



**Loving God...Loving Others**  
**The Heartbeat of Ridgedale Baptist**  
**Lessons for Septmeber 4 – October 2, 2011**



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**The Heartbeat of Ridgedale Baptist**  
**September 4, 2011**

As the 2015 team identifies the Heartbeat of Ridgedale Baptist Church and focus in on our highest callings as a church, we consider Loving God and Loving Others as our Greatest Commandment. Our future focus is not a new focus, just one we want to make sure is at the heart of all we do in the future.

### **Introduction**

In our human understanding of love – when we love someone, we want and expect them to love us back. When they do, the love comes full circle. When God loves us, the circle is not complete if we just love Him back, His Word tells that we have to include His Children in that circle of love. God loves us, we love Him back by loving others AND Him.

### **Looking at the Scripture**

**Matthew 22:37-39 (AMP)** ... You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (intellect). <sup>38</sup>This is the great (most important, principal) and first commandment. <sup>39</sup>And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as [you do] yourself.

When asked by one of the religious experts of his time, a Pharisee, what the greatest commandment was, Jesus did something unheard of...He modified the Jewish creed of the Shema. Every generation of Jews since the Exodus could have repeated the Shema in their sleep, because they repeated it often: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup>Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” **Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (NIV)**. Jesus answering his critics with this commandment as the greatest would have been no surprise. Jesus, however, then threw the religious leaders a curve ball when He added a command from **Leviticus 19:18** “...love your neighbor as yourself...”

He had just beaten these legal experts at their own game. They had intimidated and lorded over those they were supposed to be leading by filling them with fear that they could never be loved by God because they couldn't keep all the rules. Jesus basically summed up the 10 Commandments in just 2 verses. In the process, He had also indicted the Pharisees who claimed to love God, and certainly loved themselves, but cared little about others and self-righteously belittled them. The religious hoity-toity had to concede defeat; Jesus had elevated loving others to being more important than knowledge of the rules and rule following. He reminded them that most of the rules dealt with loving others anyway.

### **Exploring the Scripture**

The **Pharisees** get a bad rap today, but they had begun with the best of intentions. They wanted to bring God's people back to Him by reminding them of His covenant and laws. They came at a time in Israel's history when the people had strayed far from the Truth. They were really good at knowing and keeping all 613 laws and commands they found in scripture. But the very things they did so well actually began keeping from doing the very thing they wanted to do. They wanted to be in right relationship with God, but their rule following began to make them self-righteous, and their self-

righteousness began to take them out of right relationship with other people. They began to feel a sense of entitlement, because they thought they were better than everyone else. They began to elevate following rules over being in right relationship with God and other people. Even though theologically Jesus and the Pharisees agreed on almost everything, the Pharisees devalued the people by making the whole point about the rules. Jesus rebuked them because the rules were written so people could be in right relationship with God AND people. **1 John 4:20-21 (NIV)** says, “If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup> And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

### **Application Questions**

As we study today about Loving God and Loving Others consider the following questions:

1. Which do you think is a more powerful motivator—love, fear, or hate? Why?
2. What popular figure alive today or from history used hate to motivate people?
3. When have you been motivated by love?
4. How can we demonstrate our love for God?
5. What example has Jesus set for us to follow?
6. How should God’s love motivate you to love others?
7. How do you know that God lives in you?
8. Why is it be easier to love God than other Christians?
9. When you have difficulty loving other believers, what is it that makes it difficult?
10. How can we demonstrate our love for others?
11. Who is someone that you have a difficult time getting along with that you need to ask God to help you love this week?
12. What specific steps will you take this week to demonstrate your love for another believer?

## Loving God...Loving Others

### The Heartbeat of Ridgedale Baptist September 11, 2011 Worship and Proclaim

**John 4:24 (NIV)** God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

#### Introduction



This is Darlene Owens. We know her as the pastor's wife, but we also know her as a true worshipper. You can see the adoration on her face and the enthusiasm in her musical bounce when she sings praise to her heavenly father each Sunday in the choir loft.

Darlene was recently diagnosed with cancer, but her worship was not diminished by this unwelcome life-crisis. Her resolve to praise God has only been strengthened and more determined. She sat down with the congregation one Sunday Night to share her determination to worship God as long as the Father gives her breath. She affirms that she will praise Him, in good times and bad. Even the Sundays when she has been unable to stand in the loft with the choir because of a chemo compromised immune system, she is in the isolation room fully engaged in true worship in her

spirit.

This kind of true worship doesn't just come from a once a week, Sunday morning worship service experience at church. This kind of worship is a lifestyle for Darlene. She has an ongoing connection with God each day.

This retired school teacher took her God-loving relationship with her to work every day. It was obvious to her co-workers that she was a God-worshipper. It must have been obvious to her kids that something was wonderfully different about Mrs. Owens. As a matter of fact, families of children from her class have come to Ridgedale when they are looking for a church home, because of her positive influence on their kids.

Everyone loves Darlene. Her sunny and positive disposition surely comes from her close loving relationship with God. She always has an encouraging word for everyone she sees, even those who may not be in a positive disposition before she speaks with them.

We don't have to be a pastor or a pastor's wife to be a true worshipper. We just have to Love God with all of our being. When we love and worship God, it will become obvious in our everyday lives.

#### Looking at the Scripture

**Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

#### Exploring the Scripture

Worship is a lifestyle, not just an event.

Paul noted in his letter to the Romans that the continuing process of becoming a "transformed" community was facilitated by individual members of the *ekklesia* who would personally practice the behavioral model of Jesus to be "living sacrifices" ([Romans 12:1-2](#))...Living as a participant member of the body of Christ changes one's values and lifestyle. Because Jesus is the preeminent member of the *ekklesia*, the group members follow his thinking and model to see themselves and one another through new eyes—the eyes (and mind) of Christ. As reflected in [Romans 12](#), this transformation comes about through the small group's exercise of good thinking, mutual sacrifice, healthy self-awareness, sharing personal gifts and expression of familial love. As the small group practices thoughtful and mutual relationships, it becomes a transforming space, community and family system. – Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry

## Application Questions

1. Is there someone in your life who you recognize as a true worshipper of God who has influenced your view of worship?
2. How do people properly worship God?
3. What right does God have to ask us for a full-life commitment to Him?
4. What makes offering our bodies as living sacrifices an act of worship?
5. How does your personal worship differ from corporate worship on Sunday mornings?
6. How does your personal worship affect your corporate worship experience?
7. To what worldly life-styles or values do we typically conform?
8. What must happen in order for a person to discern and agree with the will of God?
9. How does understanding God's love reduce our selfishness and conceit?
10. What is one step you can take this week toward eliminating habits that merely conform to the world's pattern?
11. How can you put a spiritual gift to work as an act of sacrificial living for others in your Bible Study group this week?

**Loving God...Loving Others**  
**The Heartbeat of Ridgedale Baptist**  
**September 18, 2011**  
**Equip and Empower**

**Matthew 28:19b (NIV)** ...make disciples...

### **Introduction**



This is John Lemons. You know him as our Recreation Minister, but he is an equipper of God's people. He teaches a group of college students on Sunday mornings, but his equipping goes beyond just Sunday mornings. Last fall, he was a key member of a young adult Bible Study group that met each Sunday night at a local family's home to discuss a book by David Platt called Radical. Radical is a challenge to forsake *everything* for the Gospel. John has a Radical mindset in his ministry.

John is theologically sound (he's got a seminary degree). Helping people understand Biblical Truth is important to him. He is always eager to preach or teach to build up others in their faith. He takes Paul's charge to Timothy seriously: **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (GW)** "Every Scripture passage is inspired by God. All of them are useful for teaching, pointing out errors, correcting people, and training them for a life that has God's approval. <sup>17</sup> They equip God's servants so that they are completely prepared to do good things." John is a life-long learner, so he will always have something to teach those he is equipping.

But John, the perennial sports fan, doesn't just know and teach the Word of God, he also has some strategies for reaching people with the Truth. This past basketball season he held an Upward basketball clinic at Ridgedale for any YMCA team members that wanted to develop their skills before the season started. He used the opportunity to build bridges to share the gospel with the players and their parents. He also designed a Bible Study each week just for the YMCA basketball coaches in the league.

Equippers not only know the Truth of God's Word, but they are open to exploring the different ways that God leads them to equip others in faith. Knowing the Truth of God's Word is very important, but it is just as important that you not keep it yourself. Equip others in their faith and build up the church!

We are all called to be ministers of the Gospel. We don't have to be on the staff of a church to be called an equipper of Christ Followers. It is said that God not only calls the equipped, He equips the called.

### **Looking at the Scripture**

**Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)** Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

### **Exploring the Scripture**

Jesus told the disciples to baptize the disciples they made. This was a symbolic picture of what happened when new believers were being initiated into the faith. Jesus also told his disciples to teach the new believers His commandments, which was important to knowing what Truths to believe. But Jesus didn't begin with baptizing or teaching, He began with the concept of making disciples. Jesus had connected his life with the lives of those he was discipling. This disciple connection was crucial to their watching and learning and initiation into the faith. Equipping people in faith involves connecting our lives in some way to those we are equipping. It isn't just dunking people under water or standing in front

of them in a classroom speaking knowledge; it is connecting with people, letting them see your life as a disciple. They could then see what a life of faith looks like.

The Preachers' Outline and Sermon Bible Commentary says, "Christ made disciples of men by **attaching** Himself to them; and through that personal attachment, they were able to observe His life and conversation; and in seeing and hearing, they began to absorb and assimilate His very character and behavior."

### **Application Questions**

1. What did Jesus tell His disciples to make?
2. What does it mean to "make disciples"?
3. Why didn't Jesus tell us to "make converts"?
4. What activities were the disciples to be involved in?
5. Why are baptizing and teaching important to making disciples?
6. According to Jesus what are the most important commandments to teach them to obey? (Matt. 22:37-39)
7. Why did Jesus model to His disciples how to live as well as teach them for 3 years instead of just telling them what they should do?
8. What role do you have in making disciples?
9. What step can you take this week in the process of making disciples?
10. What older and wiser Christian can you approach in the next couple of days to ask for help in spiritual learning, training, and growing?
11. Who can you disciple this week by your example and your teaching?

**Loving God...Loving Others**  
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**September 25, 2011**  
**Serve and Share**

**1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)** Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

### **Introduction**



This is Matthew Varner. Matthew is a typical high school student, but he is exceptional when it comes to serving others. Matthew has a servant's heart and he works really hard when it comes to providing help for others. When tornados ripped through Ringgold and Apison, he and his family were right there to help survivors in the aftermath.

From before the first night the youth went out to help clean up storm debris Matthew was eager to learn what he could do next to help the survivors. Matthew is like most young men, he is not much for sitting around for a long time talking about what to do. He would rather be doing ministry than talking about it.

Matthew is usually the first one to contact the youth minister, to find out when and where the next service venue is. Matthew can be seen still engaged in a ministry task long after most of the other teens have stopped working. He is the first one to volunteer for the hard jobs and last one to put down the rake, or the wheelbarrow, or the shovel... Matthew even jumps in to help other teens finish their task when they run out of steam.

Matthew is a fun-loving young man who playfully enjoys pushing the limits of an adult youth leader's patience whenever possible in the more mundane activities of youth group, but when it's time to really help someone and minister to their service needs, watch out, because this young man means business. Matthew is up to the challenge of serving even in tough conditions and doesn't mind when there isn't a lot of fanfare when the job is completed.

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV) says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Matthew is a young man who wants to DO the good works God has for him to do. Matthew shows that he loves God and loves others through his acts of service, sharing his skills and energy to the benefit of others in need.

We can all show our love for God by serving and helping other people. James warns that if we claim to love God, but don't show it by our works, our faith is dead. Paul says, the converse is also true, if we serve extraordinarily, but serve without love, we gain nothing. So, out of love and gratitude to God, serve others!

### **Looking at the Scripture**

**1 Timothy 6:18 (AMP)** "[Charge them] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be liberal *and* generous of heart, ready to share [with others]."

### **Exploring the Scripture**

The Greek words for "good works" mean to do beautiful and better deeds for people. Believers throughout history have been known for their good works. Even when terrible things happened, Christ followers, were the first ones on the scene and the last ones to leave. If you look at hospitals today, most were originally built by churches (though now most are run for a profit, they were originally built by Baptist, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and other groups of faith). Believers aren't supposed to just be saved people, they are to be BETTER people. More compassionate, more positive, more helpful, etc...

The last part of this verse. "ready to share" doesn't reiterate the idea of being generous, but the Greek translation means to be ready to communicate. So, do good things for people, be generous and communicate WHY you are doing these things.

As we do good works, as we help people, as we are generous, we can let them know we are doing these things because we LOVE GOD AND LOVE OTHERS.

### **Application Questions**

1. What sort of goals do people in your profession tend to pursue?
2. What goals do TV commercials and print ads encourage us to pursue?
3. How is being a Christian supposed to change the way we live?
4. What can a Christian do to help the people around him or her?
5. What is one way to tell if a person has a real, living faith?
6. What is difficult about applying what we hear in church to our everyday lives?
7. What are some of the biblical commands which are hard for you to live out?
8. If God has forgiven us and promised us eternal life, what motivation do we have to live in obedience to Him today?
9. Which is easier for you—talking about your faith with others, or demonstrating love toward them?
10. In what areas of your life do you want to begin acting more like a Christian?
11. What gift has God given you that you could use to serve others?

**Loving God...Loving Others**  
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**October 2, 2011**  
**Embrace and Invite**

**Mark 9:37 (AMP)** Whoever in My name *and* for My sake accepts *and* receives *and* welcomes one such child also accepts *and* receives *and* welcomes Me; and whoever so receives Me receives not only Me but Him Who sent Me.

### Introduction



This is Richard Smith. Richard is a TVA retired jack-of-all-trades kind of guy. He can fix just about anything from plumbing to carpentry. But he also has a heart for the “least of these.” He can be seen on Sunday mornings teaching in the Special Friends class, patiently and calmly leading his learners in Bible Study.

Richard has a heart to help, but he has an especially soft spot for kids. Serving in Disaster Relief opportunities he has fed thousands of people, cut down hundreds of trees with chain saws, and met many other relief needs, but his greatest joy has been to provide stability and loving care with surviving children who are displaced and desperate after a disaster.

Locally, he helps with Community Kids, Vacation Bible School, RA’s, RBC’s Pumpkin Patch festival, Neighborhood Helpers and many other ministries. Caring for children is a ministry interest shared by his wife, Kay, who helps kids in high-risk situations as the Special Events Coordinator for Bethel Bible Village.

Richard makes no judgments about the children he helps, he just loves them with God’s kind of love that is unconditional. This provides the kids with a safe framework from which they can ask questions about God and even ask about salvation if they want. Though Richard, like Jesus, is partial to children, he also creates a safe environment with adults who may be seeking answers to their spiritual questions. Experts tell us that most people have to trust a Christian before they are interested in becoming a Christian. Richard trustworthiness is solid because his lifestyle is consistent with his faith.

As we all grow in a lifestyle that is consistent with Loving God and Loving Others, we will earn the trust of those who need to know and follow Jesus. When they feel comfortable, they may ask us a question and we can respond appropriately.

### Looking at the Scripture

“*Simply proclaim the Lord Christ holy in your hearts, and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have.*”<sup>16</sup> *But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience, so that those who slander your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their accusations.* **1 Peter 3:15-16 (NJB)**

### Exploring the Scripture

The book I Once Was Lost by Don Everts and Doug Schaupp, tells us that modern believers *typically* go through at least 5 thresholds before coming to faith in Christ:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Pre-Christians usually have to Trust a Christian.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Pre-Christians Become Curious about Christ
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Pre-Christians Become Open to Change
- 4<sup>th</sup> Pre-Christians Begin to Seek After Christ
- 5<sup>th</sup> Pre-Christians Enter God’s Kingdom and become Christ Followers

Most people come to faith by the lifestyle witness of a friend (about 90%). If this statistic holds true then why is it important that we live a life that is trustworthy?

## Application Questions

1. How should we set Christ apart as Lord in our hearts?
2. How prepared are you to explain your hope in Christ?
3. What can you do to be better prepared for discussions about Christ with non-Christian friends?
4. What could be some of the reasons unbelievers don't trust Christians?
5. Is there something about your life in Christ that would make an unbeliever curious about who Jesus is?
6. What are some of the wonderful life changes that happen to those open to believing in Christ?
7. What are some of the some of the risks to those open to believing in Christ when their lives begin to change?
8. What is the difference between wanting to know Jesus personally and just wanting to connect with the Supreme Being (or the Creator)?
9. Why is it vital that there is **a moment** when we fully enter the kingdom by repenting from sin, accepting a relationship with Christ, and committing to live for and follow Him, as opposed to just asserting that "we have always believed in God?"
10. Do you have a relationship with a Pre-Christian who is at any of these 5 stages? If you don't, why not?