

July 19, 2015

Discovering God's Will for You

"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."

Matthew 22:37-40

Last week we started a series designed to address our personal search for our Father's will for our lives. As we noted most students of the Bible consider that God's will comes in three forms including commandments, examples, and inferences. While the last two are no doubt important to consider in seeking God's will, the real meat of his will for us is, I think, found in his direct and specific commands to us.

Whether we are talking about the ten commandments from the old Law or the material contained in the Sermon on the Mount, God gives us, either directly, through his Son, or through the authors of Scripture, directions about what he wants from us. These commandments are nearly always clear and specific and are, I am convinced, more than we can ever completely master.

The two commandments from the passage above really supply for us a great guide to God's will for our lives. He wants us to love him completely and he wants us to love others well. I don't know about you, but I struggle to do these two things consistently. I am convinced that I could spend the rest of my life working on getting these two things right, and never quite get there.

Why do these two commandments spawn so many struggles for us? There are, I think, a number of issues that make obedience difficult and while I can't address them all today I would like to focus on three that I believe really trip me up.

First, I have a chronic case of severe 'plankitis' and I desperately need a 'plankectomy'. In Matthew 7:1-5 Jesus says, ***"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."***

The simple truth is I get caught up, as most of our culture does, in pointing out the sin in the lives of others, from our national leadership down to the guy who lives up the road. This focus on the sins of others is, Jesus would say, hypocritical. I sin. I make mistakes. I get it wrong. I am far from perfect! So, how can I criticize the failings of others when I so often fail?

Second, I have been convinced by Satan to live in a world that is way too big. In Matthew 6:25-34 the Master commands, ***"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life...But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."***

In reality, I live in a very small circle of influence and choice. While I may be saddened by the deaths of hundreds of people in a tsunami half way round the world there is really nothing, aside from prayer where I hold these victims up to God, I can do about it. I have no power over what happens in most of the rest of the world, but Satan wants me to think I do. Anytime that I

spend focused on what's happening outside my little circle is wasted time and any energy I expend shouting at these problems is wasted energy.

My Father wants me to love him completely and he wants me to love others really well in the little circle that is this day in this place. My focus needs to be that limited and the rest belongs completely to him. I need to learn to leave it with him.

Finally, I suffer from severe 'mission creep'. At our house we call this 'chasing squirrels'. Jesus commanded us in Matthew 28:19-20, ***"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."***

Jesus tells me that the Father's will for me is to love him completely and to love others well, as well as I love myself. He commands me to share the good news of his grace with others and to teach them to keep these two commandments. That's a lot. I have barely scratched the surface. How about you? But I suffer from 'mission creep'. I want to do these things, but I also want to fix everything that is wrong with everyone else in the world and clean up the whole mess and change everything. That is not my mission. My Father wants me to focus on the very narrow mission he has given me. Period!