

Study Guide

Monday, February 1- Friday, February 5

Monday, February 1—Read **Matthew 22:37-39**. A Pharisee, a religious teacher of the law, was trying to trap Jesus, and he asked Him this provocative question, “Of all of the commandments, what is the most important?” Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind.” “And the second is like it.” “To love your neighbor as yourself.” Why are so many relationships messed up today? We don’t even love ourselves. We haven’t experienced the unconditional grace of God, which overflows, renews our minds into a self-acceptance in appreciation of how God has made us, so when we go to others, rather than giving them the love of God, we are looking for something from them, and we are not bringing them God’s best.

Tuesday, February 2— A relationship is only as good as the two individuals who make it up. And nothing helps the relationship more than when you shine a spotlight on yourself and see your own issues, baggage, hurts, weaknesses and faults. As you understand what makes you tick and begin to resolve your personal issues, your capacity to love, to give grace, to improve communication, to be honest, and to solve problems is greatly enhanced. When you start with yourself that is the best way to get what you want. Before we can love our neighbor as ourselves, we need to “know” ourselves. Open your eyes and heart to the Lord of love. **Read Ephesians 5:13-14**. Let your life be opened by the light of Christ.

Wednesday, February 3 – One attitude that seems prominent in our world today is “if I ever find the ONE, I will be happy.” Happiness is not a good life goal. A much better life goal is *growth*, and one of the byproducts of growth is happiness. **Read Psalm 68:3**. Happiness is a gift from God. But, people whose life goal is to be happy are acting like children. Children don’t like pain, frustration, rules, or delayed gratification. They want to feel good all the time. So we don’t aspire to be like them do we? The spiritual and emotional growth process, designed by God, is about discovering what we lack inside, where we are empty, and where we are broken. We find out how unfinished we are and how much we need God and others. But it doesn’t stop there. The next step is experiencing the many ways we can be filled, matured, and healed. When we begin addressing our needs for growth, we find happiness. Don’t ask from your relationships what only personal growth can provide.

Thursday, February 4 –Relationships are not *additive* in nature. In other words, one-half plus one half does not equal one in relational math. Relationships are *multiplicative*. **Read Mark 10:8**. So when you take a whole person and multiply his or her strengths by the other whole person, you get a unified, mutual relationship that is incredibly strong. The problem is that when you multiply one half of a person times one-half a person (which is what happens in every relationship, as none of us is totally whole), you get one-quarter of a person. That’s less than you started with. Couples will bring each other down by demanding that the other “half” display more than the original half that he or she brought to the relationship. The key is remembering we are all incomplete and lower expectations for that “half-baked” person to be “done.”

Friday, February 5 – Can you accept the fact that you and your mate are not fully complete and well-rounded? Give up the demand that your mate be other than he is, and start dealing with it in a better way.

- Accept your spouse (or the one you are dating) as an incomplete person, just as God has accepted you.
- Look at the areas where you are incomplete before focusing on another's incompleteness (**Read Matthew 7:5**).
- Become supportive change agents for each other in the areas of growth you need.
- Focus on the things that are important first.
- Be patient. **Read Proverbs 16:32**. (Review sermon notes for more hints for your relationships)