

Is There Room for “We” When God is in “Me”?

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When Jesus was asked by the Jewish leaders which of Moses’s commandments were most important, in Matthew 22: [37] Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. [38] This is the first and greatest commandment. [39] A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself. [40] The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

Jesus’s instruction for us in his Great Commandment was very clear. We are to love God and love others with “love” being the common instruction to both. However, because “love God” was mentioned first, some Christians put most of their focus there. Their faith is to be admired, but when love for others is lacking, they are not honoring God’s commandment.

In 1 Corinthians 13, the Apostle Paul admonished the Corinthians for this very situation: “[1] If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. [2] And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. [3] If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

Paul then describes what love is: “[4] Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant [5] or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; [6] it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. [7] Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Paul then closes with how love compares with faith: “[8] Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. [9] For we know in part and we prophesy in part, [10] but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. [11] When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. [12] For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. [13] So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Love captures the essence of our God and savior. Love is the essence of the Holy Spirit that lives in us. As Paul said in Galatians 5:[22]: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

We are called by God to be kind, patient, and loving through every circumstance. We are not to be rude or demand our way. We are not to keep a record of wrongs. We are not to worship our God at the expense of loving each other. We are to endure and not give up in being Christlike and pursuing Christlike-loving relationships.

A healthy relationship between two people, such as in marriage, is based on both people loving each other as God commanded. I call this having a “we” focus. This was clear from the beginning of time when God said in Genesis 2:[24] “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” There is significant additional biblical basis for this in Malachi 2, 1Corinthians 7, Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, and 1Peter 3.

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Of course, people in a relationship need a degree of healthy independence. Both need to be individuals. Both need to be secure in themselves. Both need to be self-assured. Both need to love the LORD as individuals and place their trust in Him. So, a great relationship isn't 100 percent we. Maybe it is 60 percent we or maybe it is 95 percent we. I don't know. But a God-centered loving marriage is definitely not based on a primarily “me” perspective. Both people make God, the other person, and their relationship with each other their top priorities. They give more of their attention to the needs of their spouse than themselves. As long as both do that, both get their needs met. In contrast, when each person focuses on their own needs, neither person gets their needs met.

Listed below are differences in having a “me” versus “we” focus in a marriage. If interested in evaluating yourself, use the list as a self-assessment. For each attribute put a ✓ in front of the “me” or the “we” description that most closely aligns with your typical preference:

Attribute	✓	Me Focus	✓	We Focus
Goals		Lives to get, self-preservation		Lives to give, marriage preservation
Priorities		Care of self, God		Care for spouse, God's design for marriage
Spiritual focus		Know God, obedience		Live God's design for love
People focus		What others do negatively		What others do positively, spouse
View of others		Negative, criticizes others		Positive, affirms and builds up others
Dependency		Independent		Interdependent
Communication		Keep deep thoughts to self, friends		Share deep thoughts with spouse
Responsibility		Take care of self		Inform, help, involve, care for spouse
Social preference		Be alone or with friends		Be with spouse
Travel preference		Alone or with friends		With spouse
Source of pride		Children, friends, work		Spouse, quality of marriage
Best friends		Single people and individuals		Married people and couples
Favorite activities		Self-interests		Couple and spouse interests
Projects, hobbies		Prefer doing alone or with others		Prefer doing with spouse
Ministry method		Work alone or with others		Work with spouse
Outreach focus		Individuals		Couples
Best friends		Friends, children, pets		Spouse
Connectedness		Logical, superficial		Emotional, deep
Openness		Close-minded		Open-minded
Touching		Keep hands to self		Touch spouse
Intimacy		Have sex		Make love
Fitness focus		Physical health		Mental and physical health, hormones
Endurance		Quick to quit, leave		Persist, work things out
Possessions		Mine		Ours
Money		Mine		Ours
Decision making		Make decision on own		Make decisions with spouse
Risk tolerance		Won't risk self		Accept reasonable risks if good for spouse

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Here are several principles about loving your spouse I think are particularly important:

1. **Empathize.** Understand what the other person is thinking and feeling. Consider the other’s circumstances and perspective. Know what is important to each other.
2. **Encourage.** Look for what is right and working. Be positive and uplifting toward each other. Build up each other. Be grateful and show gratitude for one another.
3. **Stay connected.** Communicate often, deeply, and openly. The bonds of love are maintained by constantly talking, asking questions, sharing thoughts, and disclosing feelings.
4. **Have fun together.** Love takes work, but is also built on joy. Keep the spark in your relationship. Keep the fire burning for each other. Pursue happiness and intimacy together.
5. **Grow together.** Continually strive to be your best self and have the best marriage. Receive feedback and be open to new ways of thinking, feeling, talking, and behaving.
6. **Have faith.** Let go when trying to control everything. Replace worries and anxieties with a genuine trust in God. Read the bible, pray, and follow God’s principles. Let God do the rest.
7. **Live to give.** Make each other the top priority. Take responsibility to know and satisfy each other’s needs. Fulfill each other’s love language. Serve. Affirm. Encourage. Touch. Show compassion.
8. **Resolve differences.** Share concerns respectfully and timely. Gently exchange observations and their impact regarding matters needing resolution. Avoid labels, accusations, and threats of leaving.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches (www.ScopeOfLeadership.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.AlpineLink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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