

RESETTING LIFE'S COMPASS
Cleaning Up Relationships

Galatians 5:13-15

Dr. Doyle Sager, First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri

February 15, 2015

AUDIO: <http://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/resetting-lifes-compass-cleaning-up-relationships/>

This morning is the final sermon in our series RESETTING LIFE'S COMPASS (and we made it through all of them with being snowed out!). When I was taking education classes for my bachelor's degree, a wise teacher said, "At the close of each day's school session, you should review with the children all you've learned that day. That way, when Mom or Dad ask, 'What did you learn at school today?' you'll look like a good teacher!" So, I want to look like a good preacher. Remember the ground we've covered regarding resetting life's compass. Creating Margins, Establishing Priorities, Managing the Clock, Investing Wisely, Demanding Justice, Becoming Christ's Community and today, Cleaning Up Relationships.

And this is an appropriate place to wrap up, because we can't really get our life under healthy management until we clean up those relationship issues. This morning's text, like all of the Bible, reminds us how pride and selfishness destroy relationships (v. 13a). Listen to the ways selfishness and pride infected the Galatian believers: legalism, judgmentalism, criticism. And where those things exist, relationships are built on fear instead of trust, control of others instead of mutual self-giving and focusing on our differences (the only way we can feel good about ourselves is to feel bad about someone else).

So if selfishness and pride destroy relationships, it's logical that humility and love nourish them (v. 13b). We are slaves to each other! The Greek literally reads, "Through love keep on constantly serving one another." It's not a one-time effort; it is constant. So here's a question. Is the believer's life "love-optional"? Can you find life's compass heading, get started in the right direction without love? No. Loving others isn't an option, like cheese on your sandwich or a sun roof on your new car. Listen to Paul in v. 14. And note how many times these exact words are repeated in the Bible.

"You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD." Leviticus 19:18. "And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Matthew 22:39. "The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Mark 12:31.

"He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.'" Luke 10:27.

"...for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no

wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." Romans 13:8-10. "You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" James 2:8. (And of course, Jesus showed us on the Cross what that looks like--dying for neighbors, even the neighbors down on the ground who drove the nails!).

So these verses I just showed you, plus our text from Galatians, make seven quotes of the same words. How many times does that happen in scripture? It must be pretty important. Probably something we set our compass by, do you think? The WHOLE law is fulfilled by love. We refer to the Ten Commandments as "Decalogue" (literally, "ten words") so maybe we are dealing here with one word--love! (T.W. Manson is the source of this thought).

Wisely, Paul shows us sobering alternative to love (v. 15). Devoid of love, we are like a pack of wild animals. We devour one another. Does anyone doubt that, observing the racial and ethnic hatred, wars and genocide among us? But even at personal levels, think over the past week--the poison, hatred, bitterness that has boiled up inside you and at times, come out. I heard about a man and his nine-year-old son went on a trip to the Grand Canyon. After an afternoon on the rim, the father called his wife, describing eloquently the grandeur of it all. The boy took the phone and added, "Dear Mom, I spit a mile today!" Sometimes, like the boy, we almost make a virtue out of the bitterness we spit out. But doesn't the world deserve a model of love deeper than what culture offers? Shouldn't we as believers be setting the pace in loving relationships instead of mimicking the world? The world needs a message of love deeper than culture's, one that goes beyond categories, exclusion and hate.

John Claypool once said, "Our choice is never between pain and no pain; it's between the pain of loving and the pain of not loving. And only the pain of loving holds any hope for the future."** That is a great compass setting, isn't it?

A man once told me that one Sunday, the family was bustling around, getting Sunday lunch on the table. The littlest family member came up to her grandmother and said, "Grandma, I need someone to hold me and everybody else is busy." Isn't that where we started this series? Schedules, calendars, time and priorities. Resetting our compass. Too busy to hold each other is too busy. Too busy for relationships is too busy. Too busy for Jesus is too busy. Too busy to love is too busy.

*****I traced back this quote as far as I could. John Claypool shared it in a sermon, "Our Choice to Live." He was quoting Catholic priest Edwin Farrell.***