

Our Basic Need

Text: 1 Corinthians 13 (NIV)

13 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Introduction

T. S. Elliott, in one of his poems, asked a penetrating question about what matters and what seems to matter. How do we decide? If you're a thoughtful person, that question will dog you all of your life. Between what matters and what seems to matter, how do we decide?

You're faced with it now as students taking a number of courses. You have to attend a number of classes, read a number of books, write a number of papers, and take a number of exams. If you're married you have a responsibility to your spouse. If you have children you have a responsibility to them. If you have a job you have a responsibility to the persons paying you a salary. If you serve at a church you have a responsibility to that body of believers. Between what matters and what seems to matter, how do you decide?

“Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important.”

— Charles E. Hummel, Tyranny of the Urgent

How do we decide between what matters and what seems to matter?

I. How Do We Decide Between What Matters and What Really Matters?

A. Because there are so many “good” actions we can take we must know what is really important.

Over the last decade, anxiety has overtaken depression as the most common reason college students seek counseling services. In its annual survey of students, the American College Health Association found a significant increase—to 62 percent in 2016 from 50 percent in 2011—of undergraduates reporting "overwhelming anxiety" in the previous year. Surveys that look at symptoms related to anxiety are also telling. In 1985, the Higher Education Research Institute at U.C.L.A. began asking incoming college freshmen if they "felt overwhelmed by all I had to do" during the previous year. In 1985, 18 percent said they did. By 2010, that number had increased to 29 percent. Last year, it surged to 41 percent.

For many of these young people, the biggest single stressor is that they "never get to the point where they can say, 'I've done enough, and now I can stop,'" [one expert] says. "There's always one more activity, one more A.P. class, one more thing to do in order to get into a top college. Kids have a sense that they're not measuring up. The pressure is relentless and getting worse."

Benoit Denizet-Lewis, "Why Are More American Teenagers Than Ever Suffering From Severe Anxiety?" New York Times Magazine (10-11-17)

B. Our motives are as important as our actions.

II. Love Matters Most.

A. Love for God matters and transforms all we are and do.

Love fosters dependence and devotion.

“But the root of all sin is self-sufficiency—independence from the rule of God. When we fail to wait prayerfully for God’s guidance and strength, we are saying with our actions, if not with our words, that we do not need him. How much of our service is actually a “going it alone”?” – Charles E. Hummel, Tyranny of the Urgent

B. Love for others matters and reorients all we are and do.

Conclusion

Max Lucado writes in, In the Eye of the Storm, about a story Clovis Chappell, a minister from a century back, used to tell about the journey of two paddleboats.

They left Memphis about the same time, traveling down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. As they traveled side by side, sailors from one vessel made a few remarks about the snail's pace of the other.

Words were exchanged. Challenges were made. And the race began. Competition became vicious as the two boats roared through the Deep South. One boat began falling behind. Not enough fuel. There had been plenty of coal for the trip, but not enough for a race. As the boat dropped back, an enterprising young sailor took some of the ship's cargo and tossed it into the ovens. When the sailors saw that the supplies burned as well as the coal, they fueled their boat with the material they had been assigned to transport. They ended up winning the race, but burned their cargo.

God has entrusted cargo to us, too: children, spouses, friends. Our job is to do our part in seeing that this cargo reaches its destination. Yet when the program takes priority over people, people often suffer. How much cargo do we sacrifice in order to achieve the number one slot? How many people never reach the destination because of the aggressiveness of a competitive captain?

Max Lucado, In the Eye of the Storm, Word Publishing, 1991, pp. 97-98.

Of all the things that matter, love matters most.