

2. The Building Block of Priority

Hey, welcome once again to the journey church, New York City. I'm Kerrick, I want to thank you for joining me today, as we continue with our first teaching series of 2022, is called Building blocks the foundations of a great life. And so I'm excited that you're here today. And if you haven't yet, go ahead and click the button beside the live stream player and download your message notes for today. So you can take some notes and follow along during the message. Now listen, during this series, we want to show you how to build a foundation for a great life. And we're doing that by looking at three great statements from Jesus that we find in the New Testament of the Bible. Three great statements that we've built our church on over the last 20 years three great statements that I believe God wants you to build your life on over the next 20 years. In fact, looking at what Jesus says in Matthew chapter seven, it's there in your notes, I'll put it up on the screen.

This is our memory verse for our building blocks teaching series. So let's begin today by reading this passage out loud together. So wherever you're joining us for Church Online, I want you to read this out loud with me with a lot of new year's enthusiasm. Are you ready? Go. Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock, though the rain comes in Torrance, and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. You see, when the rains of that floodwaters of fear, when the winds of pain and loss hit your life, it's important that you have an unshakable foundation on which you can stand and face the storms of life. It's important that you have solid bedrock that you can stand on that provides the support that you need on which you can build your life. And see that's what this new teaching series, this first teaching series of the year is all about. It's the building blocks for your life that Jesus has given you the three great statements from Jesus in which you can build a great life. And what I want to do today is I want to look at the greatest of the statements, the greatest building blocks on which you can build a great life. Now you may be thinking, well, Carrie, how do you know that this is the greatest building block on which to build a great life?

Well, we know that because Jesus says it's so here, let me give you the setting. The religious leaders of Jesus's time, there, they're constantly trying to trip him up and trap him getting to say something that gets him into trouble or that discredits sin. And so on this day, they're asking him some questions to trick him. And here's one of the questions that they ask Jesus, they say, Teacher, what is the most important commandment? Teacher? What is the most important commandment of the 613 Commandments in the Old Testament of the Bible, Jesus, which one stands above all the others, which is the most important? Now although this wasn't a sincere question, it was a question designed to trap Jesus. If you think about it, it's really a great question. In fact, it might even be the greatest question, Teacher, what is the greatest commandment? Jesus? What is the most important thing that I can do with my life? Jesus? What is the most important building block on which I should build my life? And listen in response to this question Jesus directly and clearly tells them the great commandments, I want you to, to look at these.

I'm going to put them up on the screen there in your notes. These are the great commandments, Jesus's answer to this question, teacher. What is the greatest commandment? Here's what Jesus says

Matthew 22, beginning in verse 37, Jesus says, You must love the Lord your God, with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment now hold your finger there for for just a moment. It's really fascinating, because when Jesus is asked what is the most important commandment, the actually quotes in Old Testament scripture, Deuteronomy, chapter six, verse five, and it's a passage that every Jewish person would recognize immediately because it was known as the Shema. It was so important that the devout Jew would repeat the Shema out loud six times every day. It was so foundational to their faith, they were repeated six times a day. So Jesus says the most important commandment is this. Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, love the Lord your God with all of your soul, Love the Lord your God with all of your mind, and I believe that most of the religious experts would have agreed with Jesus they probably would have been satisfied with his answer. It's a good answer. But Jesus doesn't stop there.

He continues back in the passage, Matthew 22, Jesus continues as second is equally important. Love your neighbor as yourself, the entire law and all Hold the demands of the prophets. All the commands in the Old Testament are based on these two commandments. Now want you to notice what Jesus does here, he takes another verse from the Old Testament. This is found in Leviticus chapter 19, verse 18, and elevates loving your neighbor as yourself as an equal command with loving God with with the Shema. It's really a very radical idea. And see, according to Jesus, these two commandments are tied closely together. You cannot separate loving God from loving others. Because you see, you aren't really loving God, with all your heart with all your soul and with all your mind, if you're not loving your neighbor as yourself. And here's the truth. You can't really love your neighbor as yourself if you haven't fully come to understand what it means to love God. And Jesus says that every other command in the Bible, every other direction that we received in the Bible falls under these two commands.

That's how important the great commandments are, how important of a building block it is to your life. And so don't miss this. A life well lived a great life is one that focuses first on your relationship with God and loving God. And then secondly, on your relationship with other human beings and how you can love them. If you look back in your notes, the foundations of a great life is the statement that we're coming back to each week during this series. I want to help fill it in today. And so I want you to feel this in a great commitment to the great commandments. That's the feeling for the day, right that in commandments, a great commitment. We looked at commitment last week, to the great commandments, and the Great Commission, done with great compassion. We'll grow a great Christian and a great church and see the great commandments are so foundational to who we are as followers of Jesus, love God and love people. And they're foundational to who we are at the journey as a church.

Jesus says that they are the main things in life. And so today, let's study these commandments that Jesus elevates above all of the others. Let's look at how to build our lives on the great commandment. So if you look in your notes, this is what we want to ask, How do I build my life on the great commandments? Well, here's the first step. I want you to write this in. How do I build my life from the great commandments first, to love God with all my heart, I give him priority over anyone or anything else. I'll give you a minute to write that in. To love God with all my heart. I give him priority over anyone or anything else. If I want to love God with all my heart, it means that I give God first place in my life above everyone and everything else in my life God because my number one priority. Don't forget how Jesus begins the great commandments. Matthew 22:37 Jesus says, You must love the Lord your God

with all your what? Heart circle the word heart now, why does Jesus begin the great commandments with your heart with the heart with Jesus begins with the heart, because the heart is the center of your being. In fact, in your notes, right above the word heart, I want you to write the center of my being your heart is the center of your being. So Jesus is asked what is the most important commandment, and he begins by saying, Love the Lord your God, with all your heart with the center of your being, make sure that God is at the center of your life, make sure that God is your number one priority. I want you to think about that for just a moment. Think about your life. Who are what is at the center of your being right now. Who are you loving with all of your heart? Who are you giving number one priority in your life? Let me give you a principle.

What you worship is at the center of your life, and what is at the center of your life. What is the center of your being is what you worship. And so if I love God with all my heart, I put him at the center of my life. And if that's the case, then I am worshiping Him, My Life Points them everything about my life brings honor to him. And you say well, character, you know what, I worship God. But if your career is really your number one priority, it's what you think about all the time. It's what you pursue, then you're just lying to yourself. Because if your career is at the center of your life, then your career is what you're worshipping. It becomes your God with a lowercase g. C, you are created to have something at the center of your life you are made towards if you are going to worship something or someone but if you put the wrong thing at the center of your life. You'll worship the wrong thing. And then your life gets off kilter gets it gets off center. Hey, have you ever heard someone use that phrase before? You know why? My life just feels off center right now it feels off kilter out of alignment. I mean, I think it happens to all of us at some times, right?

Here's the thing, if you allow anything but God to be at the center of your life, your life will feel off center, your life will be out of alignment, in the Bible says you will be deceived. In Deuteronomy chapter 11, verse 16, it says this, it says, but be careful. Don't let your heart be what? deceived. Remember, your heart is the center of your being. And this is don't let your being don't let your heart be deceived, so that you turn away from God and serve in worship other gods, then you may say, well, Carrie, not not in my life, I don't hit there are no other gods that I worship or love. There are no other gods that I put before, before God or love with all my heart. But are you sure? Here's how to determine if you really love God with all your heart, if he's your priority above everything, and everyone else in your life answered this question. Is there anything in your life right now that you would be unwilling to give up? If God asked you to? I want you to think about that right now. Is there anything or anyone in your life right now that you would be unwilling to give up?

If God were to ask you to do that? He made me think you can't, not my career, I couldn't give that up. I've been working for that my entire life. It's so important to me. It's, it's sort of the center of my being, it's who I am. I couldn't give up my career. If that's the case, and you say, I can't couldn't give up my career. If God asked, then, then that's become something you love with all your heart more than God. You say, Well, Carrie, I couldn't give up my boyfriend or my girlfriend, I would never be able to do that. Well, then that person has become someone that you love with all your heart, more than you love, God's become your your number one priority above God. Listen to things, the things that often take priority in our lives over God. They're not usually bad things. In fact, they're usually good things, good things that we've just moved to the center of our lives. And we began to worship over God. They're

simply things that if you aren't careful, will cause your heart, the center of your being, to turn away from God.

I talked to a young man recently. And during the pandemic, he lost his job. And when he did, he was something he pursued for a long time, he felt like his life was over. And he admitted to me to having suicidal thoughts. He told me his self worth as a man was gone. You know, he had lived his entire life for his career. Now his career was gone. And he didn't know what to do. He felt like he had nothing to live for. Because you know why his life was off center, he had the wrong center of his life. Work had become his number one priority, the thing that he loved more than God. And I've seen it happen in so many lives, I've seen people, maybe they've gone through a breakup or they lost a loved one, or they lost a job, they lost something that meant something to them. And it was hard because they had put that in place of God in their life. Listen, I want to ask you this question. Have you given your heart to someone or something else? above God?

Is there something or someone else who's become your number one priority? If so, that all center feeling that you're having is God telling you right now that you need to recenter, you need to realign your life, allow God to return to his rightful place at the center of your life at the center of your being. You know, that's the first step that you need to take today. Maybe that's why God is trying to get your attention today, at the beginning of 2022. God wants you to begin loving him today, with all your heart, He wants you to give him priority over everything and everyone else in your life. That's the first step to building your life on the great commandments. Now, back to your notes. Here's the second step. And I just want to warn you, I'm gonna go a little bit out of order and skip around a little bit here. So let's go to this part of the great commandments.

To love God with all my mind. I give him my focused attention each day, especially Sunday. Now give you a moment to write that down to love God with all my mind. I give him my focused attention each day, especially Sunday. Now, why does Jesus commanded us to love God with all of our mind? Well, here's why. Your mind is the center of your attention. Just like I said, your heart is the center of your being your mind is the center of your attention of your focus. The mind is what is what you it determines what you focus on. And that's what Jesus says this in Matthew 2237 He says you must love the Lord your God with all your what your mind. So circle the word mind and then above it, right center of my attention. Now, the truth is, we get so easily distracted. And here's the thing you can't love God with all your mind? If God is never on your mind, let me repeat that you can't love God with all your mind if God is never on your mind you know the committed Jews in Jesus's day they understood this.

Do you remember how many times they repeated the Shema Love the Lord your God with all your heart all your soul Now do you remember how often they repeated the Shema every day, six times, six times, six times they will repeat Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind. Why? So that they can refocus their attention refocus their minds on what is most important to stay on track with God and to keep God on their minds all day. So how do we do this? How do we how do we love God with all of our minds? How can you give God your focused attention each and every day? Well, for starters, maybe we could just take a cue from from the Jewish people. And maybe we can just repeat the great commandments at least three times a day in the morning at lunch, and at dinner. And you can just repeat, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your

mind and love your neighbor as yourself. Repeat that three times a day, that's a good idea to help focus your mind your attention on God. But also you can love God with your mind by beginning every day, by focusing your attention on him. Listen, begin every day by giving God the at least the first 15 minutes of your day set aside those 15 minutes that you know what I'm going to I'm going to read some scripture, I'm going to have a devotion I'm, I'm going to spend time praying, make those moments, a time where you focus on God, not on your phone, not on social media, not on work or anything else. But you give him your focus attention. That's how you love God with your mind. Now to help you do this, we've we've put together a 2022 Bible reading plans, they'll help you read through the entire Bible, or maybe just the New Testament of the Bible. In one year, we want to give that to you as a free resource, you can just click the button beside the live string player and download that. And by the way, that's what I'm doing.

I've made a commitment this year. I haven't done it in a couple of years. But I'm going to read the entire Bible in 2022, along with a lot of you a way of focusing my mind on God of loving God with all my mind. So take advantage of that resource. But listen, when it comes to loving God with your mind, start by giving him your full attention every Sunday. You know, Sunday is the day that we as Christians we set aside for God is the day when we go to church together and we we recenter on God and we give Him our full attention. Look, if 2022 is anything like 2021 or 2020, for that matter, there are going to be some unexpected things that come at you. You're going to need a solid foundation.

So make a commitment right now that you are going going to give God your Sundays, you're going to be at church every Sunday in person in Times Square if you can, or you're going to be at Church Online each week as well. That's just as good. But make being with God on Sunday here at church, a building block of your life in 2022. Listen, there's so much garbage that's being poured into your mind each and every day. So much so many things that are trying to distract you and pull you away from God. And listen, if you want to love God with all your mind, if you want to build a foundation to a great life, give your focused attention to God every day. Fix your mind on Him on Sunday and on every day. I love what the apostle Paul writes in Philippians chapter four, verse eight. Look at what he says. He says, fix your thoughts. What does he say? He said, fix your mind. He's talking about your mind here loving God with all your mind. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right and pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Remember, you can't love God with all your mind if God is never on your mind. So give God your focused attention each day.

So to build your life on the great commandments Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind that I told you I was gonna skip around a little bit and get out of order. So let's let's get to the second part of the great commandments and look at this, to love my neighbor as myself. Write this in I give others my time and energy where needed. And were gifted, right that in to love my neighbor as myself. I give others my time and energy where needed and are gifted.

Now I want you to remember what I said earlier. It's impossible to love God with all your heart, your soul in mind, if you're not loving your neighbor as yourself, and these two commandments are so interconnected. And so how do I make the second part of the great commandments a building block of my life? You know the horizontal part if, if my loving God with all my heart, soul and mind is my vertical relation To shoot with God than loving my neighbor's myself, this is my horizontal relationships with others. And in Matthew 2239. That's what Jesus says. He says, Love your neighbor as yourself, and

listen to love others, as much as you love yourself, you must be willing to give others your time and energy were needed. And we're gifted, even when you don't want to, even when you'd rather use your time and energy for yourself into it for your own benefit. But what does it mean to give your time and energy to others where needed, and were gifted? Well, first of all, we're needed means whenever God presents a need to you that you can meet. And here's the truth, there are unmet needs around you every day. And it may not be doing something that you're passionate about, it may not even be doing something that you're particularly good at.

But it's a need that God brings to your attention. And you are able to meet that need. You know, it could be something as simple as cleaning up after a service at the journey on a Sunday in Times Square, you jump in and you help clean up, it could be taking a friend that you met in your growth group and they're going through a difficult break break up and you take them out for coffee just to listen to them and to pray with them. It could be showing up to serve food to the homeless on a Saturday during free lunch in the park. It's anytime God shows you a need. And you're able to meet that need. Listen, God will put real needs in front of you every day, where you can show love to others. And you can decide, listen, you can decide right now you say care, I'm going to use my time, I'm going to use my energy just for myself for my own pursuits for my own benefit, you can do that. Or you can make yourself available to meet the needs of others.

You know, but I really love it, when we're able to help people plug in here at the journey, and serve others, where they're gifted, show God's love where they're gifted. See, this is where you're really come alive. This is where your heart really begins to sink. Because let me tell you this, God created you uniquely, to serve others and to love others, God has given some of you the gift of music. And when you find ways to use that gift, not just for yourself, not just for your own benefit or enjoyment. But when you begin to use that gift of bless others in the church. That's when you're really loving your neighbor as yourself and your heart really comes alive when you do that. You know some of you maybe you love being around children and in teaching kids. And when you use that gift and journey kids to invest in our in the spiritual growth of our families. Not only are you making an eternal difference, but you have fun when you're doing you have a blast, and you grow spiritually as you use that gift. You see when you use your gifts to serve others in the church, and not and you don't just use them for yourself. You're fulfilling the great commandment you're doing what God created you to do. You're building a great foundation for a great life. And it was Jesus's purpose in his part of our purposes.

Well, Matthew 20:28 Look at what Jesus says. In fact, I want you to read this out loud with me, here's Jesus is talking about his purpose. Are you ready? Go. For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many. You know, I want to show you a couple of ways that you can give others your time and energy here. It's a journey, where you're specifically gifted. And we have some areas of service that we've listed out on our online connection card. So here's what I want you to do. If you're on our website, I want you to minimize the video for a moment. Or maybe if you're on Facebook or YouTube, you know, open another browser and go to journey.nyc.tv. And then look at your online connection card. If you put your name and email in you click Next go to the next page. There's your prayer request, you click Next again, and you get to the page that has all the different ways that you can serve all the different areas of service at the journey.

One of them is our worship Arts team. If you're a musician or a vocalist, you could use your gifts to love others in that way. When is the serve on the journey kids team that I talked about earlier. One is to serve on the welcome team and to greet people and make them feel welcome as they attend the journey you can serve in the office and do administrative work during the week. That's a great way to make a difference you can serve in the community service area of our church and help the less fortunate in inner city ministry, any of those, just find a place that might work for you a place where you could give your time and energy to love others.

You know today we're talking about building your life and the great commandments. The commandments that Jesus said were the most important. So what I want to do right now is I want to put the final piece of the puzzle in place here. We've said to love God with all my heart by giving God priority in my life first priority I love God with all my mind by giving him my focused attention. I love my neighbor as myself by giving others my time and energy where needed and were gifted. And then finally, right to sin, to love God with all my soul, I give him control over the direction of my life. To love God with all my soul, I give him control over the direction of my life. You see, your soul is the center of your will. Never your heart is the center of your being, your mind is the center of your attention, but your soul, that's the center of your will. It's the GPS system for your life. It's where you set the course and where you set the direction for your life.

That's why Jesus says this in Matthew 2237, he says, You must love the Lord your God with all your what? Your soul, so circle the word so and so and then above it, right center of my will. Loving God with all your soul means that you allow Him to guide your life, that it means that you listen to God's voice, above all the other voices trying to speak into your life. And by the way, speaking of loving God, looking at what Jesus says is the number one way that you and I can show our love to God. This is Jesus in John, Gospel of John Chapter 14, beginning in verse 15. Jesus says, If you love me, what's next, obey my commandments, would you Underline that phrase, obey my commands, Jesus says, If you'd love me, obey my commandments, those who accept my commandments, and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, My Father will love them, and I will love them and reveal myself to each of them. See, Jesus says, this is clear as day. If you want to show that you love God with all your heart, soul and mind, if you want to show that you're building your life on the great commandments, and that God is number one in your life, Jesus says is simple. obey my commandments.

You know, he's saying, listen to God, follow God, do what he says. He says, if you, if you love God, you will obey God. As Jesus says, you can say you love God all you want. But if you if you want to show it, If you really love God, then OBEY Him. And that means you're going to give God control over the direction of your life. Listen, your life is going to be guided by someone or something. And what guides your life will determine the direction of your life, and the direction of your life will determine your ultimate destination. And so it is with your life. You get to pick the voices, that you're going to listen to the voices that you're going to follow. But be careful, because many of those voices that are trying to guide your life right now they're gonna get you off track, off track with got off track in your life very quickly. You listen to the voice of philosophy, you're gonna end up frustrated and far from God. If you listen to the voice of pop psychology, you may end up hurt deeply. If you listen to the voice of politics, you may find yourself angry, and your soul empty. If you listen to the voice of popular culture, you may find yourself trying to please everyone. But in the end, determine that you're not really pleasing anyone.

Listen to other people. And you may find that you're simply being used by them for their own purposes. Life can be confusing, it can be dangerous. And there are a multitude of voices that are vying for control of the direction of your life, vying for control of your soul. competing to see if they can control how you live and what you do. But there's only one voice that knows you better than you know yourself. There's only one voice that knit you together in your mother's womb. There's only one voice who knows your purpose. Who knows, when your heart has been broken? Who lifts you up? When it feels like you're sinking hopelessly, there's only one voice who is there for you, when everyone else has walked away. He sent His only Son to die on the cross for your sins, so that you can have eternal life. There are a lot of voices that are trying to direct your life and control your soul right now. But there's only one voice that cuts through the garbage and cuts through the noise and can heal your heart into it and will direct you to the ultimate destination of knowing your true purpose. If you want to love God with all your soul, trust him with the direction of your love life.

If you want to love God with all your soul, trust him with the direction of your career. If you want to love God with all your soul, trust Him with how you spend your time and your money, follow his lead. You know one day almost 2000 years ago, Jesus was approached and asked a very insincere question that had the intention of trapping me and getting me in trouble. And that question was teacher, what is the most important commandment? And Jesus has answered not only to shut down his critics, but it provides us with the essential building block for living a great life. Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. Love God first and love people second, is simple enough that listen, it's what you were created to do. It's the first building block of life that's worth living a great life. You know, I begin today by reading our key verse for this entire teaching series.

In Matthew chapter seven. Jesus asks, if you're building your life on sand, or if you're building your life on solid rock, and I guess the question that I would like to leave you with today is this. Are you just building sand castles with your life? They're gonna be knocked down the first time that the tide comes in, and forgotten when you're gone? Are you building sand castles with your life? Because you've pursued the wrong things? Or are you building a foundation for your life on which something great and lasting can be built? Because you've remembered what the two most important things are? Maybe today as a follower of Jesus, you need to recommit to this building block for your life. Loving God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind, and loving your neighbor as yourself recommitting to God is your number one priority. Or maybe today for the first time. You need to surrender your life to God by stepping across the line, and believing in Jesus, in finding out what it really means to live what it really means to love and to be loved by God. Our final verse today is a reminder that everything that we're really looking for in life, everything that we really need, we find when we seek God above everything else is our final verse.

So let's read it out loud together. Matthew, chapter six, verse 33. These are the words of Jesus, let's read them together. Are you ready? Go. Seek the kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously. And he will give you everything you need. If you would, let's bow our heads together. And pray wherever you're joining us for Church Online, if you would right now, bow your head, close your eyes. Let this be a time between you and God. Father, thank you for the great commandments. And for showing us what really matters in life. What's most important. God help us right now, to set aside all of

our other insignificant pursuits, and focus on loving you with all of our hearts by making you number one priority. That was the focus on loving you with all of our souls by giving you control of the direction of our lives and loving you with all of our minds by giving you our focused attention every day. And God help us to love our neighbors as ourselves by giving our time and energy to others into your church. Help us to build our lives on this great building block. And listen as we pray, if you're here today, and maybe you're afraid right now that you're missing the purpose of life, you're building your life not on these principles of loving God and loving others, but on what culture says and what politics or philosophy says. And right now you just feel empty and exhausted. today. Jesus offers you real life now, and eternal life forever. Just pray with me Jesus today. I put my faith in you. I believe you died on the cross for my sins. And I commit to follow you and love God and love others the best that I can forgive me of my sins and when I fall short. It's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.