

Excelling in Loving Others

Our main passage is 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

The importance of Love

The greatest commandments (Matthew 22:36-40)

- Sometimes we forget that these are the greatest commandments
 - Greater than the great commission
 - Greater than the command to make disciples
 - Greater than serve in the ministry

Without love, all you do is nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

- If you spend your entire life spreading the gospel, but don't have love, your work is nothing
- If you spend your entire life getting to know the Bible, and you discover great truths that the Church has forgotten about, and you help others to find them, but you don't have love, your work is nothing.
- This is something we need reminded of because we face temptation to forget about it
- Love is the measure of success in your stewardship
 - When you get to the end of your life, and you give an account of your stewardship to Christ, the most important thing won't be how much you spread the gospel, but how well you loved God and loved others

Loving other Christians is one of the best ways we can serve Christ (Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 9:4)

- If you want to love and please God and you just want to be a blessing to Him, then make it your aim to be a blessing to other Christians
 - Make it your aim to be a blessing to them and to contribute to their wellbeing

Loving others brings you closer to God

- Loving others can draw you closer to God or pull you away from God, but it depends on your attitude on how you go about it. We've all seen people who put their ministry above their relationship with God, and it ends up pulling them away from God. But loving others, if depending on we view it and go about it, can bring us closer to God.
- Let's start with how we view it
 - I want you to change the way you think about loving others and instead of seeing it as "something you do for God" start seeing it as "something you do with God"
 - Sometimes when a father and a child do some type of work together, the child starts to view that as "this is our thing; this is our special activity; this what we do together"
 - I think you should make it your aim to start viewing loving others like that.
 - This is how Jesus operated
 - John 5:16-20
 - Jesus didn't merely see His earthly ministry as something He did for the Father. To Jesus, His earthly ministry was something He did with the Father. It was intimate and relational.
- How you go about it makes a difference too
 - Loving others starts to bring you closer to God when your love for others is built on the foundation of your prayer life.
 - Serving others through the gifts of the Spirit is another way our serving becomes with God and not just for God

Excelling at loving others in your heart

- Make loving others part of your prayer life
 - Be praying throughout the entire day (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
 - And as you pray throughout the day, set a special emphasis on praying for others
 - Don't just talk to God about others, but listen to God about others
- Think about how you can serve others
 - Spend time during the day thinking about how you can bless others that day
 - Put it in your calendar if you need to; set an alarm
 - This makes you more effective at loving in your heart, and it also makes you more effective at loving in your actions
- Be intentional about desiring the wellbeing of others
 - Love could basically be summed up as "desiring the wellbeing of others"
 - You have the ability to lead and direct your desires
 - Be intentional to desire the wellbeing of others
 - As you think about others, or maybe when you're in prayer, take the time to just remind your self that they are their own person with their own world, and even though you can only view life from your own world, their exists just as much as yours does and is just as important as yours is
 - Decide in your heart that you hope the best for them.
- Being intentional about your motives
 - When you're serving someone, taking the time to mentally remind yourself that this person's wellbeing is important, and that this act being a blessing to them is reason enough to do it even if nothing else good came from it.
- Pay attention to the needs of others
 - God, in talking about how He cares for you, as an example, talks about how He pays attention to you (Luke 12:6-7)

Excelling at loving others in your actions

- Loving others in your actions is called "serving"
- Five major areas to learn to serve others in:
 - Through prayer
 - Through relationship and social interactions
 - Through work
 - Through finances
 - Through ministry
- Everyone should learn to excel in all five of these areas. All five of these areas are for everyone, and we should all seek to excel in each of them
 - You might not be called to full time ministry, but you are called to minister to others spiritually an at least some capacity
 - You might not called to work a 40 hour a week job, but either way, you are called to work in practical ways at least some capacity
- Be strategic about these five areas. Think about how you can grow and excel further in each area.