

The BASICS

Love God

First, it's the Greatest Commandment—to love God with nothing less than everything we are. Have you ever wondered why, though? Is he so desperate that he *commands* us to love Him? I don't think so—it seems like the opposite. The whole Bible shows us that God is radically giving His love to us. From creation until now, we see God creating us, choosing us, and He even calls us “very good.” God is for us. He always has our best interest in mind, He thinks good thoughts towards us and creates beautiful plans for us. He takes care of us, provides for us and calls us His own. When we really get to know God, we find that it is a natural response to fall in love with Him. This commandment from God, to love God, was for our good. This is God calling us into the very best, a relationship the Almighty Father, Son and Holy Spirit; a relationship that requires all of our emotions, energy, hopes, dreams, intellect, and effort.

Love Others

It is from our true, wholehearted love for God that the second most important commandment can be lived out. Love your neighbor as yourself. In society today the golden rule is not to put others first. It is all about *me*. We ask ourselves, “What can I get? What is the plan for my life? How will I succeed? How do I get the most popular? How do I look the best?” This reflects our selfish culture, not the culture of the Kingdom of God. But when we love God with everything we have in us, it is the next step to really start loving others as we love ourselves. Becoming fully drenched in God's love, and reflecting love back to him, we begin seeing others as God sees them.

Love the Lord your God with everything and then love your neighbor as yourself. When falling so deeply in love with God we can start to feel His heart for others, and from His heart we can really love others.

These two commandments are the very central part of our walk with God. Anything and everything we do is rooted in loving God and loving others. Whether we worship, serve, teach, or go on missions trips, it is all founded in these. They are The Basics. It is how those who do not know the truth will recognize the truth in us.

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind. And, Love your neighbor as yourself.

—Luke 10:27 (NLT)

These two simple sentences are the most important things that God has ever told us to do. In just a few phrases, God summarizes the whole Bible.

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Identity and Inheritance

As we waited on God for this theme, all of us had strong impressions about the twin ideas of identity and inheritance. We all recalled verses that spoke about us being hidden in Christ, (Colossians 3:3), and identifying with him and his suffering, (Romans 8:17). As the theme became more clear, we saw that loving God is at the core of our identity. It runs to the very foundations of who we are.

In Ephesians it talks about adoption, (Ephesians 1:5); how God chose us to be co-heirs with Christ. We are His sons and daughters. Our identity should not be rooted in the piece of dirt of where we are from, what job we have, what we like to do, etc. As lovers of God we are included with Christ, we are marked with a seal, (Ephesians 4:30). We have been adopted and are included in this glorious inheritance. We are children of the Most High, (Galatians 3:26) belonging not of this world, (1 Peter 2:9) but to the kingdom of heaven.

It is through these promises that we can have the confidence to see ourselves as God sees us. In God's kingdom we learn that hating ourselves is hating what God has called good. We need to have a certain appreciation for how God has made us. This is different than the, "It's all about me," infatuation. This is a real, solid, appreciation for God's creation, and who He has created us to be.

The Glory of God

God's desire is for every person to know Him, (1 Timothy 2:4). Jesus is on about his Father's business of revealing God's glory in the nations, (Ezekiel 39:21). And he's getting it done, and he's inviting us to participate, (Matthew 16:24). See, he chooses to spread the good news to the world using us. Someday soon, the knowledge of the glory of God will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14)

When we love God with our whole being, it will become natural for us to be lined up with what he's doing in the world. What he loves will become what we love, and it will overflow from our hearts to even the far corners of the world!

People will know we are followers of Christ because of our love for one another, (John 13:35). When we are fully devoted to God, we'll take the glory of God to the nations.

A Continuous Spilling

There is an analogy about water glasses that we use to describe God pouring himself on us. The image is God as a fountain, pouring water into us as a cup. In our lives, a lot of times we take our God-filled cups and go out into the world, pouring that God-goodness out onto someone else, leaving us empty to be filled again. These greatest commandments paint a different picture. Instead of taking our filled cup to someone else, we remain in the outpouring of God-goodness, overflowing his love and goodness onto all those around us.