

Devotion April 22, 2020 "Relationships"

Scripture – Matthew 22:36-40 (NIV)

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'
³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'
⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Good afternoon! I hope you are doing well.

This afternoon we are going to first do a little review of A Rule of Life. So far, we have looked at our relationship with God and our personal life and health (or we could say our relationship with ourselves). Today we will look at the third element of a Rule of Life, our relationship with others.

Matthew 22:36-40 presents Jesus with the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Herodians. An interesting group! They are plotting and planning how to trap Jesus into saying something that will prove he is a bad person and people should not follow him. After they have complimented him about his integrity and his teachings of God's law, they begin to ask questions. They even called him teacher! The crowds are astonished by how Jesus responded. The Pharisees send in a "law expert" and he asked Jesus "which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus responded, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first commandment. And the second is like it; Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

These few verses tie together our first three elements: relationship with God, self, and others. It sounds so easy! It is not, it takes a lot of work.

A relationship with a spouse is not always easy; there are things that happen, an illness or financial concerns. If you are single, relationships with family can have similar issues that create situations that are stressful. When stressful situations happen, the bond that holds the relationship together gets stretched. To restore the relationship, good communication and a willingness to work together are important.

Friendships also require good communication and problem solving. While I was in Seminary, I met someone, and we became good friends. Her husband had Lou Gehrig's disease and she had a serious problem with her daughter. I tried to be supportive by listening and suggesting ideas or asking questions to help her work through things. Unfortunately, our friendship became very toxic for me. After five years I had to end the friendship. I know in my heart I did the right thing. Sometimes toxic relationships cannot be changed, and it is important to separate ways. This goes back to our relationship with God and self, putting God first. A Rule of Life helps us create a structure that will strengthen us as a child of God and help us be strong in all our relationships. Relationships with others also include our children or the children in our lives, our extended family, neighbors, and co-workers.

This evening, I suggest that you make a list of your “good” relationships and think about what makes them good. Then make a list of “bad” relationships and think about why they are bad and if it is possible to make them something positive in your life.

Jesus said to love others as yourself. How does your self-image influence your relationships? That could be a starting point for discerning good and bad relationships as well as your ability to love someone who is not like us.

Tomorrow we will look at church and work!

Have a blessed evening.

Pastor Linda