

# LOVE OTHERS

Matthew 22:34-40

Our mission at Grace Community Church is to love God, love Others and Make Disciples. When asked which of the 613 commands of the Law of Moses was the greatest, our Lord answered:

**Matthew 22:34–40 (ESV)**

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.<sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment.<sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”



This morning we're thinking about the second greatest command: love others. Most of us would insist we love others. But truth be told, we really don't. We agree with the idea, but we struggle with execution.

I could talk about all the ways we should love others starting at home with our spouses and children and working outward to our Christian brothers and sisters, neighbors, friends and coworkers to loving the poor and needy in our community. I could give specifics: pick up your underwear, don't leave the car on empty, speak kindly to one another, help someone in need. No doubt these things are right and true and you and I might go away and for the next couple of days we might actually pick up our underwear or do the dishes or turn off the television and listen. But invariably we'll drift back into old habits and

patterns.

You and I will not make progress in loving others based on one sermon or even a series of sermons on loving others. We will not make progress in loving others unless we are whole-heartedly engaging in our relationship with Jesus.

**If we don't love God, we won't love others.**

The reason: born in Adam, we are all born with a sin nature (Rom. 5:12-14). The essence of that sin nature is that we want to be god and we want to build our kingdom. From our earliest days we seek to bring people and things under our control to satisfy our desires; to serve us in our kingdom. Why is bitterness rife in the human soul? Why is a critical spirit so common? If we honestly drill down, we are bitter and critical because someone somehow didn't live up to our expectations; they didn't do what we wanted them to do.

Even our loves are self-serving. Romantic love is essentially self-centered; I love you because of the way you make me feel. We don't love others outside of the small circle of family and friends because we see others as a threat to our kingdom or at least a nuisance to be avoided. Those we love we hurt terribly because of our self-centeredness.

Our self-centeredness doesn't go away when we get saved. We don't automatically start loving others with sacrificial, unconditional love the moment we're born again. Some Christians never really learn to love others the way Jesus wants us to love others. Why? Because they never whole-heartedly engage in their relationship with God. It is only through a growing love relationship with God that we can grow to love others. We cannot obey the second greatest commandment without obeying the first. Loving God is necessary to loving others. Why?

**It is only through loving God that we can be transformed out of our self-centeredness.**

The primary way we pursue our relationship with God is through spending time in His Word. And it is through the truth of His Word that our minds are renewed – the key to change.

**Romans 12:1–2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Here it is even more clearly spelled out in Colossians 3:1-17

**Colossians 3:1–17 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

<sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> On account of these the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup> In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup> But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

<sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

As we spend time with God and meditate on His grace, love and kindness to us, the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to the ugliness and hurtfulness of our self-centeredness. His purpose in exposing the disease is to drive us to the cure. Until we're really convicted that our self-centeredness is ugly and hurtful and that because of it we do not love others, there will be no change. It is as we see it and hate it that we cry out to God to change it.

If we don't spend time with the Lord we won't see our lovelessness nor long to be changed.

If we're loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and spending time with Him in His Word the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to the things that are really important.

**1 John 2:15–17 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

The two things that will not pass away are the Word of God and people. Our houses will crumble. Our cars will stop running. Whatever your company produces or markets today will not matter in the future. The only things of lasting value here on earth are the Scriptures and people. You may have a lot of biblical knowledge, you may have been a Christian for a long time, but if you do not love people, you've missed the point; you've missed the heart of God. If you're not loving people you're living for things that don't matter.

**1 John 4:7–12 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

As we love God, He grows in us a heart of love for others.

Loving people is hard. Loving others is messy. You will get hurt. But God's love will sustain you. There are few joys as fulfilling as loving a person and watching them blossom in Christ.

If you would love others, first, love God.