

Do you remember when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was?

Matthew 22:37–39 NKJV

Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Here Jesus emphasized in a big way the importance of relationships

This is what life is about—loving God, loving yourself, and loving others

- It is never wrong to love
- It is never out of order to love
- You do not compromise when you love
- You never lower your standards when you love

God’s Love Never Fails!

1 Corinthians 13:4–8 (NKJV)

⁴ Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails.

Love Yourself First

In **Matthew 22** Jesus sums up hundreds of commandments, old and new, in one word: Love

- But there is a catch to the loving others part
- You must love yourself first
- We need to feel good about ourselves
- Not in a narcissistic, materialistic or selfish way

I'm talking about an unshakable inner confidence based on what God says about us

Not a distorted self-image based on what the devil throws in our faces

- Are you the one who had an affair?
- Did your spouse cheat on you?
- Is your son struggling with drug addiction?
- Do you feel like a failure because you cannot reconcile your family?

Messes have a way of diminishing our self-love capacity

- The devil whispers...
 - You're not good enough
 - You're not holy enough
 - You're lazy
 - You're undisciplined
 - You call yourself a Christian?!?!?

When we judge ourselves unworthy we miss out on the treasures God has in store for us

Paul and Silas are preaching in Antioch to almost the whole city

- Some of the Jewish people were jealous of Paul
- They caused a scene and contradicted everything they said
- Paul was not intimidated but grew bolder

Acts 13:46 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and **judge yourselves unworthy** of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

- The Jews were unable to receive from God
- Not because of sin
- Not because of God
- Not because of Satan
- They were the problem
- They were hindered by the message because of self-judgement
- Sometimes your worst enemy is you
- You need to love yourself and stay out of the way

Remember you are worthy through Jesus Christ and Him alone

- It is not based on your merit
- Once we start to recognize our worth things will start to change
- We begin to open up ourselves to the great things God has for us

When we let lies overrule love it affects those around us

- We take out our frustrations, lack of self-worth, shame or guilt on those we love
- We struggle with depression
- Isolate ourselves from others
- Stunt the growth of healthy relationships

We are commanded to love ourselves

- As we do this we move one step closer to the Kingdom of God

Romans 14:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- Self-esteem is not the goal, God esteem is
- Its not about what you think about yourself
- Its about what God thinks about you
- Its not a matter of what you've done or what's been done to you
- Jesus sees you as a wonderful masterpiece

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

You come from a bloodline of royalty

Ephesians 2:13 (NLT)

¹³ But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

Tapit – A white stallion at Gainesway Farm Kentucky

- Grade 1 stakes winner

Sired an extraordinary number of offspring who were incredibly fast

- His first crop produced a champion
- Many other offspring have done remarkably well
- Highest earning stallion in the U.S.
- The cost to breed - \$300,000 a pop

The late Storm Cat was even more successful for twenty years

- The cost to breed - \$500,000

Anyone who pays this price would tell you it was well worth it even though their colt had not run a race yet

- Why?
- The Blood-line
- A line of winners

Its value isn't based on its current accomplishments or rewards

- Its living, breathing royalty

Your blood line is Jesus Christ!

- You overcome by the Blood – **Revelation 12:11**

Loving Others

Ephesians 4:31–32 (NKJV)

³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

- Its time to Drain the Swamp
- Get rid of all the things that have been polluting your wells
- Get that mean evil behavior out
- Let it go – Put it away
- Be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving

If you cannot be kind or tenderhearted to someone you have a forgiveness issue

- Being kind means treating the waitress who serves you with respect
- It means apologizing, sincerely
- Biting your tongue when your neighbor cusses at you

Stop criticizing and putting down others just because they have a different political or world view than you

Do a personal inventory

How would strangers or your loved ones rate you?

- Are you always generous or helpful?
- Would the members of the PTA say that all you do is complain?
- Would your spouse say he or she never knows what kind of mood you will be in when you wake up or come home from work
- Would your kids say that you are always on the phone running your mouth to your friends?
- Talking about so and so and such and such

Even if you are the kindest person you know we could all fine-tune our kindness

Am I moved with compassion towards the single mom with the three loudest kids in the fast food restaurant?

- Would you help her?
- Encourage her or pay for her meal?
- Or would you just roll your eyes and move?

To be kind is to be holy

Galatians 5:14–15 (NLT)

¹⁴For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.

To Be Holy Is to Bear Fruit for Others to Eat

Galatians 5:22–23 (NLT)

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

- Neither our families or the world needs more...
 - Nagging, criticizing, whining and finger pointing

We will not make a difference in the lives of others by being petty, by yelling our opinions or banging people over the head with our picket signs

- The world needs open arms
- The world needs grace
- The world needs love

Galatians 5:24–25 (NLT)

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

- Give your bitterness, shame and unforgiveness to Jesus
- Live by the Spirit in all that you do
- Love Never Fails!

See the Treasure in the Field

Matthew 13:44 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

If you are going to enjoy life and have healthy relationships, you have got to buy the field

Take ownership of your attitudes and consider your life a great treasure

- Not only when things are smooth sailing
- Take time to dig through the rubbish, broken bottles and dirt
- Buried in that messy field is a treasure
- You cannot have the treasure unless you buy the field
- Choose to believe in what could be possible
- Stop focusing on your current reality
- Choose to reconcile rather than fight

Choose to stop what you're doing and love on your kids instead of being stressed about your finances

Choose not to give the finger to the guy who cut you off

Choose to give the waitress an extra tip even if she did mess up your order

Am I a Peace Maker or a Fire Starter?

Do you remember a time when you lost control of your temper?

- Maybe you yelled at your child
- Maybe you were already on the edge driving home from work when someone cut you off, so you decide to ride their bumper
- Maybe you were tired from not getting enough sleep, so you blew up at your spouse
- Maybe you've gotten so out of control you became physical?
- We've all been there to some degree
- We all get angry and want to do something about it
- But we cannot be ruled by our tempers

Ephesians 4:26-27 (NKJV)

²⁶ “*Be angry, and do not sin*”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷ nor give place to the devil.

- Being angry is not a sin
- Mismanaging it is
- When we hold on to anger, nurture it, harp on it, think on it and dream about it
- When we mismanage anger, we give the devil a place in our lives
- NLT - Foothold

The Greek word *topos* – topography, translated place or foothold

- Means to give opportunity

When we live with unresolved anger we give the enemy authority

- Just as the enemy thrives on division he also works well in an environment of anger

James 3:16 (KJV 1900)

¹⁶For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work.

The best way to manage anger is to delay our reaction to it

Proverbs 16:32 (NKJV)

³² *He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*

- One of the fruits of anger is revenge

Vengeance will give you the desire to inflict harm or punishment on someone who has wronged you

- You wish them evil
- You curse them

Anger and unforgiveness will rob you of the creativity, positive energy and joy you need to live well

- Remember vengeance is Gods – Romans 12:19

James 1:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

- Unruly emotion will never produce right behavior
- Love is not easily angered

Be a peacemaker not a fire starter

Matthew 5:9 (NKJV)

⁹ Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

- When I find yourself in a volatile situation how does my presence change things?
- Do I add kerosene to the roaring fire or am I a fire extinguisher?
- A peacemaker will put out the fire
- Internal peace affects the external atmosphere

Sometimes you need to “zip it”

Proverbs 15:1 (NKJV)

15 A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

- We need to work at keeping quiet and let God give us a great victory

The Battle of Jericho

God told Joshua to have the people march around the city six days followed by seven times on the seventh day

- The priests were to blow the trumpets and the people were to shout
- The walls would fall down

Don't miss this

Joshua 6:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Now Joshua had commanded the people, saying, “You shall not shout or make any noise with your voice, nor shall a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I say to you, ‘Shout!’ Then you shall shout.”

- In other words, “*Shut up until I tell you otherwise.*”
- How many times have you opened your mouth and destruction came flying out?
- There is a time to fight but there is a time to stand still and be at peace
- Pick your battles wisely

Romans 12:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

- Tame the tongue
- Don't add to the conflict
- Stay away from negative influences
- Allow God's peace to rule in your heart – **Colossians 3:15**