

What is Among the Greatest Things of Life?

1 Corinthians 13:13

Introduction:

With all of the practical skills associated with understanding and living a successful life—otherwise known as wisdom—that is in this room, I wish there was time for each person to answer the question, “What are the greatest things of life?”

Some ideas that would likely come up are health, financial soundness, children or grandchildren, parents or grandparents, our spouse, naps, coffee, foods, technology, makeup, deep conversations, traveling the world, forgiveness, or the opportunity for personal growth.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (as rendered in the NASB95) reads, “But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Love is important; Love is impeccable (faultless); Love is indestructible (eternal), and Love is invincible (supreme).

Love is the greatest and most powerful principle of life.

Love sacrifices on behalf of the beloved object (John 3:16).

Love gives its best (God’s gift of His Son as a sacrifice is an “incredible gift” 2 Corinthians 9:15).

Love makes heavy burdens seem light (In Genesis 29:20 we are told, “Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days...because of his love for her”).

What sacrifices have you made on behalf of the God you love?

Are you giving Him your best?

Does your service to Him seem light because of your love for Him?

“Love is the most important quality of all, because it is the essence of God.”¹

1 John 4:8, “The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

Christ “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Colossians 1:15), so Christ is love.

Christians are to be like Christ; thus, Christians are to be characterized by love.

“But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

What is among the greatest things of life?

I. The greatest objective of life is to purposely glorify God.

As Paul instructed the brethren in 1 Corinthians 10:30-32, “whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Christians should do what they do for the good of all people, and do it for the glory of God.

In life by choice, in death by judgment “every knee will bow...and...every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

Christians are to “glorify God in [their] body” (1 Corinthians 6:16-20).

The church is to glorify God “forever and ever” (Ephesians 3:21).

When we purposely glorify God, we will lead others to “glorify [our] Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

II. The greatest privilege of life is to be “children of God.”

¹ Andrew Knowles, [The Bible Guide](#), 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 588.

John wrote in 1 John 3, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

We become children of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26).

The next verse (Galatians 3:27) says, “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

Becoming a child of God is an intentional act, a conscience decision.

1 John 3:10 says, “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”

We must intentionally choose righteousness and pursue it.

We must intentionally love our brother.

We know we are children of God when we choose to purify ourselves through faith in Christ, submit to being baptized and clothed with Christ, and practice righteousness.

Then, “the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him” (Romans 8:16 and 17).

When we are children of God, we share the greatest privilege of life.

III. The greatest knowledge of life is knowing God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to give eternal life, which He explained (in John 17:3) as knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ whom God sent.

How do we know if we have come to know God? How can we be sure that Jesus is indeed our Savior?

1 John 2:3 and 4 answer, through obedience, love, and holiness.

We must obey God (vv. 3-6): “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

We must love God and God’s people (vv. 7-11): “The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”

We must live holy lives for God (vv. 28 and 29): “Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.”

When we know God and His Son, Jesus Christ, we will obey, love and live according to the greatest knowledge of life.

IV. The greatest vocation of life is to work for God and serve Him.

A vocation is one’s main calling in life, while an avocation is a subordinate occupation pursued in addition to one’s vocation.

If our vocation is to work for God and serve Him, then our avocation will be a vehicle through which we glorify God.

Christianity is our vocation; our jobs are avocations.

Ephesians 4:1-3 implore Christians to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which [we] have been called.”

No matter what job you have, love God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind (Matthew 22:37).

“Seek first [God’s] kingdom and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

If our vocation and avocation are in the right order, then we will always find ourselves working for God and serving Him.

V. The greatest work of life is the work of winning souls.

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who is wise wins souls” (Proverbs 11:30).

Wisdom was called a tree of life in Proverbs 3:18.

Hence, the work of winning souls shows wisdom and righteousness, because the winning of souls brings renewal.

This renewal is experienced today in a wife winning her husband to the Lord by her chaste and respectful behavior directed by “a gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Peter 3:1-4).

The work of winning souls brings renewal as the church invites the lost.

“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost” (Revelation 22:17).

A congregation of the Lord’s church continues on into the future through the work of winning souls.

VI. The greatest joy of life is the joy of salvation.

The Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39).

The Philippian jailer brought Paul and Silas “into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household” (Acts 16:34), after he was baptized (v. 33).

Christians everywhere love Jesus though they have not seen Him, and they believe in Him “greatly rejoicing with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

As David confessed his sin to God, in Psalm 51, he asked God to remove his sin, restore his joy, and renew his spirit; David pleaded “Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit (vv. 11 and 12).

VII. The greatest victory of life is overcoming self and the world.

1 John 5:3-5 declares, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

To the church in Sardis it was written, “He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (Revelation 3:5).

VIII. The greatest fellowship of life is with Christ and Christians.

“If we walk in the Light...we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

Continual cleansing takes place in fellowship with Christ.

Fellowship with Christians keeps us devoted to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship (Acts 2:42).

“If we say that we have fellowship with [God] and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (1 John 1:6).

The greatest fellowship of life is with Christians who have “fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).

IX. The greatest gift of life is to give one’s self to God and God’s people.

God gave His best when He sent His Son and offered salvation to us through His Son.

What will we sacrifice to God?

Paul said that the brethren in Macedonia “first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God” (2 Corinthians 8:5).

Will we surrender our will to the Savior?

Will we sacrificially share our wealth with the saints?

X. The greatest loss of life is to lose one’s soul.

Jesus asked in Matthew 16:26, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

We must decide what we will do with our life.

Save it and lose it or lose it for Christ’s sake and find it (v. 25).

“For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds” (v. 27).

Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24).

XI. The greatest neglect of life is to neglect so great a salvation.

The writer of Hebrews penned, “how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will” (Hebrews 2:3 and 4).

Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15 and 16).

XII. The greatest prize of life is eternal life—eternal glory—the crown of life.

Four passages from different writings of Paul are shared here as a cohesive call to strive for the greatest prize of life: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:7 and 8; 1 Timothy 6:12; and Galatians 6:7-9.

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

“Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”

Conclusion:

What is among the greatest things of life that are worthy of serious consideration?

Have you considered the things shared tonight?

Love is the greatest and most powerful principle of life.

Love sacrifices on behalf of the beloved object.

Love gives its best.

Love makes heavy burdens seem light.

Do you love God this way?

God is offering His love to you; will you receive it?