

BIBLICAL

EQUIP HUDDLE

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of the core value of Biblical at RLCM is to keep us centered on the message of Jesus and the Kingdom of God that's revealed throughout Scripture. God is our authority and our hope and one of the essential ways He communicates His character and the hope He alone provides is through the Bible. It is important to note that this value of being Biblical at RLC means that Scripture is foundational to our understanding of God and not merely supportive. The Bible is a collection of 66 books that faith communities throughout history have found authoritative in regards to faith, practice, and the identity of the Trinitarian God. The overall message of the entire Bible goes from Creation, to broken relationship, to redeemed relationship, to New Creation. This message is one that encompasses LOVE: of God, of our neighbors, and of ourselves as well!

CELEBRATE

What are you celebrating in your personal life or ministry right now?

CONNECT

What do you think it means for a church to be "Biblical"?

COACHING CONTENT

VIDEO

[Our Lead Pastor Rusty George on being Biblical](#)

KEY SCRIPTURE

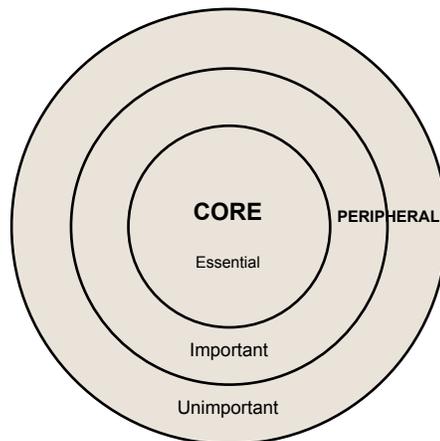
“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” - Matthew 22:36-40

- Here, Jesus says that out of all the Jewish scriptures, all the commands, all the stories, they narrow down to these two passages taken from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 respectively. The Law and the Prophets comprised the Jewish scriptures, what we now refer to as the Old Testament. The Old Testament contains a lot of different rules of life and stories, so it is pretty striking Jesus would narrow it down to two!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Rusty talked about the “concentric circles” in relation to what it means for us to be a Biblical church. What are some things you would put in the core? What are some things you would put in the outer circles? Use the charts below to help.

Core	Peripheral
Essential to the Christian faith	Not essential to the Christian faith
Have endured over time	Have changed over time
Have an overwhelming consensus among Christians	Have considerable differences of opinion among Christians
Can likely be pronounced publicly in the local church	More than likely better handled privately



2. What common theme do you notice between those two commandments Jesus mentioned? What are some practical ways you try and live out these commands?

WAY OF LOVE BY NORMAN WIRZBA

This is an excerpt from Way of Love by Duke University Theology professor Norman Wirzba. The premise of the book and in particular this article is to remind us that no matter how much theological training and understanding we have, we miss the entire point if the primary experience of Christianity is not love.

The joining of life and love is presupposed by much of the Bible, but clearly not all of it. There are places in Scripture where violence is sanctioned, perhaps even encouraged, and there are some practices, like slavery and the harsh treatment of women, that are not seen to be a problem. The Bible is a complex book, containing multiple voices, not all of which are in obvious agreement with each other. Though it contains the revelation of God, it also witnesses to humanity's developing, sometimes struggling, sometimes erring discernment of who God is and what God requires. However, the overall structure and deep logic of scripture progressively communicate the miraculous and astounding nature of God's love. This love is so far-reaching and all-encompassing- so inexhaustible- that we should expect its revelation to be complex and frequently overwhelming. It takes time to appreciate.

That people often have difficulty understanding Scripture is sometimes a feature of faulty reasoning or inadequate training. But an even greater impediment is the narrowness and smallness of our own loves, which prevent us from apprehending the radically inclusive and merciful love of God. Part of the problem comes from what we ask of scripture. If I believe Christianity is fundamentally a collection of true statements, then I will look for the Bible's "truths" and try to make sense of all of them. But if I see Christianity as a revelation and invitation to a way of life, then I will read scripture for the wisdom and guidance for living that Jesus and the biblical writers provide.

It takes time and a lot of practice to appreciate the love of God, which is why our readings of scripture need the correcting insights of others and the inspiration of God's Spirit of love to empower us to live in ways that witness to and extend the action of Jesus. For Christians, Jesus is the decisive window into the love of God and the logic of scripture. In his self-offering life we see where scripture has been heading and what it is ultimately about. Using another metaphor, he is the lens that brings the whole of scripture into focus.

In John's first letter, we read something that is startling: "Whoever does not love abides in death" (3:14). John presupposes love of life and the knowledge of God go together. Without love we simply cannot know God, because the love of each other is our only access to God. "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love" (4:7-8). This point is so crucial it is repeated: "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them" (4:16).

To say that "God is love" is an arresting claim, because it means that God is not some Superbeing out in the sky waiting to exercise (ruthless) power over everything. God has from the beginning been Emmanuel, "God with us," energizing relationships that nurture and heal whatever they touch. In certain respects, it makes more sense to characterize God as a verb rather than a noun, because God is the incomprehensible "action" that nourishes whatever action we or anyone else can perform. If our action does not flow within God's action, it is unlikely that God will be known or experienced.

In Matthew's gospel this point is made in a striking way. The scene is the time of an ultimate reckoning, when God, here described as a king, distinguishes between those who have truly been faithful and those who have not (Matt. 25:31-46). The deciding factor is not what people merely said or believed, but what they did (it is always the behaviors of people that are the more honest indication of what they believe anyway). What God wants to know is if they fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed strangers, clothed the naked, cared for the sick, and visited those in prison, because it is their love of others that demonstrates a relationship with God.

The supposed "righteous" ones protest, because they believe that the life of faith is what happens between God and an individual. It is a private affair and nobody else's business. But God has none of this. Echoing what we have already seen in John's letter, God says to these people that they can't possibly be doing anything to or for him if they are not already doing it to and for the people who surround them every day. If you want to claim to love God, you simply have to love the people that God puts in your path. "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me... Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me" (Matt. 25:40, 45).

This passage shows how God identifies with ordinary people in the midst of their daily struggles and troubles. God says, "I was hungry... thirsty... a stranger... sick... and in prison," because God is not aloof from the world, looking on disinterestedly from some distant height. If God is love, and love is the power that animates and nurtures all creatures, then God is present to every person. It makes no sense to sidestep the world in order to gain "direct access" to God. It's not simply about having a private, personal relationship with God, but about having an interpersonal relationship. To meet God you have to go deeply into the world and join with God's enlivening action already operative there in every creature. Love is the power that enables people to do precisely that. The test of faith is always the test of love: "If we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12).

Taken from Wirzba, Norman. *Way of Love: Recovering the Heart of Christianity* (Harper Collins: New York, New York, 2016) pp. 36-3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What difference does reading the Bible through a Christ-centered lens of love make?
2. With what you understand of the Bible through a "lens of love", in what ways do you have room for improvement?
3. If this became the most common way "Biblical" is described in every church, throughout the communities of RLCM campuses, what impact do you think it could have in those communities and across the globe?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him... Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. -1 John 4:7-9, 11-12 NIV

- God is love and His love is both noun and verb as John describes in this passage. We may not be able to see God but we are able to tangibly experience Him by loving and being loved.

DISCUSSION QUESTION (OPTIONAL)

What is one action step you will take to help yourself and your team express God's love?

CLOSING THOUGHT

It is important to “major in the majors, and minor in the minors.” At RLCM, there are a lot of diverse people with a lot of diverse opinions and preferences, particularly when it comes to the Bible. Even Jesus’ own inner circle had differing opinions! However different we may be, we must be rooted in love in everything we say and do. This is what it means to be Biblical - it means being more like Jesus, because all of scripture points to him.

COMMUNICATE

Pertinent ministry announcements that need to be communicated.

CARE

Prayer requests and corporate prayer