

BEING AND DOING WHAT IS TRULY GREAT

I. [Mark 12:28-31](#) [Matthew 28:18-20](#) [Mark 16:15](#) [2 Timothy 4:1-5](#)

A. The Preacher and the Barber - Author Unknown

A preacher and a barber were walking through the city slums. The barber says to the preacher: *"This is why I cannot believe in a God of love. If God was as kind as you say, He wouldn't permit all this poverty, disease, and squalor. He wouldn't allow these poor bums to be addicted to drugs and all their life-destroying habits. Who can believe in a God who permits such things!"* The preacher was silent until they passed a man who was grossly unkempt and filthy. The scraggly bearded man reeked with matted hair running all the way down his back. The preacher says: *"You can't be a very good barber to permit such a man to live on the street looking like that!"* The barber was infuriated: *"Why blame me for that man's condition? I can't help he looks like that! If he came to my shop, I could clean him up and make him look like a gentleman!"* The preacher stared into the barber's eyes and said: *"Then why blame God for allowing people to continue in their evil ways, when He's come to save them? The reason these people are slaves to sin and evil habits is they've rejected the One who made them and came to rescue them!"*

B. [Mark 12:28-31](#) (ESV) is the Great Commandment, what we're called to be: **28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that He answered them well, asked Him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" **29** Jesus answered, "The most important 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 and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' **31** The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Jesus melds together **Deuteronomy 6:5** and **Leviticus 19:18** to show us the kind of church he wants us to be. Vertical love + Horizontal Love represents the vision Jesus has for His people--even the likes of us!)**

C. [Matthew 28:18-20](#) (ESV) is the Great Commission, what we're called to do: **18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." **Mark 16:15** (ESV) echoes: **15** And He said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." (Remember Jesus' words, "**The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few...**")**

D. There's nothing more important in all life for you to know than the Gospel. (1 Cor. 15:3-4; Jn 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21) There's nothing more important in all life for your children & grandchildren to know than this! There's nothing more important in all life for your family, friends, and neighbors, your coworkers, classmates & teammates, strangers & enemies to know than this Gospel! If you love them, tell them!

E. There are stories of great revivals where the tiniest morsel of Scripture is proclaimed and people fall on their faces in repentance. Masses are regenerated. Faith erupts. Weeping & joy. Signs & wonders accompany. Whole towns and cities are converted. Tsunami-like awakenings drench lost souls unto eternal life! *Do it Lord!*

F. But even as we pray for such revivals, we seem to be in-between such times. Our present lot seems to be in a wide trough between peak waves. So then do we put on

hold our call to live out the Great Commandment & Great Commission? Do we crawl into caves and go into spiritual hibernation? Do we chuck the mandate and form committees to better market ourselves? Do we shelve the Word for self-help sermonettes? Do we water down the wine until it tastes like Kool-Aid? Or do we press on with prayer and persistence, faithful and obedient to the last breath? *(I suspect you know the answer!)*

G. I wonder if there's something for us in Paul's charge to Timothy, some direction that we can glean and take to heart and apply to ourselves? 2 Timothy 4:1-5 (AMP) says: **1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: **2** preach the word [as an official messenger]; be ready when the time is right and even when it is not [keep your sense of urgency, whether the opportunity seems favorable or unfavorable, whether convenient or inconvenient, whether welcome or unwelcome]; correct [those who err in doctrine or behavior], warn [those who sin], exhort and encourage [those who are growing toward spiritual maturity], with inexhaustible patience and [faithful] teaching. **3** For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine and accurate instruction [that challenges them with God's truth]; but wanting to have their ears tickled [with something pleasing], they will accumulate for themselves [many] teachers [one after another, chosen] to satisfy their own desires and to support the errors they hold, **4** and will turn their ears away from the truth and will wander off into myths and man-made fictions [and will accept the unacceptable]. **5** But as for you, be clear-headed in every situation [stay calm and cool and steady], endure every hardship [without flinching], do the work of an evangelist, fulfill [the duties of] your ministry.**

H. What did the church throughout the Roman Empire look like a 100 years after Paul made this charge to Timothy? Did it fizzle out or thrive? Justin Martyr (100-165 AD) wrote a legal brief to Emperor Antoninus Pius defending the church in his day: "We formerly rejoiced in uncleanness of life, but now love only chastity; before we used the magic arts, but now dedicate ourselves to the true and unbegotten God; before we loved money and possessions more than anything, but now we share what we have and to everyone who is in need; before we hated one another and killed one another and would not eat with those of another race, but now since the manifestation of Christ, we have come to a common life and pray for our enemies and try to win over those who hate us without just cause." **(Could the church in our day make such a claim?! Do we bear any resemblance?!)**

I. There's a difference between being *fishers of men* and aquarium-keepers. There's a lot of fish being exchanged from one fishbowl to another but how much fishing is actually taking place? No one catches fish if they aren't fishing! When the Holy Spirit is at work in a church and genuine love for God and one another is real, that's the right side of the boat to be casting our nets; that's the pier from which we want to cast our lines! But God remains Lord of the catch. Meanwhile Church: *Love God. Love others. Preach the Word. Be ready. Keep your sense of urgency. Correct. Warn. Exhort and encourage. Be clear-headed. Stay calm, cool and steady. Endure every hardship. Do the work. Fulfill your duties. Fish!* And pray, pray, pray for God to do His thing in making people His own!

* Close with Prayer...

[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

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28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that He answered them well, asked Him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" **29** Jesus answered, "The most important 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 and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' **31** The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

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2 Timothy 4:1-5 (AMP)

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Quote by Justin Martyr

"We formerly rejoiced in uncleanness of life, but now love only chastity; before we used the magic arts, but now dedicate ourselves to the true and unbegotten God; before we loved money and possessions more than anything, but now we share what we have and to everyone who is in need; before we hated one another and killed one another and would not eat with those of another race, but now since the manifestation of Christ, we have come to a common life and pray for our enemies and try to win over those who hate us without just cause."

- Justin Martyr, *First Apology* (155-157 AD) Chapter 14, a legal brief to the Roman Emperor, Antoninus Pius.

Bonus Stuff

Four Important Questions For Your Life - John Piper

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScFkIF-d9FM>

"His Mercy is More" - Matt Boswell and the Boyce College Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijsjA5Yf8XA&feature=share>

John 13:34-35 (ESV)

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. **35** By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 15:12-17 (ESV)

12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. **14** You are My friends if you do what I command you. **15** No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you. **17** These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

1 John 4:7-12 (ESV)

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. **8** Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. **9** In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. **10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.

1 Peter 4:8-10 (NIV)

8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. **9** Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. **10** Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.

Romans 12:9-13 (AMP)

9 Love is to be sincere and active [the real thing—without guile and hypocrisy]. Hate what is evil [detest all ungodliness, do not tolerate wickedness]; hold on tightly to what is good. **10** Be devoted to one another with [authentic] brotherly affection [as members of one family], give preference to one another in honor; **11** never lagging behind in diligence; aglow in the Spirit, enthusiastically serving the Lord; **12** constantly rejoicing in

hope [because of our confidence in Christ], steadfast and patient in distress, devoted to prayer [continually seeking wisdom, guidance, and strength], **13** contributing to the needs of God's people, pursuing [the practice of] hospitality.

Romans 13:8-10 (ESV)

8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one 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 covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." **10** Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

MCC's Vision Statement

"To be a growing family of believers, characterized by a deep and genuine love for God and one another."

MCC's Mission Statement

"To establish, restore, and increase relationships with our Lord Jesus Christ."

This Is My Church

Author Unknown

This is my church

It is composed of people just like me.

It will be friendly if I am.

It will do great work if I work.

It will make generous gifts for many causes if I am generous.

It will bring others into fellowship if I bring them.

Its seats will be filled if I fill them.

It will be a church of loyalty and love, of faith and service if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these.

Therefore, with God's help, I dedicate myself to the task of being all these things I want my church to be.

Parable of the Life-Saving Station

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a little life-saving station. The building was primitive, and there was just one boat, but the members of the life-saving station were committed and kept a constant watch over the sea. When a ship went down, they unselfishly went out day or night to save the lost. Because so many lives were saved by that station, it became famous. Consequently, many people wanted to be associated with the station to give their time, talent, and money to support its important work. New boats were bought, new crews were recruited, a formal training session was offered. As the membership in the life-saving station grew, some of the members became unhappy that the building was so primitive and that the equipment was so outdated. They wanted a better place to welcome the

survivors pulled from the sea. So they replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged and newly decorated building.

Now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members. They met regularly and when they did, it was apparent how they loved one another. They greeted each other, hugged each other, and shared with one another the events that had been going on in their lives. But fewer members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions; so they hired lifeboat crews to do this for them. About this time, a large ship was wrecked off of the coast, and the hired crews brought into the life-saving station boatloads of cold, wet, dirty, sick, and half-drowned people. Some of them had black skin, and some had yellow skin. Some could speak English well, and some could hardly speak it at all. Some were first-class cabin passengers of the ship, and some were the deck hands. The beautiful meeting place became a place of chaos. The plush carpets got dirty. Some of the exquisite furniture got scratched. So the property committee immediately had a shower built outside the house where the victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting there was rift in the membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities, for they were unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal fellowship of the members. Other members insisted that life-saving was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of all those various kinds of people who would be shipwrecked, they could begin their own life-saving station down the coast. And do you know what? That is what they did.

As the years passed, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a place to meet regularly for fellowship, for committee meetings, and for special training sessions about their mission, but few went out to the drowning people. The drowning people were no longer welcomed in that new life-saving station. So another life-saving station was founded further down the coast. History continued to repeat itself. And if you visit that seacoast today, you will find a number of adequate meeting places with ample parking and plush carpeting. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown.

- Thomas Wedel, *Ecumenical Review*, October, 1953, paraphrased in *Heaven Bound Living*, Knofel Stanton, Standard, 1989, p. 99-101.