



LIFE NEWS

Who do You **Love**

by Gordon Lanpher
Children's Pastor

parksidevisalia.org

February is almost over. Often during this month, we think about love and its many different meanings. My love for my wife is different than my love for my kids. Both of these are unique, and should be different than my love for my favorite hockey team. I also love a good cup of coffee and New York pizza. It is very easy to have a diluted meaning of the term, "love." Because of this diluted meaning, I can love many things and people, but I don't have to love everything wholeheartedly.

In the Bible and in the Christian life, love is one of the major themes. We tend to answer the question of how we should live out the gospel by saying, "Love God and love people." This is true and vital. This statement is a summary taken from a command of Jesus when he was talking with the religious leaders and was asked, "What is the greatest command?" Jesus replied to them, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (See Matthew 22: 37-40)

Jesus was calling them to love. First, he does this by explaining how we should love God. There

shouldn't be any part of you that doesn't participate in loving Jesus. When we look at this passage, we almost always try to figure out how we can love God with our minds. How about our hearts? How about our soul? These questions have merit, but they miss the bigger point. The purpose of the command here is to call us to love God with our whole being. There shouldn't be compartmentalization. God should be loved with everything. Whether I am writing an email, reading a book, or engaging in deep conversation, we should have the love for God at the center.

Most of us like the first command even though it's difficult, but it is the second command we struggle with more. Loving our neighbor as ourselves is hard. We aren't the only ones who struggle with this. The religious leaders once asked the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus responds in the parable of the Good Samaritan (see Luke 10:25-37). To summarize the quote, "good" people didn't help the man who was injured, yet the "bad" Samaritan took care of the man and went beyond cultural expectations. It is obvious that the man who took care of the injured man was the one being the neighbor.

Our neighbors aren't just the young family next door

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or the elderly couple across the street. Our neighbor is anyone who we see that needs help. It is anybody that God calls upon us to show his mercy. They might be different from us or have treated us poorly (we are also called to love our enemies). We aren't called to just kind of love them but to love them and treat them as we would love ourselves. It isn't passive. This type of love flows from the first command. If we love God wholly, we understand his love for others.

How is your love? Are there parts of your life where you keep leaving God out? Are you cutting off parts of your life from him? Or is he being loved in all areas? Is it a "whole being" type of love you have with God? How is your love for people? Are there people who you struggle to love as a neighbor?

Love God and love people sounds simple, but we know it is more than a pithy statement. It is a call to surrender self and a call to follow Jesus in his way of life. The way to grow in this love, whether you are struggling or doing okay with it, is to surrender yourself to him and to be in His presence. In His presence, you will grow in your love of him, and you will start to understand His heart for people.

Friends, the month of love might be over; however, we aren't called to a "month" of love but to a lifetime of love. May you grow in your love of God and love of people.

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*Love your
neighbor
as yourself.*”



*Gordon Lanpher
Children's Pastor*