

12.29.13, "The Basics for 2014"

As we enter a new year, it might be a real good time to re-evaluate and re-align our priorities.

As a Christian, I believe my main priority and main purpose is to love God and to love others on His behalf.

When Jesus first comes on the scene, in Mark chapter one, His purpose is clearly stated (vv. 15, 17).

God's Son came to earth to save us, that we might believe in Him, follow Him, and tell others about Him, so they too might be saved (John 1:1-14, 18; 3:13-18; 5:39-40; 6:28-29; 8:24; 10:30; 11:25-27; 14:6-7, 15-17, 25-26; 18:8-9).

Both Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13 say, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But no one can accomplish that on their own (Ephesians 2:8-9); in fact, we must first confess our sin and believe in God's Son for forgiveness (Acts 2:26-28; Romans 10:9-10).

We are all guilty of sin, deserving God's judgment; but because of His great love, we are forgiven our sins and granted eternal life, through the shed blood of Jesus, God's only acceptable payment for our sins (Romans 3:10-12, 22-24; 5:8, 12, 18-21; 6:23; 8:1-2, 8-14).

All those born of God will have a desire and propensity [inclination] to live in a manner that pleases God, i.e., to walk in love (1John 4:7-12, 19-21; 5:1-5, 11-13).

If you have repented of your sins, confessing Christ as Lord, you have been changed forever, and you will seek to obey God's Word and to be conformed to God's Son (2Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; 1John 2:6).

Our main purpose and priority is to love God and then to love others on His behalf, for God is love and His children (born in love) will live a life of love.

Love is a verb, and therefore, what has happened in our heart will be displayed through our life. As we grow in Christ, we will seek to do what is necessary to reconcile others to God, as we develop intimacy with God, God's Word, and God's people.

Christians are members of God's family, the Church, of which Christ is the Head (*Colossians 1:18*), and our unity should be displayed in our fellowship, in our love for one another (John 13:34-35; 1John 4:7; Acts 2:42-47).

Hebrews 10:24-26, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left."

Christians are instructed to meet together, to share with and to encourage one another, to not do so is to sin.

1Corinthians 12:12-14, "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many." **18-21**, "But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' **25-27**, "There should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

God made us, called us, saved us, and set us apart for His own glory. He provides for us and He commands that we be actively involved in the life of the Church, i.e., with one another, and we do that by studying the bible with other believers, by fellowshiping together (having everything in common), by praying with one another, celebrating the Lord's Supper, and giving a portion of our income to Him, in order that His will might be done.

God's Word says believers are connected to each other, and we are expected to encourage, edify, and care for one another. And yet there are some in the body who make no effort, whatsoever. You would think, from their example, that they believe a foot can somehow walk around without being connected to a leg, or an eye can function on its own, apart from being attached to the skull by muscles, and also connected to the brain!

You can't be actively involved in the life of the church by sitting in a pew on Sunday mornings, and so, we offer a variety of opportunities for involvement: Bible Classes for all ages on Sunday Mornings, Adult Bible Studies on Sunday nights, Tuesday nights, Wednesday nights, Thursday nights, Friday nights, Women's Bible Studies on Tuesday mornings, Men's Bible Studies on the 2nd & 4th Saturdays of the month, Family Dinners once a month, Family Breakfasts & Family Movies four times a year.

Look, our purpose is to love, honor, and obey God's Word, in doing so we will be conformed to the character and the nature of Christ, i.e., we will become Christ to the world by both our words and deeds, and we will share the Message of the Gospel of Salvation with all who will listen.

Jesus was the master teacher, master evangelist, and He ministered to: prostitutes and pharisees, religious leaders and the demon possessed, slaves and free men, poor men and rich men, fishermen and farmers, soldiers and Samaritans, the influential and the insignificant.

We can learn a great deal from Jesus' interactions with some of those He came into contact with?

A Rich Young Ruler in Matthew 19:16-26

The Teacher of Israel in John 3:1-21

A Samaritan Woman in John 4:1-42

An Expert of the Law in Luke 10:25-37

Jesus met people where they were, then he engaged them in conversation, bypassing the place of intellect and argument, going straight to the place of the heart and conscience, to speak to their soul.

I pray that we all will be motivated to follow Christ's example, speaking the Truth in Love, because every man, woman, and child of age is accountable before God to acknowledge their sin, and to repent and to believe in God's One and Only Son - Jesus, the Christ, both Savior and Lord - for He alone can forgive sin and grant eternal life. Apart from Him there is no love, no hope, no mercy, no salvation, only eternal punishment in hell awaits.

For that reason, I pray that we might see many from our families and our communities, come to Christ this year, for this is good and pleases the Lord, who wants everyone to be saved. No wonder Christ commands us to be going, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and reminding them to do everything God commands us, as revealed in the Scriptures.