

christian virtue.

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In Galatians, Paul tells us that as a Christian, we are given the freedom to choose the way we want to live our life. Paul urges the congregation to not use their freedom to indulge the flesh, rather to serve one another humbly in love. That sounds beautiful and true, but to be honest, living out our Christian values in this world is not always easy and oftentimes do not come naturally.

As Christians, we sometimes confuse ourselves on what Christian virtues should look like, or we overemphasize according to various biblical figures or ideas. While in actuality, the emphasis should always be on Jesus. Jesus gave us a clear articulation on how we should be living through the Great Commandment: to love God and to love other people. Jesus taught us that, to love other people is like the parable of the Good Samaritan, and to love God ultimately looks like the Fruits of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:13- 26 (NIV)

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Luke 10: 25-37 (NIV)

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when

he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Matthew 22:36-40 (NIV)

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'* Out of every other laws or commandments that had existed already, why do you think Jesus claimed this as the greatest commandment of all?
2. What does it mean when we must 'love your neighbor as yourself'? Who is *your* neighbor?
3. What does it mean to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind'?
4. Loving people is not always easy and often times it can take a toll on us. How can we still practice this commandment even when we feel like we can't?
5. Paul tells us that we must walk by the Spirit and not gratify the desires of the flesh. What has your experience been with the fruits of the Spirit? How does the Great Commandment relate to this in terms of living out our Christian values?