

life group study guide

I Don't Care About You

July 17, 2016

"Inward Issues"

Matthew 22:37-40 *'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.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'*

Big Idea: *As believers, we should be focused on looking up to God and looking out to our neighbors.*

The first thing we do is love God; the second is to love others. We pursue broken relationships, pray for those who persecute us, meet the needs of others, and love our neighbors as ourselves.

God longs to be first in our lives above all else and then to love others. The two greatest commandments tell us that the entire law (hangs/depends) is fulfilled when we do these two things.

God tells us to trust Him and seek Him FIRST and He will take care of us (Matthew 6:25-34).

When we are UPWARD and OUTWARD focused, the inward takes care of itself.

There is no thing and no one more important in this life than God.

We need to move from our worship preferences to His presence; when we taste this, our preferences become secondary to true worship of God. If not, then we are most likely worshipping our preferences above Jesus.

If the first question were, "Do you love God?" every one of us would answer, "Yes."

However, many people who sincerely believe they love the Lord are mistaken. Sadly, they may not even know Him. Words alone are no proof of love. Even sincere believers can miss out on this awesome experience. **How are you demonstrating your love for God?**

Many of us confuse our need with love. Most of us are quick to bring our cares and concerns to the Lord in prayer because we need His help, but that may merely be evidence of our need for Him, not our love for Him.

Some of us assume that our giving is a sign of our love. But simply putting money in the offering plate is not showing true love for who God is to us personally.

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Religious activity doesn't represent love for God. Singing, teaching, preaching, and sharing the gospel may not be expressions of love, especially if they are done out of a sense of obligation.

Loving God means He has a prominent place in our hearts and our love for Him permeates every area of our lives. As Jesus told the Pharisees, the greatest thing we ought to do is to love God with all our hearts, souls, and minds (**Matt. 22:37**). Everything about the life of faith depends on this: knowing God's love, and loving God in return. Nothing can substitute for a life of complete immersion in the love of God.

This simply means we express our love for Him continually in our innermost being—both emotionally and mentally. It's an act of giving ourselves totally to Him for His purposes and joy. As He pours out His love to us, our eyes are opened to see His good purposes, and we desire to honor Him with obedience. We must be renewed in this love every day. So we wait on the Lord in His Word and prayer, meditate on His glory, listen for His Spirit, and walk in Him, the eyes of our heart fixed firmly on Jesus Christ, our exalted King.

We must be in the Word! If our passion is to know the Lord, our goal must be learning to love. Jesus put it as plainly: The Old Testament Law and the Prophets – whether Old or New – depend for their being understood on our having love as the treasure we're trying to increase. If you only read the Scriptures in order to gain information or perspective, or to increase your understanding of doctrine, then you're not reading them according to the purpose for which they were given. God gave the Scriptures to equip us for good works, works motivated by and expressive of love (**2 Tim. 3:15-17**).

Loving our neighbor is a biblical mandate and the foundation for the Golden Rule, but the phrase is not complete without the last two words: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (**Mark 12:31**). If we are to be vessels used for pouring out the Father's love on others, we must always be unselfish in our concern for them. Once again, the Word must be our constant guide. Everything about the Scriptures – every book, section, story, doctrine, or theme – is intended by God to promote the practice of love.

Regardless of how we act or feel, our Father loves us perfectly. The proof is in John 3:16, which says God loved mankind so much that He gave His Son to die for their sins. And He did this while all human beings were still His enemies (**Romans 5:8-10**)! No one is worthy of the sacrifice Christ made, and yet the Father's perspective is that we are worth it. If He considers each of us that valuable, then we ought to look at others the same way.

Experiencing God's love should inspire us to love our neighbors—this includes everyone in our sphere of influence, although some are easier to love than others. Throughout the gospels, Jesus repeated the command to His disciples, probably because He knew how often His followers, both then and now, would run into people who are difficult to love. But we are most like God when we ask, How can I serve this person? What is in his or her best interest?

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Though we'll encounter people who seem unlovable, the commandment stands: We are to love them as ourselves. This is a powerful evangelism tool. Few can resist the attraction of a loving friend acting on behalf of the perfectly loving Friend. **Who among your neighbors needs to feel loved today?**

The Apostle John said that God is love (1 Jn. 4:8). We may turn that around and say that love is God. To love, in other words, is to relate to other beings as God does. We know from our Lord Jesus that, in the divine Godhead, the Father, Son, and Spirit relate to one another in love, in such a way as that they share in glory together (Jn. 17.20-24). The Father loves the Son and so gives Him the world and a people for His own possession, whom He loves, saves, sanctifies, and brings into His glory with the Father. The Son loves the Father and so set aside, for a season, certain of His divine prerogatives in order to do the Father's bidding in destroying death and Satan and saving from the destructive power of sin a people for God's own possession. The Spirit loves the Father and the Son by being the motive power of the Kingdom for making God's plan and the Son's work come to fruition. And the Father and Son love the Spirit by giving Him such a central role in accomplishing the New Covenant.

What are some ways you would like to grow in loving God and the people around you?

What are your greatest needs in this area? Do you feel you are a well of God's love?