

# LOVE

## Without Hypocrisy

(in the book of Romans)

### Guidelines, Priorities for Living

## GUIDELINES FOR MAKING DECISIONS

**WARNING:**

- Guidelines do not remove our obligation to learn from Scripture how to apply them.
- Those who don't learn from Scripture will be following the world's values. They will not recognize how corrupt their values are, and will think they're doing things in a God-honoring way.

## THREE ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

1. The Priority of Love
2. The Kingdom View
3. The Good of Those Involved

## Conflicts: The reason for "priority"

- God did NOT create a world where obligations would conflict with each other.
- It was only when sin entered the world, that conflicts began to occur. [THIS MIGHT BE FROM...]
  - ✓ Sin we may have committed.
  - ✓ Sin others may have committed.
  - ✓ The general effects of sin on creation (not caused by any specific sin committed by us or others).

## ISSUE #1 – THE PRIORITY OF LOVE

➤ Our priorities (obligations) are in the following order:

1. Love for God.
2. Love for Neighbor.
3. Everything else that is good.

HIGHER PRIORITY

LOWER PRIORITY

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Sin – NOT an option! ✗

## Love for God

- This love is expressed by obedience and moral purity. [EXAMPLES:]
  - This is love for God: to obey his commands. 1 John 5:3a (NIV)
  - If you love me, you will obey my commandments. John 14:15 (NET)
- Religious activities do not always demonstrate love for God. [MORE ABOUT THIS LATER.]

### Love for Neighbor

- This includes all people (though differences in priority exist):
  1. **Our Christian family** (an eternal relationship; it will never end).
  2. **Our biological family** (a temporary relationship; it ends at death).
  3. **Other unsaved people** (1<sup>st</sup> → those we know; and 2<sup>nd</sup> → others).

### In "love for neighbors," Christian family has priority

- It's a matter of emphasis (when there is no conflict).
 

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, *especially* to those who belong to **the family of believers.**

Galatians 6:10 (NIV)

LOWER PRIORITY

HIGHER PRIORITY
- Unless there is an actual conflict, we must fulfil our obligations to all who are in this "neighbor" category.

### Everything else that is good

- There will be differences in priority:
  1. **Love for ourselves** (when it is legitimate).
  2. **Religious activities.**
  3. **Anything pertaining to the rest of creation.**

### Religious activities & priority issues

- They may be an expression of "love for God."
- But they are *not the same* as "love for God"! ***EVEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, THEY WERE TWO DIFFERENT ISSUES!***

GOD vs. RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the Lord: your **burnt offerings and sacrifices** or your **obedience** to his voice?"

**Obedience** is far better than **sacrifice**. **Listening to him** is much better than **offering the fat of rams.**

1 Samuel 15:22 (NLT)

HIGHER PRIORITY

LOWER PRIORITY

### Many obligations have a higher priority than do religious activities!

- Make sure you are doing the higher priorities... then do the religious activities!

PEOPLE vs. RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

"So if you are offering your gift at the altar and remember there that another believer has something against you, leave your gift at the altar.

**First** go away and **make peace with that person.**  
**Then** come back and **offer your gift.**"

Matthew 5:23-24 (GW)

LOWER PRIORITY

HIGHER PRIORITY

### More priority examples (when there is a conflict)

GOD vs. PEOPLE

Peter and the other apostles answered, "We must **obey God** rather than **[obey] people.**"

Acts 5:29 (GW)

PEOPLE vs. SELF

I try to please everyone in every way. I don't think about **what would be good for me** but about **what would be good for many people** so that they might be saved.

1 Cor. 10:33 (GW)

HIGHER PRIORITY

LOWER PRIORITY

**JESUS vs. (FAMILY + SELF)**

[Jesus] turned and said to them: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his **own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters**—yes, and even **his own life**—he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not **bear his own cross and come after Me** cannot be My disciple."

Luke 14:25b-27 (HCSB)

( Love and hate are not always opposites. Here, it means we are to always choose God over family and self. )

**HIGHER PRIORITY**    **LOWER PRIORITY**

**FAMILY vs. RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES INVENTED BY PEOPLE**

Jesus replied, "And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? For instance, **God says**, 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death.' But **you say**, 'You don't need to honor your parents by caring for their needs if you give the money to God instead.' And so, by **your own tradition**, you nullify **the direct commandment of God**."

Matthew 15:3-6 (NLT)

**HIGHER PRIORITY**    **LOWER PRIORITY**

**Don't invent conflicts where they don't exist!**

**RELIGIOUS DUTIES vs. PEOPLE? NOT HERE!**

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give **a tenth of your spices**--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--**justice, mercy and faithfulness**. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."

Matthew 23:23 (NIV)

**"Do the one & don't neglect the other!"**

**HIGHER PRIORITY**    **LOWER PRIORITY**

**What about SIN?**

- **NEVER, NEVER, NEVER.**  
(Repeat this until you have it memorized!)
- **NOT EVEN IF YOU THINK "GOOD" WILL COME FROM IT.**  
(That's a lie the world invented.)

And why not say, "Let us do evil so that good may come of it"? ...  
(Their condemnation is deserved!)

Romans 3:8 (NET)

**ISSUE #2 – THE KINGDOM VIEW**

- Our priorities (obligations) are in the following order:
  1. Things that are eternal. **HIGHER PRIORITY**
  2. Things that are temporary. **LOWER PRIORITY**

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Ignoring eternal matters – NOT an option! **X**
- **Eternal and temporary do not always contradict.**  
The sin is often one of neglect or wrong emphasis.

**Eternal vs. Temporary**

- **Examples of potential conflicts:**
  1. *Eternal needs vs. physical needs.*
  2. *People (who were created in God's image) vs. all other created things.*
  3. *Eternal riches vs. money, possessions, etc.*
- **Many "humanitarian" organizations focus on temporary matters and ignore the eternal.**  
(Some will even refuse to allow for any eternal considerations!)

### "Christian" vs. "biological" family (1)

- There is a distinction and a priority:

Once when Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, they couldn't get to him because of the crowds.

Someone told Jesus, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, and they want to see you."

Jesus replied, "My mother and my brothers are all those who hear the message of God and obey it."

Luke 8:19-21 (NLT)

- Many commands focus on one's Christian (but not biological) family.

### "Christian" vs. "biological" family (2)

- You do have obligations related to your biological family. [EXAMPLE:]

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Tim. 5:8 (NIV)

- It's only when there is a genuine contradiction between them, that you have to focus on priorities.

### "Christian" vs. "biological" family (3)

- Conflict (if it exists) is normally caused by unsaved people who hate Jesus (and your Christian family).

[In some countries where Christians are persecuted.]

"Tell us where the other Christians are [so we can kill them]. Or else we will kill your family."

[In some Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist (etc.) countries.]

"If you associate with Christians, we will disown\* you. You must choose: the Christians or your family."

\* (In some cases, this would include killing you.)

### ISSUE #3 – THE GOOD OF THE RECEIVER

- Our priorities (obligations) are in the following order:

1. Things that are good, beneficial, etc.
2. Things that have no value.

HIGHER PRIORITY



LOWER PRIORITY

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Things that are short-sighted or detrimental – NOT an option!



### Things that are good and beneficial

- Many things are "lawful" or permissible. (No "do" or "don't" commands apply to them.)
  - We must choose those things that are beneficial, and avoid those that have no value. [THEY SHOULD BE...]
    - Fitting for the situation.
    - Building people up.
    - Not controlling or enslaving people.
- 1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23-24

### Things that are not hurtful

- We must not do anything that will spiritually harm another person. [THINGS THAT WOULD BE...]
    - Causing spiritual damage to "newborn" Christians. [We must also help them to grow up.]
    - Defiling an unsaved person's conscience.
- Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8:7; 10:27-29a
- Such things may be fitting in a different situation, but we must avoid them when it causes harm.

## These principles apply to all of life.

### A MODERN-DAY EXAMPLE:

➤ Suppose you are interested in the environment and ecology, and wanted to "save the whales."

- If you had to choose between "*saving a whale*" and "*saving a whaler*" (= a person who catches whales), which would you choose?



- God places higher priority on the human. *And so must you.*

## Your Mission...

### THREE BASIC PRINCIPLES:

1. Scripture *defines* our obligations.
2. There is normally no conflict between obligations.
3. If there is a conflict, we must fulfil the obligation that has the higher priority.

WE CAN APPLY THESE PRINCIPLES TO ALL OF LIFE.

SO... LET'S DO IT!

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# Your Mission...

## HAVING GOD-HONORING PRIORITIES

### Many Scripture passages describe our obligations.

Some explain how these obligations are to be fulfilled. Others show us the way different obligations relate to each other. (They often use priority words or phrases, such as: *first, better than, especially, instead of, rather than, etc.*)

Below, the first two sections involve matters where Scripture describes definite right or wrong actions. These obligations must *always* be followed, unless there is a conflict between them. If there is a conflict, then the higher priority must be followed.

### *The priority of love*

#### #1 - Love for God.

Expressed by obedience and moral purity; sometimes (not always) by religious activities.

#### #2 - Love for Neighbor.

In order of priority: Our Christian family; our biological family; unsaved people we know; others.

#### #3 - Anything else that is good.

In order of priority: Love for self (when it is legitimate); everything else (including religious activities).

### *The Kingdom view*

#### #1 - Things that are eternal.

Things that will affect us *forever*: Eternal needs (salvation, etc.); eternal rewards; spiritual relationships; people.

#### #2 - Things that are temporary.

Things that affect us *right now*, but not after we die: Physical needs; present-day rewards; relationships in this present life; all created things other than people.

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This last section involves matters that may be right *or* wrong, depending on the circumstances. For these, there are no commands that tell us they are *always* right or wrong.

### *The good of those involved (especially the other person)*

#### Things that are good and beneficial.

Things that are fitting or suitable for the situation; things that encourage or build people up.

#### Things that are not hurtful or harmful.

Things that don't control or enslave people (which includes not tempting them with something that would lead them into habits or addictions); things that don't cause spiritual damage to newborn Christians (they need to grow up, but they haven't had time); things that won't defile an unsaved person's conscience (referring to something *they* think is wrong, even though *we* know it isn't *always* wrong).