

FIRST THINGS FIRST

By Bob Young

Two great texts from the New Testament are the Great Commandments (Matthew 22:34-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). The Great Commandments say, "Put first things first." The Great Commission says, "Help others put first things first." The commission depends on the second commandment—"love your neighbor". If the second commandment is not in place, the commission is not fulfilled. The second commandment depends on the first commandment—"love God". If the first commandment is not in place, the second commandment is difficult, perhaps impossible.

A good question for Christians and for the modern church is this: "Are we serious about putting first things first?" When the church decides to pursue God with reckless abandon, the world will hear about Jesus. Opportunity knocks. The question is not whether we have opportunity—the question is what we will do with the opportunities we have.

Jesus responded to the lawyer's question by citing two commandments—love God and love your neighbor. The church has confused #1 and #2. We have made #1 into #2, and we have put #2 as #1. Most churches focus on #2—why don't people love me? How can we love one another more in the church? Why don't we love the world enough to tell them about Jesus? What can we do to love our neighbors? Most of the emphasis is on loving other people—one another, neighbors, the world. This reverses the Great Commandments. We must return #1 to #1. When we do this, God will take care of the results.

Are you wondering which commandment this church puts first? Are you wondering which you put first in your own life? Let me ask you a question. Do you see Christianity and the church as a rescue mission or a treasure hunt? When I passionately pursue God, my primary aim is to connect with God and to love God. I am seeking the greatest treasure ever known. I want the pearl of great price, the buried treasure, the reality of the kingdom. Pursuing God will endure. Teaching people to pursue people will not endure. People are not the ultimate goal. God is the ultimate goal. Connect with God. Build spiritual roots.

When you find the treasure, you have something to share. Evangelism is easy, natural. Taking the kingdom where it is not is natural—the kingdom goes where you go. Kingdom influences brighten a dark world and call the world from evil to goodness.