Romans 13:7-10 (NKJV) 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes [are due,] customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. 8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if [there is] any other commandment, are [all] summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love [is] the fulfillment of the law.

The Biblical order given to us from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) never changes. Vertical-love for God, horizontal love for others

The **Ten Commandments** (found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5) reveal these two distinctions.

- **(Commandments 1–4):** Your vertical relationship with God (no other gods, no idols, honoring His name, keeping the Sabbath).
- **(Commandments 5–10):** Your horizontal relationship with others (honoring parents, not murdering, not committing adultery, not stealing, not lying, not coveting).

I. God's Love for us is the Catalyst/driving force behind everything

We experience this order in the book of Romans.

Before believers are asked to love anyone else, Paul emphasizes that they must receive and understand God's love for them.

- Romans 5:5 (NKJV) Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
- Romans 8:39 (NKJV) nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

II. Vertical Worship Precedes Horizontal Love (Romans 12:1-2)

Before Paul gives specific instructions on how to treat the church (Romans 12) or the government and neighbors (Romans 13), he calls for a total devotion to God:

Romans 12:1 *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to* ***present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."***

This "living sacrifice" is the literal fulfillment of loving God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Paul in Romans follows the same pattern taught by Jesus regarding the Greatest Commandments (Mark 12). You cannot properly fulfill the vertical obligation (loving God) without it naturally overflowing into the horizontal obligation (loving your neighbor).

By the time you reach **Romans 13:8-10**, the command to "love your neighbor as yourself" is not an isolated moral rule. It is the practical, outward manifestation of the faith, worship, and devotion to God that you have already committed to in chapters 1 through 12.

A scribe asked Jesus what the most important command in all of scripture is. **Jesus answer is commonly referred to as the most important command**.

Mark 12:29-31 [29] Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. [30] And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. [31] And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Jesus quotes from what is considered the Shema which Comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 when answering the question what is the most important command. For thousands of years every Jewish family read, memorized and taught the Shema which means hear or listen. The **Shema** is arguably the most important prayer and declaration of faith in Judaism. It is much more than a prayer recited twice daily. It is a declaration of God's absolute oneness, Israel's covenant identity, and the call to love God with one's entire being.

In ancient Hebrew there is not a separate word that means obey. To hear 'shema' also means to obey. One could argue that hearing/obeying is the entry into fulfilling God's greatest command.

Jesus makes an important distinction/connection when asked about the most important command: He adds **Leviticus 19:18b** "love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus deliberately joined these two commandments together in Mark 12 declaring them the foundation upon which all the Law and the Prophets hang.

The first expresses our love for God; the second demonstrates that love through how we treat others. following the pattern in the 10 commandments.

Most of the time the focus is on loving God or loving our neighbors but we are told to love our neighbor as yourself. There is definitely an order/flow to love the way God intended . We are not able to fulfill the commandment to love our neighbor as ourself if we don't know how to love ourselves.

1. **Receive God's love by faith**, believe Him-for God so loved
2. **Love God with all of your being,** *keep growing into mature love* (*mind, will, emotions, time, finances etc.*)
3. Holy Spirit enables you to then rightly love yourself which enables you to rightly love others. In order to love your neighbor effectively you would love God and love yourself.
4. *Our inability to love others actually identifies our own blockage in receiving our Fathers love and offering it back*

The church doesn't talk a lot about the importance of loving self because it feels wrong. The world talks about self-love a lot but it is distorted because it is out of order, its selfish.

Without God being first and foremost, self-love is idolatry, in essence you are worshipping yourself. We need to have wisdom not to be lovers of self according to the flesh. The church is warned in 2Timothy about distorted self love.

2 Timothy 3:1-4 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. [2] For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good [4] treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

It seems like in the church there are two opposite sides of this spectrum, self love that is all about you and is selfish or self loathing or hatred which never can grasp God's full identity brought Christ. Neither one are Biblical. We want God's perspective on all things.

The best way to love yourself correctly is to see yourself through God's perspective. You should love you in the power of Holy Spirit, because God loves you. When you see the cross of Jesus Christ and the price He paid for you to be saved you should see what you are worth to God and what He thinks about you.

When you see yourself how God sees you, you are enabled to love yourself the right way. After all according to Scripture you are the temple of the Holy Spirit, (1Cor. 6:19) you are the walking, breathing revelation of the life of Jesus Christ to the world so how can a born again believer not love himself if views himself the way his Father sees him.

- The truth is proper love of self is not self evolved but rather formed in your identity as a child of God. We are to be so consumed by God's love that we are able to forgive ourselves as He forgives us, have grace upon ourself etc. knowing that it is necessary to fully believe these gifts of graces are true both to us and to others. We will not be powerful and effective witnesses of Jesus Christ if we are not willing to first receive what He has paid for as our own. In other words, you cannot give what you do not have.

- Worlds self love beholds itself- The follower of Jesus, beholds Jesus. Proper order is first upward and then outward. You will only be enabled to rightfully love yourself when you grow and mature in your love for God. In other words you only love yourself and others rightly when you are fully devoted to God.

- In the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) both the priest and the Levite who were to be examples of God's love passed by on the other side of the road avoiding their neighbor out of the wrong kind of self love which is more about self preservation, self priorities and self image.

The more we understand the Fathers extravagant love for us the greater we are positioned to fulfill the great command. He transforms weak believers into strong believers by nourishing and cherishing us, yet **we must have the wisdom to live in His voice alone.**

Ephesians 5:27-29 [27] that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. [28] So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; [29] for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,

Jesus cherishes us while we are still immature and speaks life over us even when we fall short and stumble. Jesus accomplishes this through intimacy. He pulls us in close for this.

- Jesus does not define or limit us by our weaknesses or failures, He see us from an eternal perspective! We in turn do that for others
- Jesus sees the end of our journey with perfect clarity and knows what we will become if we do not stop persevering! We do that for others

Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Home group questions

Discuss God's order and the process of each. Why is this order so important t and what happens if it's reordered?

- Receive God's love
- Love God with your whole self
- Learn to long with His love for yourself
- Love others

Discuss the right and wrong versions of loving one's self
Testify of your own journey of Identity that is found in His voice alone
Where do you need breakthrough in this area?
Discuss-we can only give away what we have recieved