

## Love God, Love Neighbor

“WHY?” was the question that greeted us as we walked into the meeting room a few years ago at our annual Family Policy Council conference. That one word was written on the top of six large easel pads distributed around the meeting room. Our instructions: divide up into six groups and discuss and answer the question “Why?” Why do we, as state-level, faith-based Family Policy Councils, do what we do?

Oh, and we had to answer the question in four words or less, and we had an hour. Really???

I was chosen as the facilitator for my group, and although I had not done this exercise before, it was actually something to which I had given quite a bit of thought. I told my group they were probably going to get frustrated with me because whatever response they gave to the question on the board, I was going to respond with the same question “Why?”...until we got to the bottom of the matter.

“We do what we do because we want to see good legislation passed and bad legislation defeated,” one of my colleagues commented. “That’s absolutely right,” I said, “but why?”



“We want to be a light in a dark world that is growing darker every day.”

“You’re right, but why?” I responded.

“We are about speaking God’s Truth and sharing the gospel, to help lead others to faith,” another stated.

“Yes, but why?”

“Because we believe God’s Word is true, and He has a perfect plan and a purpose for each and every person.”

Now we’re getting somewhere!!

Somewhat exasperated but also quite energized, we continued to dig and probe and ponder to answer the question at the top of our white board.

Then it was as if a light bulb went off, as several of us thumbed through our Bibles or pulled up the Bible apps on our phones.

We zeroed in on Matthew 22:36-40, where the Pharisee, “an expert in the law,” asked Jesus, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

And Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

That’s exactly why we do what we do! Because we love God and we want to honor Him, and because we love our “neighbors” and we want them to experience the love, peace, joy, grace, and fulfillment of living into the unique individuals God has designed and created them to be! That’s it!

Now we had to boil this all down into four words or less. That was easy - **Love God, Love Neighbor**

It felt like we struck gold after toiling together on an arduous and exhausting mining expedition, and we were excited to present our valuable “treasure” to the rest of our colleagues.

As we reassembled to share our conclusions, the results were amazing, but, honestly, not so surprising. Every group but one had come to exactly the same conclusion. Several of the other groups even cited Matthew 22 and landed on the same four words (or something very close).

What an incredible affirmation this was, not only of the important work of the Family Policy Councils around the country, but also of the Spirit Who guides our efforts. I couldn’t think of a purer representation of our calling and our motivation to do all that we do than “to love God and to love our neighbor.”

Earlier in Matthew 5, Jesus says that we—as believers—are the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world.” He even says that we are blessed when people insult us, and persecute us, and falsely say all kinds of evil against us because of Jesus. “Rejoice and be glad,” He says, “because great is your reward in heaven....” (Matthew 5:11-16).

Living into this kind of love is not easy, especially in our current culture, but as Christians, it is what we are called to do. In fact, it is what we were made to do! And in Christ Jesus, we have the perfect example to follow, and we have His Spirit within us to guide us. 🏠



A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John".

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