

# Kingdom News

Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever... (Matt. 6:13)

Volume 6, Issue 1

June 2007

## Love the Lord...

*With your whole heart, soul, mind and strength; and ...*

A wife was on her way to the store to pick up a few items. Her husband asked her to also pick up some shaving cream. He directed her to be sure that the shaving cream contains Shea butter. The wife goes to the store, and near the isle where the shaving cream is located was a gentleman promoting a new-to-market shaving cream product. She gets it, sparing herself the task of "shopping" through all of the brands of shaving cream. She returns home and as she is unpacking the groceries, her husbands notices the brand of shaving cream that she brought home. He was quite displeased; as it did not contain Shea butter. He mentions to his wife that while he appreciates her efforts; he couldn't use shaving cream without Shea butter. She was upset and considered him ungrateful and hard to please. She said, "You wanted shaving cream; I brought shaving cream and now you say you can't use it. Next time get your own shaving cream." He reminded her that he could not use shaving cream without Shea butter; which was clearly not one of the ingredients in the product she brought home.

The wife didn't understand why the ingredient Shea butter made such a difference. She simply didn't

*Love the Lord*

*Continued on page 2*

## The Leadership Corner *Leadership Living, Inc.*

### Marketing Your Story

Did you know that God is a Marketing Executive? It's true. He has this awesome marketing plan he uses to positively influence the decisions people make. And guess what? He uses ordinary people, particularly believers, as his advertisement or Ad campaign.

My "late-comer" education story is one of the tools he used recently to positively influence a young woman's decision to go back to college. When I was growing up, I got pregnant and married (in that order) in my early twenties. As a result, for years I thought my chance to go to college was gone. I found out, however, that God had a different plan. I went to college when I was thirty-five years old. I graduated six years later with a Masters Degree. That was a couple of years ago. Now I hold an executive level position. Of course, I'm thankful that God brought me through the experience, but I really don't talk much about it anymore.

A few weeks ago a young lady at my office overheard me sharing my story with a vender. I don't remember exactly how we got on the subject. At any rate, the young lady didn't say anything to me for almost a week. Then finally, she told me that hearing my story about going to college at such a late age changed her entire outlook for "her" future. She told me that she will turn thirty years old this year. She is married and has a couple of small children. She had been thinking that her chance to complete her college degree was gone. Unlike my former situation, she

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Love the Lord...
- 1 The Leadership Corner
- 5 Bite-Sized Wisdom
- 5 Summary and Electronic Editions

already has about twenty college credits.

The young lady went on to say that when she heard me tell my story to someone else; it sparked a light in her mind. It revived a dream that had died. She now plans to start taking one class at a time next year. Man! That was so powerful to me.

Later that night the Lord told me that it's important for me to not be hesitant to share stories from my past, as I feel the urge. He reminded me that it is my stories He uses to influence (advertise to) others. This is one of the ways God moves people to follow their passions; and to not give up on their dreams. So, my encouragement to you is this. No matter what you've gone through; regardless of who was at fault; as God urges you - go ahead and share your stories. If God brought you through it, He wants to use it in His marketing plan. This is the type of leadership that God extracts from us, even when we aren't aware of it!

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Love the Lord

Continued from page 1

understand why he was upset. But I'm sure you understand. And I'm sure you can fully appreciate the husband's position. He was very clear about his needs. She responded to his request in a manner that was convenient to her, thinking that she had done him a favor.

You can probably recall, or imagine, a very similar situation yourself. It may have been from the husband's or the wife's perspective. Now we all know that this situation may not be a "deal-breaker" for their relationship. It is likely that they would get past this. But there are other situations where something like this can be very costly to a relationship.

Because of the laws that govern the righteousness of God, there are certain things He cannot accept from us. To ensure that we are not in the dark about what is, or is not, acceptable; the Lord has prepared directives. In His estimation, He has made the way very accessible and has clearly defined it. Jesus says that "I am the way... no man has access to the Father, unless he comes through me." (John 14:6 KJV paraphrased)

The Lord requires of us (the body of believers) a lifestyle that is represented by the fact that we love the Lord preeminently. And that we love our neighbor as ourselves.

One day a man asked Jesus, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Essentially the man was asking, what "really" are we obliged to do to be accepted by God? Of all that the law and the prophets teach which of these tenants are we compelled to fulfill?

Jesus' response to this was that there are two commandments which represent the whole law of God and everything that the prophets taught. First, we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul and mind. ...and with all of our strength.... Secondly we are to love neighbor as ourselves. (Matt 22:37-40; Mark 12:29 KJV paraphrased)

Many of us have heard this teaching our whole life. What really does it really mean?

- ✚ What does it mean to love the Lord with all of our heart?
- ✚ What does it mean to love the Lord with our whole soul?
- ✚ What does it mean to love the Lord with our entire mind?
- ✚ What does it mean to love the Lord with all of our strength?
- ✚ What does it mean to love our neighbor as ourselves?

Could this be right? Is this really do-able? At first blush it would seem that this directive would be too much to ask; and even more difficult to deliver. Is it possible to love the Lord with our all? Or does it mean something covert and mystical? If we convince ourselves that it means something less than or other than it says, then we can justify our lack of compliance with its dictates.

However, if we believe that the Lord knew exactly what he was saying; and that he meant every word of it, then an obligation is laid upon us. We become responsible to first learn it's meaning; and secondarily to bring ourselves and our lives into compliance. Or we must give just cause as to why we feel that we cannot fulfill this mandate. The latter of which I would not want to be found attempting.

It is imperative that we establish a caveat here. Scriptural use of the terms "heart, mind, soul" and sometimes "strength" are often interchangeable. Please do not be discouraged by this and miss the point.

### **To love the Lord with ...**

#### **...our whole heart**

The statutes of the Lord are right, causing the heart to rejoice. (Ps. 19:8 KJV by reference) Our heart is often represented as the seat of our desires, intentions, or our emotions. To love the Lord with our whole heart means that we hold God as the prominent object of our affections. And that everything we do, we do out of our love for Him. The scriptures admonish us to set our affections on things above, and not on earthly things. (Col. 3:2 KJV paraphrased)

#### **...our whole soul**

Our soul comprises many things, but for the sake of this discussion it is the foundation from which come our character and our integrity. It is who we are. The integrity of the upright will guide them ... a just man walks in his integrity. (Prov. 11:3; 20:7 KJV paraphrased) We may be predisposed to being faithful; jealous; meek; short-tempered or trustworthy, to name just a few. The condition of our soul overall will define these characteristics, more or less. Please do not construe this as meaning that the condition of our soul cannot be changed. Its condition is not the result of our genetic predisposition. We are fully responsible for the condition of our souls. Set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. (1 Chron. 22:19 KJV) The law of the Lord is perfect, converting or restoring the soul. (Ps. 19:7 KJV by reference) We can purify our souls by obeying the truth. (1 Peter 1:22 KJV by reference) It is also in the soul that our decision-making faculty resides. We show our love for God in our decision-making, when the root and objective of our choices respect our

relationship with God.

#### **...our whole mind**

Here our mind is representative of our collective mental and intellectual capacities. The mind is the faculty by which we intuit; by which we come to perceive or possess knowledge. In the Complete Jewish Bible the "mind" is translated "understanding." What, then, does it mean to love the Lord with our intellectual capacities? In the words of Charles Finney, "It does not imply any unhealthy degree of excitement of the mind." (Lectures on Systematic Theology Volume 1, from the 1851 Edition, p.242) It does however imply that the systems of beliefs that govern our thoughts are to be honorable to God. There are thoughts that dishonor God. While we may not be able to completely stop passing thoughts; these are not to be entertained. Nor are they to take up residence in our minds.

So then with the mind (by knowledge and understanding) we serve the law of God. (Rom. 7:25 KJV paraphrased) When our lives are governed by what we know to be true, according to what God has spoken; we are walking in agreement with the law of God. Because the testimony of the Lord (what God says about a thing) is sure; giving wisdom to the simple. (Ps. 19:7 KJV by reference) It goes on to say that on the other hand, when our lives are governed by the desires of our flesh, we obligate ourselves to the law of sin, which necessarily results in death.

#### **...our whole strength**

Our strength is representative of the power of our being, our ability to accomplish, to exert effort or to will. What does it mean to love the Lord with all of our strength or our will?

By our will we set our life's course. By it we sow and by it we reap what we sow. By our wills we either hold God as the object of our affection; or we serve our own interests. We set our wills when we make our decision about Jesus Christ. Are we for Him or not, there is no middle ground. Once the will is set, our motives reflect the position we have taken. "...whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10:31 KJV paraphrased)

The concept of loving the Lord “with our all” is often misunderstood as being so emotionally and passionately “in love with” God that we cannot relate to anyone else. It also seems to mistakenly imply that it is not possible to simultaneously have a fulfilling relationship with anyone else; as if loving God is an exclusive activity. If this is your understanding of the commandment, then it is understandable why one would draw back from this decree. Such a definition of the command is altogether impossible and unreasonable to a sound mind.

It does not exempt us from our other obligations of family, business, etc. Nor are we led to make decisions that have no foundation or reasoning. The laws of God that are to govern our lives do not conflict with each other. The ordinances of the Lord, cannot conflict with other laws. The law cannot teach that we are not to yield to temptation, and then God tempts us with unrighteousness. (James 1:13-16 KJV by reference)

To love God with all of our hearts, simply means that we are committed to recognizing the glory of God as our reason for doing the things that we do. And that this reasoning must be aligned and supported by revelation of the scriptures.

### **Love your neighbor as yourself.**

This has always been an interesting commandment to me. I have heard it interpreted as “loving your neighbor, as you love yourself.” I’d like to share with you how this commandment was revealed to me. Many years ago, I asked the Lord what it meant to love my neighbor as myself. I sincerely didn’t understand. And the concept of loving my neighbor as I loved myself really didn’t settle well with me. Because I didn’t know what it meant to “love my self.” I remember being taught to love God and to love my neighbor; but never to love myself. Nowhere in the scriptures could I find a directive to love myself. If you find it certainly let me know. Now I know it may seem only logical “that we should love ourselves.” But go with me as I share my brief journey of discovery.

I asked the Lord, “How do I love my neighbor as myself?” He told me to “love your neighbor, as if your neighbor were you.” He asked me, how do you know that you love your self? I thought ... and

thought ... and thought; still not a clue. Because all of the seemingly obvious things like securing my own possessions; looking out for my own best interests; are not true articles of love. The scriptures teach us that love (or charity) does not seek its own interests. (1 Cor 13 5; John 8 50 KJV paraphrased) What was there left for me to do?

To love one’s life is to seek to save one’s life. The only way we could ensure our own salvation is by accepting the gift of life that God has given us, Jesus Christ. Anything short of that is not love, nor is it life. God is love, and a life without God is a life without love. I then understood that the only way to prove that I loved my self is to not allow myself to spend an eternity without Jesus Christ; who is God’s expression of love for us. To do otherwise, is not a true expression of love. And if I didn’t love my self, in this way, I certainly could not love my neighbor.

Perhaps the difference between “loving your neighbor as you love yourself” and “loving your neighbor as if your neighbor were you;” may sound trivial to you. But look a bit closer. One precept requires that we love ourselves first, then love our neighbors the same. But realize that the act of loving one’s self never ends. The appetite of the flesh is insatiable. If we focus on loving ourselves first, we will never get around to loving our neighbor. The other precept requires that we focus on loving our neighbor. We recognize that our neighbor is as valuable as we are. And has the same rights that we have; a right to live, to love, to be happy, and to seek God. If we see ourselves as the “same” we will not defraud or bereave our neighbor these rights. The scriptures even go as far as to say that we are not to seek our own, but every man is to seek to ensure the wealth of his neighbor. (1 Cor. 10 24 KJV paraphrased) *Hint: Give and it shall be given to you..*

We love our neighbor when we share with them Jesus Christ. By this I do not mean that we are to “preach” to them our religious beliefs, doctrines or creeds. We are to be epistles of a life committed to God. To love our neighbor is to treat our neighbor, as one for whom Christ died.

◇ KJV ◇

## Bite-Sized Wisdom

*Food for Thought*



Great peace, have they which love your law; and nothing shall offend them. (Ps. 119:165 KJV modified)

## SUMMARY

The Lord has defined for us a life that will bring peace, wealth, joy, happiness (and that's in this world) and then eternal life. If we live the life that He has defined; we will have the rewards of that life.

However, if we choose to live the life that we define, we'll have to get our own peace, wealth, joy and happiness. As for eternal life; you're on your own.

Here the Lord has set before us life and death. >>>>>>> CHOOSE LIFE <<<<<<<<<< Love the Lord with....

Share the life that God has blessed you to live. Sometimes by seeing what God is doing or has done for someone else; are we able to see what God can do for us. Life is a gift, use it wisely. Increase in transparency.

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