

### Beginnings – ORIGIN *(Where did we come from?)*

- Only Two Choices
- Realize the Significance
- Is it Faith or Science?
  - LAB - Lookable, Accessible, Breakable
- Guess at the Evidence
- Inspect the Evidence
  - Universe = "Decay"
  - Age of the Earth = "Can't Say"
  - Origin of Life by Chance = "No Way"
  - Evolution of Species and Man = "Lacks Genes and Tweens"
- No Compromise  
DON'T - Death, Orders of Creation, Names in genealogies, Ten Commandments refer to seven-day week

### Intent of Life – LIFE *(Why are we here?)*

- Love - GOD and MAN
- Increase - GROW
- Faithfulness - Time, Talent, Treasure
- Eternity – Past, Present, Future

### Authority – POWER *(Who's in charge?)* A God Who is:

- Personal and Loving
- Omnipotent
- Wise and All-Knowing
- Everywhere and Eternal
- Righteous and Reliable

### Standards – RULES *(What are the rules?)* God's rules are:

- Revealed supernaturally, not derived by reason
- Universal and apply to everyone, everywhere, all the time
- Loving
- Enforced
- Steadfast

## Loving MAN

Loving people can be both easier and harder than loving God. It is easier because we can see people, touch people, share experiences with people. It is harder because people (including me) are very imperfect and our imperfections can be very aggravating at times. But Jesus said that the second greatest command is "Love your neighbor as yourself." If life is about loving people, to fulfill our purpose we have to learn to love the people God calls us to love. We'll use the acrostic "MAN" to discuss key concepts in loving people.

## M - *Myself*

"Love your neighbor as you love yourself." When you read that statement by Jesus you might have one of two reactions to the concept of loving yourself. You might think "Isn't that pretty natural?". Or you might think "Is this like that self-esteem psychology stuff?". I'm not certain how to interpret this "self" standard for the commandment, but since Jesus used this as the standard for measuring love for our neighbor we need to try to figure out what he meant by the concept of loving yourself.

My opinion based on other scripture is that Jesus meant that it is natural for us to focus our attention on our own interests, on getting what we think benefits us the most. When Jesus uses this as the standard for loving our neighbor he may be saying "you automatically look to your own interests, so look to the interests of your neighbor with the same passion." This is said another way in Philippians 2:4 "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Or again Jesus said "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." (Matt 7:12) This seems to involve figuratively putting ourselves into the position of others and loving them by doing what we would want done for ourselves in that situation.

I think love as it relates to myself also has another dimension to consider. Many times we are tempted to do things that will give us short-term pleasure but that we know are ultimately bad for us (not in our best interests). We can consider the principle of ownership and realize that loving myself ultimately involves me doing what my owner wants me to do *because that will give me the best ultimate reward*. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (1 Cor. 6:19-20) God offers us rewards and blessings for our faithfulness (e.g. 1 Cor. 3:14-15), so it must not be wrong to want to be blessed and rewarded. Loving myself by honoring God's conditions for giving me blessings can be a great motivation for me to make good long-term decisions rather than poor short-sighted decisions.

## A - *Associates* (those close to me throughout my life)

The associates in my life are those people with whom I have regular contact and interaction. These include my family, my friends, my co-workers, fellow church members, etc. Loving my associates involves obeying specific scriptures about each type of relationship. Much of the Scripture that talks about relating to people involves people who are our associates. Here are some highlights of how we love these people:

- **Your Spouse** - Husband, love your wife as Christ loves the Church and as you love your own body. Wife, submit to your husband as to the Lord, acknowledging that he is your head as Christ is the head of the church, and so submit to him in everything. (Ephesians 5:21-33)
- **Your Parents** - Obey your parents when you are living under their authority, because God gave you your parents and obeying them is required in order for you to obey God. Honor

your father and mother your entire life because this is commanded and because God promises you it will go well with you and you will enjoy a long life on the earth. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise-- "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." (Ephesians 6:1-3) This is the fifth of the Ten Commandments.

- **Your Children** - Raise your children to know and love God and His standards. Be the major influencer in their lives because that is God's plan. Keep their hearts turned toward you so that you can protect them from evil influences. Teach them to be prepared for the roles God gives them as men or as women. Love them unconditionally and encourage/praise them so that they can better grasp the type of love God has for them. Do not exasperate them.
- **Your Employees** - Give them the pay they deserve. Value them as people, not just as resources. Don't ask them to sacrifice their families for their careers. Take responsibility for looking to their welfare as you expect them to look out for yours.
- **Your Employer** - Obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. (Ephesians 6:5-8)
- **Your Pastor/Elder** - Give double honor to those who direct the affairs of the church, especially to those who preach/teach. Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. (1 Timothy 5:17-19) Be submissive to the elders because they have responsibility for shepherding. (1 Peter 5:1-5) Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)
- **Your Fellow Believers** - Be humble with one another. If you see a brother in sin, point it out to him gently and with a humble spirit. Encourage one another. Pray for one another. Help meet physical needs of your brothers. Meet regularly with one another to share worship and a sense of accountability to God. Be considerate of "weaker" brothers and don't argue about minor things. Love as Christ loved us (John 13:34-35).
- **Your Friends** - Encourage one another to walk with the Lord. Be willing to lay your life down for a friend.