



WOW: Word Of the Week

RESCUE

August 16, 2023

Last week, I shared some thoughts about the Christian treasure hunt. This week, I focus on our rescue mission. Rescue! Our weekly WOW. Rescue is not a common Bible word—but the refrain cannot be missed, a thread that runs through Scripture. Common synonyms are “deliver” and “save.” Treasure hunt, rescue mission. Rescue comes before treasure in the dictionary, but not in the Christian life. #1 is the treasure hunt. #2 is the rescue mission.

Most churches have these reversed. Many contemporary churches tend to think #2 is #1, and #1 is #2. Churches focus first on #2. Churches think the primary goal is to love people, to communicate and show love. **“At least they know that we love them.”** That is how many churches do ministry; that is how many churches do mission work. This approach puts God’s instructions in reverse order. Which is preferable? The church really loves God, or the church really loves people?

Am I on a rescue mission or a treasure hunt? The treasure hunt is #1. The treasure hunt comes first. The rescue mission follows, is automatic. Saving the world is not the primary focus of my life. It is a goal of my life but it is insufficient motivation. You will constantly struggle with the rescue mission until you find the treasure. You have nothing to share! You have no treasure that causes rejoicing.

Love neighbor. Love one another. Do not misunderstand Jesus’ teachings. Jesus speaks of love twice. The context of the greatest commandments says “love your neighbor as you love yourself.” The context of the Upper Room in John 13 says “love one another as I have loved you.” These are different, not the same. Love neighbor (OT) is different than love one another (NT).

What is the contrast? The old command and the new command are not the same. The old command was to love as we love ourselves. The new command is to love as Jesus loves us. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (John 13:34). Loving as we love ourselves is relatively easy. Loving as Jesus loved is extremely difficult.

The church has a “love” problem. One of the marks of being a disciple of Jesus is love. “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35, ESV). In many Christian groups, love is the #1 evidence of discipleship, the thing most often mentioned: “love one another.” In the church, we often hear that following Jesus is about loving one another.

The love that marks disciples of Jesus is uncommon. The hurdle height is raised. Clearing the hurdles in the Christian race is demanding. We can never be satisfied to love one another as we love ourselves. “Let’s just all love another and get along – one big happy family!” The new command is not so simple. We are called to love as Jesus loved. Jesus loved sacrificially. Jesus came to serve and give his life for others.

What is the love that defines a Christian? Not just love one another, nor loving neighbors as we love ourselves. Love as Jesus loved – sacrificially, serving, putting others above self (Phil. 2).

No wonder churches fall so far short in the rescue mission! Pray about it. Our weekly WOW: Rescue!

I invite you to join me this Sunday at 5:00 PM CDT as we study more deeply.

The YouTube channel for the live stream or video can be accessed here →
<https://www.youtube.com/@fortgibsonchurchofchrist362>

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