

LIFE GROUP NOTES:

SERIES: Disciple

PART EIGHT: What Love Requires

Jesus replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' [f] 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Matt. 22:37-40



INTRODUCTION

One day some people came to Jesus with a trick question. They wanted him to tell them which was the greatest of all the hundreds of Old Testament commands. Jesus quickly answered, "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. The second is like it: love your neighbour as yourself." Matt. 22:37-39. Somewhere along the way, the followers of Jesus have lost sight of what Jesus said next: "All the law and prophets hang on these two commandments." Matt 22:40. This means that every time we pick up our Bibles for guidance, every time we teach a lesson from it, every time we search it's pages to discover what we should do in a particular situation, every time we ask "what does the bible say about this?" we're to make sure we look at it through the filter of loving God with all our hearts, souls and minds, and loving our neighbours as ourselves.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Think of the people who have had the most significant influence in your life, for better or worse. How did they profoundly love you or hurt you?

MESSAGE SUMMARY

There are two categories of people that have influenced our lives profoundly: those who have hurt us and those who have loved us. And their impact was not because of what they believed; rather, it was something we felt and experienced that spoke directly to our souls. This is why it is so extraordinarily important that Jesus followers understand his message about the priority of loving others. Love is our greatest opportunity. If we want to see people change, if we want to influence their futures, then we are to love them profoundly.

You can take this to the next level by engaging with these three statements: **1) Don't do anything that will hurt you. 2) Don't do anything that will hurt someone else. 3) Don't be mastered by anything.**

These are three handles that help us in learning to treat other people in ways that heal their hurts and love them towards our Saviour, who loved them so much he died for them. Love requires that you never make a moral decision, a sexual decision, an ethical decision, a relational decision, or a professional decision that hurts you, because when you hurt yourself, you hurt the One and the ones who love you most. Love also requires that you do nothing to hurt anyone else in your interpersonal relationships, because every person you encounter is someone your heavenly Father sent his Son to die for- even your worst enemies, even the people who can't stand you. Love also requires that you not be mastered by anything. Whenever you're mastered by something, it keeps you from loving. No one should have to compete with your alcohol or your porn or your prescriptions drug addiction or your anger or with anything else that masters you. Refuse to be mastered by anything, because God is your master. Love requires that you get rid of anything in your life that competes with his lordship.

In the beginning of the Jesus movement, with the simple idea to love one another, Jesus followers were able to influence their culture so profoundly that a form of paganism we can't even imagine was turned upside down and disappeared. If that commitment to love again characterises our lives and our churches, we'll have leverage in our culture beyond comprehension. But when we abandon love as our point of leverage, we continue to lose influence. We can't preach people out of destructive habits and addictions. These transformations happen only when our love is so attractive that it's irresistible.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) How central is love for God and love for others to your understanding of the Bible's message?
- 2) How central is love for God and love for others to the moral and ethical standards you apply to your life?
- 3) How have you already grown in understanding what love requires? How have your attitudes changed over time?
- 4) What part do our beliefs play in the influence we have on other people?
- 5) What challenges are you likely to encounter if you truly seek to avoid hurting yourself, hurting others, and being mastered by anything?

KEY POINTS

- The people who have influenced our lives most profoundly are those who have either significantly hurt us or significantly loved us. Their influence was not because of their beliefs.
- If we want to influence people and see transformation in their lives, we must love them profoundly.
- We must 1) do nothing that hurts us, 2) do nothing that hurts others, and 3) not be mastered by anything.

Moving Forward

Step back and consider your overall approach to decisions, relationships, activities and responsibilities. As you grow in viewing all of these through the 'filter' of loving God and loving others- what difference will it make? What expectations do you have? If it leads to difficulties, tension and hardship, will you be ready and willing to keep pressing forward in that direction?