**The Greatest - Wk 1 – The Greatest Command**

**Happy New Year…. Before we tackle Abraham – we are going to spend a few weeks covering the greatest principles in scripture.**

**\*\* The Greatest Reason - We exist for the glory of God.**

**Isaiah 43:7 – we are created for the glory of God.**

**1 Corinthians 10:31 – everything we do is to be for the glory of God.**

**Colossians 1:16 - For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.**

**Rom 11:36 - For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.**

**Why are you here? Why do you breathe? Why does anything happen? For the glory of the LORD God.**

**2024 exists for the glory of God!**

**\*\* The Greatest Command -**

**A scribe (hand writes copies of the Torah – they know it) approaches Jesus with a question about the Torah – which they knew very well.**

**Mark 12:28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, (With a diff attitude. An honest seeker… with an honest question) “Which commandment is the most important of all?” (what’s the big dog command?)**

**Over 613 laws, 365 commands, & added oral Torah commands by the Pharisees. How was Jesus going to answer?**

**(Jesus the Torah in the flesh – answers using the Torah Deut 6) 12:28 Jesus answered, “The most important (the greatest) is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.(Jesus begins with the Sh’ma = listen, this is the One and only God of all creation – YHVH.) 30Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ 31The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” (they are intertwined – Matt 22:40 – “all the all and prophets hang on these two…”) 32“Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. (applauding Jesus seems comical) 33To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” (he affirmed this is more important than anything. A thousand burnt offerings are not greater than a single act of love) 34When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.**

**There are two commands and three loves mentioned**

**1. LOVE THE LORD GOD – 30Love the Lord your God…**

**Before this - Jesus gave the Sh’ma – “LISTEN” – We don’t just love any God, generic god, the god of your choice, Allah, Krishna, etc.**

**There is only one God – and that one God of all creation (YHVH) is to be loved.**

**Isaiah 45:5 – I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God! / Deut 4:35 - You were shown these things so that you would know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides Him. / Psalm 18:32 - For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God?**

**The LORD God’s plan from the start has always been about relationship (love) with Him – alone. He gives his name.**

**Isaiah 43:10 - You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "and My servant whom I have chosen, so that you may consider and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me no god was formed, and after Me none will come.**

**This LORD God can be known and loved. He is personal and decidedly active in our lives - not a force or a idea.**

**You have heard - Christianity is not religion but a relationship with Jesus – It’s true. Jesus is that LORD God in the flesh - loves you!**

**God reached out to us - the Mystery - why would God love us?**

**Rom 5:6-10 - When we were powerless, haters of God still living in sin – Christ demonstrated his love for us by dying for us. (He loves you)**

**\* God is the source of all love – it is intrinsic to Him. It belongs to Him -**

**indigenous to Him – not just something He does, but who He is – all love begins and belongs to Him.**

**1John 4:7 … love comes from God… because God is love.**

**Crazy thing - even our love for Him comes from Him.**

**We can’t even love him without his love first…**

**1 John 4:19 - We love because he first loved us.**

**Everyone wants to be “in love”, but we can’t know “true love” until you know God’s love.**

**We get glimpses, tastes, hints - but we cannot fully experience the depth of true love apart from Jesus - That is why the world struggles with love so much – because so many struggle to know and walk in love without Him.**

**Ephesians 3:17… And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, (Firmly planted in God’s love - that you) 18 may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, (love w/out limits) 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.**

**God so radically unconditionally loved those who hated him…**

**How are we respond to this love? With a - Wink, back at ya, want to give a shout out to the big guy, man upstairs – thank the landlord?**

**God wants, not 100 things, but 1 thing. From that flows everything.**

**The one and only expects our one and only devotion to exclusively His.**

**God will not share his place of love with anyone or anything?**

**Imagine this talk w/ my wife? Honey I love you, but I’m going to see other women? That is how we are w/ God. God and I have an agreement - it’s an open relationship. God will not share devotion w/ boyfriend, spouse, kids, a sport, or hobby – it’s exclusive.**

**And he is all lovely, wonderful, and worthy of our love.**

**Jesus quoting Duet 6, echoes the first of the 10 Commands - Exodus 20:3 - You shall have no other Gods before me”. He is to be our true hearts devotion.**

**Not a person, object, or pursuit – but the LORD God.**

**Exodus 34:14 - Do not worship (bow to) any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, (his very name is exclusive) is a jealous God.**

**God has a jealous (intolerantly exclusive) love for you.**

**Jealousy with God is not a sin – for he is the only who can call for exclusive devotion. All other jealously is a sin.**

**\*\*How are we to love the LORD? With everything.**

**Mark 12:30 Love the Lord your God with all (not part) your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ (Love wholly)**

**It’s a full meal deal. He wants every part – not just our spirit.**

**Christ gave his whole self, our love for him is to be - whole self**

**Four areas Jesus mentions:**

**\* Heart- our desires and will. Spiritual EKG check out any heart damage**

**\* Soul - our passions / emotionally. What stirs you? He wants that…**

**\* Mind - our mind / thoughts. What’s on your mind? He wants that…**

**\* Strength - our body / physically / We are to love him with our body…**

**He wants us to love him emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and physically – with our time, energy, resources, and devotion - He wants every part of you – completely. (99 ½ won’t do)**

**The whole, not a part - all. God alone gets this kind of love.**

**After we understand the place of God’s love in our life.**

**We understand another we are to love…**

**31The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’**

**2. LOVE YOURSELF**

**You won’t know how to love yourself in a healthy way until you know and love the LORD. Once you truly know his love, you see yourself diff.**

**Two unhealthy views of self – 1. The Loathers**

**Many loath themselves – look in the mirror with disgust / hate. Sometimes due to sinful choices or years of abuse & neglect.**

**As a result, you have a hard time knowing love & giving love.**

**“Well – I don’t think we should love ourselves…” \* We are to love what God loves and guess what? God loves you! I am not talking about pride and arrogance… but seeing yourself the way God sees you.**

**Two unhealthy views of self – 2. The Lathers (lathering themselves…)**

**Unfortunately - Many develop a narcissistic self-love and self adoration. Vain and self centered. This is not biblical. I’m talking a humble grateful love.**

**To truly know love and truly give love - begins with knowing God’s love for you - through Jesus.**

**When we learn to truly love the LORD GOD (above all things) – then we begin to see ourselves through his eyes and we LOVE OURSELVES in a healthy way – which leads to…**

**If we learn to love Him like that, He’ll make you a great lover of others**

**31‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’**

**3. LOVE OTHERS**

**You will always struggle to love others as long you struggle to love yourself. But once you have a biblical view of yourself…**

**How are we to love others – “as we love our self”**

**\* We are to care for others as consistently as we take care of ourself**

**We feed, clothe, comfort, bless, pray for, do nice things for, work for, plan, we want to be loved… so we do this to others.**

**\* Love for God & love for neighbor is distinguishable, but not separable**

**To love others is not same as loving God, but to love God will result in loving others. Inseparable. 1 John 4- You can not love God and hate another.**

**The Love Demo - Jesus modeled this**

**Romans 5:6 At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly… 8 God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us… 10 While we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son… (He demoed His attitude on love - when we were his enemies, unloving, ungodly, sinners, and hated him…)**

**\* When we love GOD fully – we begin to love what and how He loves**

**We know we’re in love with God - when we care for what he cares for.**

**- He loves the church (MT 16:18; Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25;** **Phil. 2:5)**

**Christ loves the church & gave Himself for it, planned it, built it, saved it, died for it, commissioned it, sent it, and is coming back for it!**

**He loves the community of faith. We are not meant to be spiritual hobos – wandering around as citizens with no home**

**- He loves the lost (He came to seek and save those hostile to him - so are we)**

**- He loves the forgotten & outcast (sick in spirit and abandoned by society)**

**Sick, hungry, homeless, orphan, widow, single mom, prisoner**

**He loves the lost, forgotten, poor, rich, clean, dirty, nice, hatful, victims, guilty, hard to love – and every nationality!**

**John 13:35By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, (By this… if you quote verses, give a lot, volunteer often, by how they vote… no) if you love one another. (By their compassionate actions to others)**

**Not just words, feelings, wishful thoughts, & prayers - but ACTION!**

**He loves us so much that he bore a cross - and what we find is - Jesus says that if you love me, you’ll bear that cross too.**

**I want read what Jesus was quoting… Duet 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (here is the next part) 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. (affects what we do and think) 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (our homes)**

**I think of how my single mom took us to church. Exposed to Jesus. My grandma was first person to ever tell me the gospel.**

**In 2024 set in your heart mom and dad, single, newly married, grand-parents. To love the LORD…. and to pass it down.**

**These are great commands – some are more significant than others.**

**What about sins – what is the worse sin? (murder, adultery, etc)**

**\*\*The truth is the greatest sin is to break this greatest command.**

**When I ponder the greatest command – I am concerned – for the reality is I can barley keep this command five minutes. My heart, soul, mind, strength – is constantly at war.**

**\*\* I have never truly loved God that deeply.**

**\*\* I have never truly loved others as I love myself.**

**If I ever thought I was a good person – this verse eliminates this delusion.**

**People don’t go to hell for stealing a stick of gum, we are eternally judged for breaking the greatest command – since none of us can – we all face God with idolatry in our heart - Rom 1 – the wrath of God is on us.**

**Romans 7:22 For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? (what do we do, who can rescue us?) 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!**

**But thank – JESUS! Without Christ we are helpless.**

**We have all broken the greatest command! But - Jesus perfectly loved the father, will all his heart, soul, mind, and strength – and he loved us perfectly - all the way to the cross.**

**By faith we are no longer just neighbors but family in Christ.**

**I want point out what Jesus said to this scribe – Mark 12:34 - When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.**

**(You’re almost there… “missed by that much”)**

**Knowing this is just a part of it. He was not quite there - he was close – he understood it. He knew the data, but not the heart.**

**He knew what it was… but lacked the most crucial ingredient – embracing Jesus by faith – only then it be walked it out.**

**Let’s begin the year looking to the grace of Jesus – shed for us!**

**\*\* Communion**