

Selfishness to Growth to Obedience

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Mark 12:29-34 - *Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. 33 And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."*

For this writing I want to focus on verse 31 of the above passage. I have written on this before but many teachings from the Bible bear repeating time and time again.

If we are honest with ourselves, most of us come to the Lord out of a selfish desire to be stronger than we are at the time before allowing the Lord into our lives; we become sick and tired of being sick and tired. Then, we grow in our relationship with the Lord as we focus on ourselves and what He is doing in and through us. We come to a place where we learn to hear His voice and become obedient to what He says (no matter how small the task). Through this process we are able to share with others our struggles which the Lord uses to bring others to Himself just as He did with us. I pray this is making sense.

We learn to love ourselves through this process. If we can't come to love ourselves then we cannot love others around us; "...love your neighbor as yourself". This is a double-sided commandment that says love yourself first then love your neighbor. The way to come to love yourself first is to "...love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength". When we begin to do this, we begin to love ourself.

Genesis 1:26a - "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."

We cannot stay in the selfishness stage but it is important to be honest and know that it can be a beginning spiritually speaking. Love the Lord with everything you are and everything you have then you will come to love yourself and your neighbor. If you are struggling to love yourself, it may be time to look at how you view God in your life. There is probably something there that He has been trying to speak to you but you have not been able to hear for whatever reason. If you are not loving yourself, it is fairly likely you are really not loving those around you either. If you have any doubts about whether you are loving, well...

1 Corinthians 13:4-10 - 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. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

Can you say you exhibit all the above at every moment of every day towards every person you encounter; including yourself? I know I can't and I dare say you can't either. The great news is God knows this and that's why He sent Jesus to live in us. It is through Jesus Christ in us that we can grow into this. All we have to do is "...love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" then we can "...love your neighbor as yourself". The selfishness to have Jesus in our lives creates the growth to allow Jesus to dwell within us and love Him with everything we have which helps us to become obedient to His ways and voice.

1 John 4:8 - He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

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