



“One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

— Mark 12:28-31

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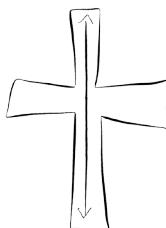
One of the knocks on the Christian church is that we are profoundly inward-focused, that we are only interested in faith inside the walls of the church building.

Putting together the Great Commandment and Great Commission, it would be impossible to mistake God’s intention for us to be constantly stretching our faith, looking outward, and partnering with God to transform and heal the world.

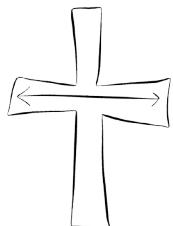
It is true that Christianity has at its core the relationship with God described by Mark 12:30: “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” With that strong foundation, our actions have power and grace.

But God’s will for our lives does not — and *cannot* — end there.

If you’ve spent any time at all in the modern Christian church, you’ve probably heard about the “vertical” and “horizontal” elements of faith.



The vertical is the faith we looked at in chapters two and three: the relationship between us and God. When our “fuel gauges” are at full for loving God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength, then we are best able to lead from a place of peace and joy.



The horizontal is the faith portrayed in Mark 12, verse 31: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” It represents the relationship between us and the people around us.

But we do not reach out into the world alone. That is why Jesus’s last words in the gospel of Matthew are so beautiful. Jesus reminds his disciples: “*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*”

The great I AM is with us as we seek to “help God’s people take the next faithful step.” We have been given the responsibility — and the joy! — of sharing God’s love with all those around us in ways that they can understand, and drawing them closer to God’s love with our words and actions.

QUESTION:

How prepared do you feel right now to step out in faith to lead? What would give you more confidence to do so?

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