

Angie's Marriage Column ~ April 21, 2010

If Love is the Greatest Commandment, Why Can't We Love?

Ask Angie: If I as a person am # 1 who can I help? Love is not self-seeking. If I seek to help myself first who matters after me? If I choose to help others first am I not full filled? Love is the greatest commandment. So why can't we love?

Guidance: I'm not sure what you mean when you say, "if I as a person am # 1 who can I help?" If you are married, scripture teaches us to carry each other's burdens, and if you have children their needs should be taken care of above your own. The priorities of marriage work best when both husband and wife do their part in the marriage.

God needs to come FIRST in the Christians life, even if you are single. Jesus teaches us how to love others without asking for anything in return, which is unconditional love.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

God, through his Son Jesus teaches us what real love is. When we love someone it should be with a willingness to give freely—this is called sacrificial love. Jesus paid the price for our sins and we have been offered a new life with him in the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus is our example for loving others.

You may be thinking, "How can I love like Jesus did? Well, we can love like Jesus because we are connected to Jesus—Jesus lives in us! Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches. Jesus says that if we remain in him then he will help us to bear fruit (love) for the kingdom. But by ourselves, apart from Jesus, we are unable to love our neighbors in the way God asks us to.

"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the Vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the Vine, you are the branches. If a man remain in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:4-5)

Jesus Commands us to Love Our Neighbors

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends, you are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:12-14)

Is Jesus asking us to sacrifice our life? Jesus is not asking us to sacrifice our life as in death, but he is asking us to love in other ways, such as encouraging, giving of ourselves, submission, helping, serving, listening, etc. All of these things are giving up a part of self

(sacrifice) to love another.

Christians are the Church and wherever you go you bring the church with you. Are you appropriately representing Jesus in your daily living and walk with God? Are you showing a good example to others who are soul searching for a better life and who are in need of Christ's love?

God's Love is the Key to the Christian Life

God's love for us and our relationship with him should give us the realization that we are delivered from our sins because of Jesus' death. God loves us so much! God's love fills us with hope, love and faith and gives us the ability to love others. So in answer to your question, "Why can't we love?" We can love, just not by our own ability or power. We must remain on the Vine and receive God's love for us FIRST, so we can love others in the ways of the Lord.

Real Love Takes Effort

Love must be sincere. (Romans 12:9). Real love requires our concentration and effort. It means helping and showing others the way to Christ. How can our life be a good example for others? How can we be an example of Jesus working in our life? Real love takes effort, time, personal involvement and sometimes money.

We must understand what our priorities are so we can properly love others. Many people who are eager to do "good works" ignore what is truly important in their life, such as immediate family. In marriage, our service is FIRST to God, then our spouse and children. We first need to take care of our own families; we must LOVE our family, above everything else. People confuse their priorities and become do-gooders in the world, while family is ignored and treated with contempt. This is not what God asks of us.

Although we must love and help others as much as we can, according to our own faith and spiritual gifts, but in marriage our spouse always comes first. For an example a husband is loving and serving his wife and family when he manages his household under the teachings of Jesus Christ. A wife is loving and serving her husband and family when she submits to her husband's headship position.

If we are loving and serving our own families in the Lord, that is all that God asks of us. But if we can't even keep our marriage together, and we are not teaching our children about the Kingdom of Heaven, and if we need healing ourselves, how on earth can we possibly serve and love others with a giving and kind heart—if we are in need ourselves!

"Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" (I Timothy 3:2-5)

God doesn't want us to feel resentful when helping others and he certainly wants us to truly love being of service to others. Being kind and giving of ourselves should never be for self-gratification, self-promotion and for appearances sake—it should be done out of selfless giving because we have the love of Christ within us. We love others when we are filled with Christ's love!

Who Can You Help?

So who can you help? Loving others starts in the home. Mother's should be good examples for their daughters and fathers for their sons. We must have our own character and household in order before we can be of any help to others. If you are a married woman with a great marriage, you can be an example to the younger generation in many ways through your marriage.

“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but teach what is good. Then they can train the younger woman to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.” (Titus 2: 3-5)

A wife can influence her unbelieving husband, not in a self-righteous way, but in a loving way through her good works and quiet demeanor in the Lord. We show Christ working in our lives through our actions and behaviors. If our actions are rude, quarrelsome, and belittling, we are not applying the power of the Holy Spirit that lives in us into our lives.

If you are a single woman with upright character qualities you can be an example to single Christian women on how to properly dress and handle themselves with the opposite sex. If you are a teenager you can be a positive and encouraging witness for Jesus—showing your friends and others what Jesus has done for you. God wants us to use our own upright Christian walk to show others the way into the kingdom of heaven. There is no other way! If our own walk needs encouragement how can we be a good example?

1 Peter 3:3-6 says, "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

If you are a married man you can show other's how Jesus works in your life in your loving leadership and management of your household. If you are a single man, you can be a positive encouragement showing other Christian men how to treat women—with respect and brotherly love.

It is God's will for Christian men to love women, as they were his sisters, with sisterly love and with absolute purity.
(1 Timothy 5:2)

“Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.” Titus 2:6-8)

We are the church! As Christians our job is to be good examples to others, not bad examples. **Our good example must start in our own homes.**

We love because God loves us and lives in us.

Once we accept Jesus Christ into our lives we are given the power to love others the way He has loved us. If we are Christ followers then we are called to love others and to do the work that God has sent us to do. True Christians are to be the light of the world and to love one another. (Matthew 5: 13-16 NIV)

L = Love

Before we can love others in the right ways we must first love God with all of our heart and mind. There is no other way to love genuinely except through the source of where we came from. I am referring to God's children. The children of God all have the resources available to them for loving others in the way Jesus Christ has loved them.

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God because God is love. (1 John 4:7-8 NIV)

O = Omnipotent

There is only one omnipotent being of the world. God's invincibility has the power to change your life. Because God is love and we are His children then we too can become love if we work off of the love God has freely given us. Accept the truth for your life and watch your life transform.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (Colossians 3:12-13 NIV)

V = Vine

Jesus Christ is the Vine. It is only through the Vine that we are saved. The Vine is our life-giving power. Those who claim to be believers of Jesus Christ are the branches on the Vine. God is the Gardener who takes care of the branches to make them fruitful. The true

followers of Christ produce much fruit for the Kingdom. Branches that do not produce fruit are cut from the Vine.

"I am the vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. (John 15:1-4 NIV)

How will you know if you are producing fruit or not? Are you loving others the way Jesus Christ has loved you? Have you brought joy and happiness into other's lives? If you are loving others the way you are commanded to love them, you are being fruitful. See also (2 Peter 1:5-8) for additional qualities of a Christian.

"I am the vine; you are my branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned." (John 15:5,6 NIV)

E = Eternal Life

God paid dearly with the life of His Son. Jesus accepted our punishment and paid the price for our sins. If we truly believe in Christ as our Savior then we have been offered a new life that Jesus bought for us! Eternal life in Heaven has no sickness, sin, death enemies, or evil. To receive this new life all we have to do is believe in what God says. We need to have faith to trust that what God says is true. When we believe with all of our heart and mind we will be given the faith to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16,17 NIV)

Love + Omnipotent + Vine + Eternal Life = L.O.V.E

God Bless!
In Christ,
Angie and Frank

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