yourself” in this key passage of Scripture.

Perhaps surprisingly to some, our inherent “love of self” does not need to be encouraged by God or others. Each of us finds it easy, even natural, to judge and respond to all aspects of life by how things affect us. Have you wondered why this is so? It's not because of any great dislike we have for ourselves but, instead, our basic love of self is predictably the pivot point for all of life. This truth is so basic that God states our natural self-love, which we already have and do not need to increase, provides the criteria by which we can examine our love to others.

Loving God and loving others, as described in the Bible, are not natural. Loving in these two dimensions requires a personal spiritual transformation (2 Corinthians 5:17). This change begins with belief in Jesus Christ for eternal life (John 3:16) and progresses by the power of God's Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18) through an application of God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Love for God and love for others are typically evidenced by responses to life's trials and blessings. Expressions of love – or lack of them – expose either a biblically sound or an unscriptural perspective toward the two greatest priorities of life.

With a biblically sound perspective, we love God and are growing in this love by obeying Scripture (1 John 5:3). If we have an unscriptural perspective, we won't care that much about God. As a result, we will do what we want (live by fleshly desires and self-oriented feelings) and violate clear directives of Scripture with surprising impunity (see Galatians 5:13-17).

With a biblically sound perspective, we will love others (1 John 4:7-11) and grow in that love. We will do what is best for them, considering them as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:3-4). With an unscriptural perspective, we won't care that much about others except for how they provide supposed benefits to us. Because of that self-centeredness, our fleshly desires will dominate us so that our feelings actually determine what is “best” (meaning comfortable or pleasurable for us) in responding to others. As a result, we will often remain oblivious or unconcerned that we have created significant problems and heartache for them.

The motivation to love God and others will be steadfast as long as we stay fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2), the Supreme Example of authentic love. With Christ at the center of our lives, our love for God and others will grow. As a result, the two greatest priorities of life will not be a subject to discuss but will be a way of life.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Matthew 22:36-40, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “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 first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

2 Corinthians 3:18, And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, and being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

1 John 5:3, For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

Galatians 5:13-17, For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

1 John 4:10-11, In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Philippians 2:3-4, Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Hebrews 12:1-2, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.