

Connecting

Matthew 22.34-40

Key Points:

- When asked what the greatest (most important) commandment was, Jesus answers that it is twofold - '*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind*' (v.37) and '*Love your neighbour as yourself*' (v.39). In this moment Jesus not only demonstrates that relationship is more important than rules, but also that our relationship with other people is '*equally important*' (v.38) than our relationship with God.
- Loving God and loving your neighbour is the answer Jesus give to the Pharisee's question. But the question is bigger than just a theological pondering. The law was the means by which the people of God could relate to God, and as such this question could be interpreted 'How can God's people live like God's people?' This is the question we find ourselves asking all the time, during tough times, painful times, confusing times etc. Jesus answer here is the answer to all our questions of 'how?'
- 'Neighbour', here, is far more than those we choose to spend time with, or those we live next to. 'Neighbour' encompasses all those who are close to us, either emotionally or by proximity. Our spheres of 'neighbour' extend to anyone who we come across. And we're called to love them, whether they're part of church or not.
- This was so important for Jesus, and therefore it's critical for us. To create a culture of connection - **Intimacy with God, Community inside church, and Influence outside church.**

Questions:

1. What is the best thing about being in a group with other people on the same faith journey as you?
2. Read Exodus 20.1-17. Is Jesus' assertion correct (at least for these 10 of the 613 Old Testament laws) that the entire law & the prophets hang off 'Love God and Love your neighbour'?
3. What are the differences between relating to God through the law (Old Covenant), and relating to God through Jesus (New Covenant)? Are there times when you slip into an Old Covenant mindset and believe/act like God's love is conditional on what you do?
4. Why is intimacy with God important? What does loving God 'with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind' look like on a day-to-day basis? Share ideas and things that work well for you - you may well be encouraging and equipping someone today!
5. Who do you find it easy to love? What does this love look like practically? Who of your 'neighbours' do you find it hardest to love? What might *this* love look like?
6. Within your group, think about how can you grow as a community? How can you love one another more? What does being an authentic community look like when you meet, and during the rest of the week?
7. How can you grow in your influence outside church? How can you support each other to love, bless, serve and bring Jesus into all those spheres of influence that God has placed you in?