

Loving your Neighbor

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Date: 22 September 2019

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[0 : 00] I planned this beginning before I knew the news, so I hope this is still okay. It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood.

It's a beautiful day for a neighbor. Would you be mine? Could you be mine? I've always wanted to have a neighbor just like you.

I've always wanted to live in a neighborhood with you. Would you be mine? Could you be mine? Won't you be my neighbor?

Was that okay? Okay. What is a neighbor? I couldn't help, as I was thinking about this, to think of Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood.

And bless that man, that gentle man, invited children, thinking of this very command. Loving your neighbor as yourself.

[1 : 10] He was, of course, a sound believer in the Lord Jesus and a follower of Jesus, lived out those principles in front of a national audience.

I remember once seeing him do an interview of a comedian who was a very harsh comedian. And just in a matter of ten minutes, he had changed her attitude from being harsh and critical to softened and just had a gentle way about him.

What is a neighbor? And I think today, in a context of a world where I think we are becoming less neighborly, where we build fences and we stay inside and we guard our privacy, we have connections that are less and less personal and more abrupt.

Instead of talking, we text. And I understand the convenience of that, but it's less personal and it's less communicative.

Instead of meeting together, we email. And I'm not berating those things, those that have their place and their convenience, but I watch our world becoming less and less personal.

[2 : 41] I remember when I was first a pastor and we lived in San Jose and we knew some of our neighbors and literally our next door neighbors, you know.

And then when God took us to Illinois, I remember thinking, oh, this is where we'll know all our neighbors. I just imagined, I presumed, it would be a place where they're outside and they're talking and they're sitting on their rockers and they're, you know, it's like Andy Griffith all over again.

You know, neighbors are neighbors. And I was shocked that I was the only one outside, it seemed like. We couldn't get to know our neighbors.

Our neighbors were shut in. We moved here and it's much better here. We know lots of our neighbors, even, you know, even the Pfizers and the Jones and the Bradleys.

We're grateful for a neat little neighborhood here where we actually do know more and more of our neighbors.

[3 : 52] What does this mean? Love your neighbor. We looked quite a bit the last few weeks at the first priority, the most important command.

And what's interesting is this scribe asked Jesus this question. He's asking Jesus to summarize of all the laws that God gave, all the commands that God gave.

And I think the scribes counted up 666 or 613, depending on which school of scribes you follow. Over 600 commands, which is the greatest?

And so he's asking Jesus to think and put it together and apply. What, of all of that, what's the most important? And Jesus comes up with the command to love the Lord your God.

And we hear that and we say, oh, that makes sense. Because if I love God, all the other things will come into play. And so Jesus picks that and that happens to come from Deuteronomy chapter 5, right before God gives the command, the ten commands again.

[5 : 12] And then Jesus says, it's not just one, but there's actually two. There's not just one command, there's another one that's important too. So he talks about loving God with our heart, which we saw from our study means to love God with genuineness, not just by performance, but genuinely with true intent.

And then to love Him with all of our soul, which means to bring all of our feelings and affections to God, whether they're good or bad, wherever they are, to bring our affections and feelings and passions to the Lord.

Sometimes they're feelings of rejoicing. Sometimes they're feelings of sadness. Sometimes they're feelings of dryness, of deadness. Sometimes they're feelings of great energy.

But whatever they are, we bring them to the Lord to love Him with all our mind. And we saw that this was something Jesus added. This was not in the Old Testament command.

It wasn't original. Jesus adds this term, to love with our mind. So He wants to teach us to engage our mind, to love God by thinking carefully, by being a student, by studying and putting together and coming to a greater understanding of who God is and how I can serve and walk with Him.

[6 : 41] And then to love God with all of our strength simply means with all of our ability. And of course, our strength can fail, so we learn to depend on His strength.

So part of our loving God with all of our strength is learning to receive strength from Him. Where He then renews our strength and we continue to love Him.

Then what we looked at last week was how do you put all that together? Yeah, that's a lot. That's overwhelming. No wonder no one can do that.

All the time. But how do you put it together? How can we make it practical? And so we looked at two ways to apply that last week. We love God with all our heart, mind, strength, and soul by, first of all, by being alert to recognize our vulnerabilities.

Recognize that we have a heart that can get hardened. That can be deceived. And so we have to guard our heart. We have a soul that's affected by feelings. And so that's something that we can't follow.

[7 : 48] We can't follow our soul. Our mind is that which can be corrupted by disuse. Or by studying things that are false.

And then, of course, our strength has vulnerability of just failing because we do get tired. Our spirit is willing, but our flesh is weak. That's just nature of who we are.

So being alert to recognize our vulnerabilities. And I think, and I even mentioned last week, I think that each of us may have a proneness to one of those areas. Or perhaps two of those. We might be more of a heart person or more of a soul person or more of a hands-on doing person.

And so we have that vulnerability. So how do we apply it? So by being alert to that. But secondly, there is what we're told twice in the New Testament to renew our minds.

To be transformed by the renewing of our minds. In Romans 12 and Ephesians 4, Paul repeats that as a critical, regular, daily part of our Christian life.

- [9 : 02] Every day we are putting off the old, putting on the new, but in between we're renewing our mind. And so I believe if we're to apply this whole loving God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, where we start is with our mind.
- We cannot follow our heart because our heart can be hardened and our heart can be deceived. Our heart is deceitful. We cannot follow our soul because our soul is wherever we're affected.
- We cannot follow our strength because our strength fails. But our mind. And notice how Paul puts it. Both times in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4, he says it is a being transformed. A being renewed. So in other words, it's not me renewing myself, it's me going to the Lord and being renewed. So I get my mind renewed first.
- Then I can guard my heart. I can guide my soul. And I can garner my strength. That's, I think, the most practical we can make that.
- [10 : 20] And that's just part of our daily thing. We're renewing every day as we come to the Lord, we walk to the Lord, we talk to the Lord, we're renewing our mind. We're just saying, Lord, renew my mind, cleanse my mind, refocus my heart, my soul, and my strength on you.
- So then we come now to verse 31 where Jesus says, a second. He adds a second command as most important. There is a first and there is a second.
- God comes first, but then there is a second. There's not just one great command. There's two. You can't have the one without the other. In other words, these go together. You don't get to pick.
- Jesus says, no, there's two. Yes, God is absolutely first and foremost. But there is something, if we love God, then we will love our neighbor.
- Because as God's children, we're going to become more and more like he is. And he is a lover of sinners.
- [11 : 32] So, what does it mean then here? To love our neighbor as ourself. What does that mean?
- There are some strange ideas going around. I've heard. About loving your neighbor. And this is, you know, and even most unbelievers know this commandment.
- They've heard this, you know, of God, love your neighbor. Love your, you know, and it's often thrown in people's faces, you know. So, what does it really mean? So, I want to break it down in two things to look at two parts of this statement.
- So, he talks about the neighbor. First of all, I want to ask the question, who's the neighbor? Who is the object of our love? What does he mean by neighbor?
- And what we're going to do is we're going to look at the original context where Jesus pulls it from Leviticus, and then we're going to go to Jesus' application in the Good Samaritan parable.
- [12 : 34] Right? He answers that specific question. But let's get the full context to understand that. So, we'll look first at who's our neighbor, and then we'll look at how.
- How do I love my neighbor as myself? What does that little phrase mean as yourself? How do I think it means by reading into that?
- What does my culture think that means? That doesn't matter what my culture thinks it means. It only matters what Jesus meant and following him so we get it right.
- Okay, so first of all, application one, who's the neighbor? What does it mean to love our neighbor as ourself? First of all, it means showing mercy to anyone in our path.
- Okay? Showing mercy to anyone in our path. So, let's break that down a little bit.
- [13 : 38] First, let's define neighbor. In the Greek, New Testament language, neighbor means one who is near. Close by. Which is the same as our English word.

Our English word comes from the Old English which means ney, boar. Ney, nigh, near. Boar, which has a meaning of dweller.

So, near dweller. So, somebody who lives next dear. Dear, near. I'm going to struggle today. I'm on medication.

Yes, I know. It's a little fuzzy. Um, so yeah. So, neighbor. Next door neighbor, we often say. A near dweller. So, it kind of has the idea of who's nearest to me.

Well, I can think in terms of concentric circles. You know, who's the closest to me? Well, my family is closest to me. They're my closest neighbors in that technical sense.

[14 : 39] And then there's my neighbor neighbors who live nearby me. There's my friends and associates. There's my church. Right? And then there's my community.

So, you could think of it that way. Who's near? In Hebrew, going back to Leviticus where Jesus takes this quote, the word neighbor there meant companion, friend, associate.

So, it's a little more closely defined. It's more, it's a little bit more who's near me. So, my fellow citizen, my fellow countrymen. So, I want to go back to Leviticus 19 and look at the original context from which Jesus takes this command.

Now, Jesus knows his Old Testament scriptures. When he's asked this question, he knows the book of Deuteronomy where he pulls the first great commandment. He knows the book of Leviticus.

Could you answer questions based on the book of Leviticus? You know, right? Yeah, it's not one of our, oh, that's one of my favorites. And not making, I mean, if I were a priest, it would be one of my favorites, right?

[15 : 57] Because that would be my, all my duties are spelled out in Leviticus. How to do sacrifices, et cetera, et cetera. But Jesus knows, he's read the scroll of Leviticus, he's studied it, and there's lots of different statutes and rules and commands in there, and in there is this nugget that he pulls out that he calls the second greatest priority of life.

Love your neighbor as yourself. So let's look at this context. Leviticus 19 is where it is. Verse 18, the second half of verse 18 is where you'll find it.

It's not even the whole verse of verse 18. So Leviticus 19, 18 says, you shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. There it is. Now, what's significant is the context in which it comes in. Leviticus 19 starts out with, Moses, speak to the people and tell them what I tell you to tell them.

And he begins in verse 2 with saying, tell the people of Israel and say to them, you shall be holy for I, the Lord your God, am holy. And then from there on, he's going to say, this is what holiness looks like.

[17 : 25] You shall be holy because I am holy. I am the Lord. And he's going to talk about all kinds of things. He's going to talk about farming. He's going to talk about don't put two different kinds of seeds.

You know, don't grow them together. He's going to talk about all kinds of various things. And in verse 18, he's going to summarize the context of how you love one another by how you treat one another.

So look with me back at Leviticus 19. Go back to verse 9. Once you see the context, he's going to talk about how we treat one another. And in verse 18, he's going to summarize that by saying, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

What does that look like? Verse 9. When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest.

You shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. Why? You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner.

[18 : 33] I am the Lord. This is what holiness looks like. Holiness takes consideration. You reap your fields.

Don't take, don't pick every little piece of it. leave some on purpose. We see a picture of this in the book of Ruth. It's a beautiful picture because she meets a man named Boaz who is a right, holy man who does, who in fact tells his workers, pull out extra ones for her.

I want you to take care of this poor widow. So he's talking about how you love one another. That's one way by considering and taking care of people, not keeping it all to yourself.

Verse 11, you shall not steal, you shall not deal falsely, you shall not lie to one another, you shall not swear by my name falsely and so profane the name of your Lord. I am the Lord. You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him.

Well, how could we rob him? Well, the wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning. In other words, pay your workers. Don't hold off and pay them next month.

[19 : 52] He needs it now. Well, they didn't have bank accounts back then. They lived day to day. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God.

I am the Lord. You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.

Neighbor. In other words, treat your neighbor fairly. deal rightly. How do I love my neighbor as myself? I treat them right.

I'm just and fair. Okay? You shall not, verse 16, shall not go around as a slanderer among your people.

Well, that's scary when that happens. It's like, God, are you speaking? I think God would sound a little bit more, you know, thunderous.

[20 : 56] The building would shake when he... No, you're fine, James. Our brother James, he misses text messages unless the whole thing explodes and fails.

So, 16, you shall not go around as slanderer among you people. You shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor. I am the Lord's. Treat them rightly. Verse 17, you shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor.

Oh, interesting. Lest you incur sin because of him. So you deal with things. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. You shall be holy as I am holy. How am I holy like God is holy? By treating people the way God treats people. By treating your neighbor, your brother, your, how does he say in verse 18 there?

The son of your people, treat them right, fair, kindly, with consideration. Now, so far, neighbor is understood in the Hebrew context of the law here in terms of, okay, he's talking about their people.

[22 : 21] For the Jew, the neighbor just means my people. Fellow citizens, fellow Jews. Well, if we skip down a little bit in chapter 19 to verse 33 and 34, we'll find out that it's not exclusive to that.

Verse 33, when a stranger sojourns with you in your land, a stranger is a foreigner, a stranger is someone who's not an associate of yours, not a fellow Jew if you're under the law, a stranger.

When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you.

Watch this. and you shall love him as yourself. Oh. So, I want you to understand, even from the Old Testament, Old Covenant context, the neighbor is not just those closest to me, those who are like me, those who are my associates and my friends, they're also the foreigner.

Which relates to things that have been happening in the last year. As believers, we respond to those who are foreigners coming to us as Christians, not as a government.

[23 : 50] Okay? How governments deal with it is different, but as Christians, what is our response?

To treat them as we would want to be treated. I'm not going to make any political statements, I'm just making a Christian statement. Okay?

That's from an Old Testament perspective. Now, you know when you get to the New Testament, it opens bigger. Right? Jesus starts talking about loving your enemies.

Right? Not just a forer, but your enemy. Okay? You with me? Okay? So we're talking about how do we love my neighbor?

Who's my neighbor? Well, just from the Old Testament context, where Jesus pulls it from, the answer is anyone in my path.

[24 : 50] A stranger who comes into my land. Okay? Into my neighborhood. Okay? So then, I want to take it one more level.

Let's look at how Jesus develops this in the application of Jesus' answer to the scribe who asked him, who is my neighbor?

So in Luke 10, if you have the outline, it's in there already. In Luke 10, Jesus is talking about the great commandment, and he's talking about the second great commandment, but it's a whole different context than we have from Mark 12.

In Mark 12, the scribe that comes to him is a scribe who's teachable. We already learn by his interaction with Jesus, you know, when Jesus gives the answer, what's the greatest commandment, the scribe is, yes, teacher, you're right, I like your answer.

And then remember, Jesus says, you're not far from the kingdom. So there's kind of a meeting of minds there. In Luke 10, it's a different circumstance, a different scribe.

[26 : 02] This scribe comes to Jesus to test him, not with a positive testing. So he comes to Jesus, in Luke 10, he comes to Jesus saying, how shall I inherit eternal life?

And Jesus, being a good teacher, doesn't answer straight, he turns it back on him. Right? Ask him a question, what does the law say? Let's go to the law, let's go to the Torah, what does the law say?

And that scribe answers the great commandment. He answers from Deuteronomy 5, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength.

And Jesus says, go and do likewise. Oh, and then the scribe also said, added this Leviticus 19, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. So here we pick it up.

the scribe desiring to justify himself said to Jesus, who is my neighbor? See, he's thinking, okay, let's make this easy, because I know who my neighbor is.

[27 : 06] My neighbor is the people nearby me, the people that I'm companions with, the people who are my friends. He hasn't read all the way through Leviticus 19. Okay?

Who is my neighbor? Jesus replies with what we know as the parable of the Good Samaritan. Okay? So you've heard it before?

Listen carefully to this one. Okay? Because Jesus is answering, and typically, watch when Jesus answers things. He doesn't answer always exactly the way they want him to answer.

He often turns it on them, and he does it again here. He doesn't answer specifically that question. He actually kind of reverses them. So watch this. So Jesus tells the story.

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now, by chance, a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

[28 : 18] So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, so stop there.

All three people have done the same thing so far. All three come, and they saw him. The priest saw him, the Levite saw him, the Samaritan saw him.

The first two, when they saw him, they saw him, and they passed by on the other side. Now comes the Good Samaritan, watch what he does. When he saw him, he had compassion.

He went to him, not on the other side, he went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

And the next day he took out two denarii, which is two full days wages, and gave them to the innkeeper saying, take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.

[29 : 36] End of story. Then Jesus asked the question. A teacher always answers with a question. Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

Now remember, Jesus was asked, who is my neighbor? Jesus hasn't answered that specifically. He's turned it around. In fact, he asked the question, after the story, which of these three proves to be the neighbor?

In other words, the neighbor is the doer instead of the receiver. Right? So he's both answering the question and turning it on.

Because the neighbor happens to be a Samaritan. Now, we've talked about this before. What is the relationship between Jews in Judea and Samaritans in Samaria?

Not good. It's just like the relationship between the Israelites in Israel today and the Jordanians, Palestinians, Arabs.

[30 : 57] Okay? It's been going on since Genesis, as God said it would. Samaritans. Who are the Samaritans?

Jews. Where did they come from? Well, we remember back when Israel was a united kingdom under David and Solomon.

After that, the kingdom divided. The ten northern tribes rebelled against the son of Solomon and eventually became more and more corrupt, more and more corrupt, and they were carried off to Assyria.

Never to return again as nations. They did return sporadically as people who were intermarried with Babylonians and Assyrians and every other kind of Gentile.

So the Samaritans, who are the Samaritans? They are part Jew and part whatever else. So from the Judean Jew full blood still full blood view, they were they're worse than Gentiles.

- [32 : 13] They've intermarried. Okay? That's who the Samaritans are. So for Jesus to take a Samaritan and say the Samaritans the good guy is offensive.
- Okay? So it's like he's adding another level. So which of the three proved to be the neighbor?
- To the man who fell among the robbers, the scribe answers, the one who showed him mercy. Jesus said to him, you go and do likewise. So who's my neighbor?
- My neighbor? Well, in this story, he's the one who shows mercy and compassion.
- So he's answering also the question, how do I love my neighbor? I love by showing compassion, acting, caring, even sacrificing.
- [33 : 17] Here is a man, this Samaritan, who not only takes the time to go over and take care of him, but then takes him to town, puts him in an inn at his own expense.
- So he's putting out. So he's not only costing him time and convenience, it's costing him some money. We don't know if that money had been determined to be used for some business prop.
- We don't know. We just know he put out the money. Here's the other thing you need to remember. He had the resources to do so. He didn't go to a bank and take out a loan so he could help the guy.
- He had the resources. First John talks about the same thing. You see somebody in need, you have the ability to meet that need, but you close your heart.
- John says how can the love of God dwell in you? But if you have the resources to help them. So that's one. The other thing I want you to notice, who's the neighbor here?
- [34 : 18] We learn that the neighbor is anyone in my path. He just happens to come upon this man who's been robbed and beaten and left for dead.
- This was not planned. He just happens to come upon him. He's in his path. My neighbor is anyone in my path, I'm going to say this very carefully, with an obvious need.
- Obvious need. You know the difference? He's not just sitting outside the grocery store asking for money.
- Does he really need that or not? I don't know. Maybe it's real. But the neighbor is someone who is in my path. According to this parable, he's the one who's in my path with an obvious need.
- He's not faking that. He's bleeding. He's needy. Okay, I need to take care of that. I think that's important to distinguish here.
- [35 : 30] Now, what about the other one, pastor? What about the guy with the sign? What about the guy outside the store?
- That's you and your Holy Spirit individually dealing with that. amen. Okay? There's no right or wrong, check the box for that. Where did my wife go?
- Delinda and I, like you, like you, I'm sure, Delinda and I have been burned by that. We've given to people with good intention and sacrificially and then been burned.
- Okay? So that's going to happen. Don't worry about that. Jesus was burned all the time. He heals ten lepers. How many came and said thank you? One.
- Do you think he didn't know that was going to happen? Of course. Okay? So this isn't a legalistic thing. When I give alms to the poor, that's what Jesus calls in Matthew 6 an act of righteousness.
- [36 : 43] it's kind of like my prayers and like my fasting. It's not a thought about thing. I just do it. I don't let the right hand know what the left hand, you know, I just do it.

And it's just to give. Okay? And I think God will honor that. If you get burned over and over again, maybe you ought to think and pray about it a little bit.

Okay? Maybe I need to be a little wiser. Okay. But err on the side of compassion. Okay? So what does it mean to love my neighbor?

First of all, first application, according to what Jesus has described for us. Loving my neighbor as myself means showing mercy to anyone in our path with an obvious need.

Okay? So secondly, let's get to the second part. Jesus adds this phrase, love your neighbor, what? As yourself.

[37 : 47] Okay, what does that mean? Love your neighbor as yourself. This is where I referred to lots of different ideas out there because people want to read into it.

Let me give you a summary before I try to prove that to you. First of all, so secondly, how do we love our neighbor as yourself, it means secondly, treating others in the same manner as we treat ourselves.

It's as simple as that. It's not complicated. Treating others in the same manner as we treat ourselves. This is similar to what we call the golden rule.

Treat others as you would have them treat you. Same kind of thing. First of all, let's remember how we have defined love. love. Not our own self definition of love, but from what the scriptures have shown us what this word love means.

Love is a self-denying act for the highest good of another. It is a self-denying, and I believe that it's always a self-denying act in some way.

[39 : 01] A self-denying act for the highest good of another. love involves some cost, some price. It's not always much.

It might even be to you as inconsequential. Quencho. So, John 3, 16.

How is love described there? God so loved the world. How did he love? By giving his son. He's sacrificing.

He's giving up his son for the highest good of another, so that whoever believes on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. That's love.

We're called to follow Jesus, who loved too, by laying down his life, right? Ephesians 5, 2 says, walk in love with one another as Christ loved you by doing what?

[40 : 03] By giving up his life as an offering and a sacrifice. So, love is a self-denying act.

In some measure, a sacrificial, pricely, costly act for the highest good of another. So, now, let's distinguish this love.

Jesus says, love your neighbor as yourself. Let's first define what that does not mean. That does not mean I first love myself, then I'll be able to love others.

I've heard it many times. Oh, see, God says, love your neighbor as yourself. That means God wants us to love ourselves first.

Now, I understand where that comes from. It comes from psychobabble. It comes from a man-centered psychobabble. I'm not criticizing all psychology, but recognize anything, any study of man that is not under God, is going to have error in it.

[41 : 24] It's going to be man-centered. A lot of psychology is man-centered. That doesn't mean it's all bad. Okay? Just recognize that. Careful with it. Even Christian psychology, for goodness sakes, goes there.

Because what do we do? Well, why do we want to say that? Why do people want to say love your neighbor as yourself means God wants us to first love ourselves? Well, we say that because we're ourselves are messed up.

And some of us don't like ourselves. We hate ourselves. We beat ourselves up. We condemn ourselves. We have all this baggage. We're carrying scars and hurt and pain, right?

We've been beat up and messed up. And so now we got a whole mixed up view of ourselves. Remember, that's the soul. Talk about being affected, right?

Okay? But even if you hate yourself, it does not mean you don't love yourself. You're still focused on yourself.

[42 : 39] You're still preoccupied with protecting and defending yourself. Even if it's twisted and messed up.

You still view yourself as important, even if you wouldn't use that word. Okay? Scripture never calls us to love ourselves.

In fact, it calls us to the opposite. Deny yourself. Humble yourself. Those are not natural things to do.

We do not naturally deny ourselves or humble ourselves. We can get humbled, and learn to accept that, but we don't naturally put ourselves below others.

The Bible assumes that you already act in your own best interest. You're already self-serving.

[43 : 58] Even if that's twisted, okay, there's a difference between loving yourself and liking yourself. Remember, we're focusing on the word love.

So, it doesn't mean first loving myself, then I'll be able to love others. If that's what that meant, by the way, if I have to start with myself before I can, if I got to get myself all fixed and healed and everything before I can ever love others, when does that finally happen?

Okay, yeah. Okay, when have I finally arrived? I really like myself now. Really? I don't like myself. I mean, I like things that God's done.

We're our own self-critics, so we'll never get there, even if that were true, which is not, that we have to love ourselves before. here's the right healthy perspective, is recognizing the love that God has for you.

See, we love, John says, because God first loved us. That's where we draw the power and ability to love others from. God loved me and I'm not lovable.

[45 : 21] Okay? No wonder I can love someone else that's not lovable. He's done that for me and that changes me. With me?

Okay? I'm not beating up on, okay, I just want to, you've got to clarify. So what difference does this make? So what does it really mean then to love as yourself?

Well, let's ask the question, how do I already love myself? In what manner do I love myself? Do we love ourselves? Well, we can open it up and probably get lots of answers, but let me summarize some ways.

We seek to please ourselves. We regard ourselves more important than others. We look out for our interests. When I'm hungry, what do I do?

I feed myself. Even if I don't like myself, I still feed myself. I still protect myself, still put clothing on. Now, I might have some warped ideas about how to punish myself, but usually I protect myself, I feed myself, I take care of myself.

[46 : 36] Those are all statements that are in the news. Don't seek to please yourself, seek to please your neighbor.

Regard others as more important than yourself. Philippians 2, I still can't get over that one. That is so unnatural. To really actually consider other people more important than I am.

Especially if I don't like them. Right? And then not looking out for your own interests, but for the interests of others.

Those are all New Testament descriptions. here's what else I thought, you know, the way we love ourselves already. I prefer to be treated with kindness rather than harshness.

Don't you? I prefer, if someone's upset with me, that they come kindly than harshness. I prefer, don't you, to be treated with mercy rather than judgment.

[47 : 53] I've told you the Mr. Bill story on the bus, right? I'll tell you, I love being a bus driver and being with kids, but, you know, they complain, you know, Jimmy's picking on me and Jimmy, you know, this and that and Mr.

Bill. So one time I was kind of getting fed up with him. I said, so Jimmy, do you want to be, do you want me to treat you with justice?

He thought about that. Nah, never mind, Mr. Bill. Because I kind of said, you know, if I'm treating you with justice, that means I'm holding you accountable and him accountable to the same high level.

Is that what you want? Nah, just him, you know. I mean, he got it, junior higher, he got it real quick. It's like, no, I don't want to be treated according to fairness, I want to be treated according to mercy.

He's like, gotcha, brother, I do too. we love ourselves naturally by our own self-concern, self-protection.

[49 : 05] The New Testament talks about how do we love one another. If you did a study of all the one another's in the New Testament, I think there's something like 32 to 35 different kinds of one another's.

So, we love one another, we serve one another, accept one another, receive one another, be kind to one another, forgive one another, bear with one another, encourage one another, prefer one another, not judge one another, admonish one another, submit to one another, comfort one another, exhort one another, consider one another, gather with one another, confess your sins to one another, pray for one another, and on and on.

And they're all expressions of how we love one another. Some of those one another's, it's interesting when you do the study, it's really a fascinating way to look at it, because some of them are about how we passively receive others, and some are how we act, so it's just really interesting, if you want to look at that, that's helpful.

Bottom line, loving others is a call to take responsibility for the real needs of others. This is what it is.

to treat others in the same manner as we would treat ourselves means to take responsibility for the real needs of others.

[50 : 32] The real needs. So, Paul says it this way in Romans 15. He says, we who are strong, in other words, we Christians who have been seasoned a bit, who have matured a bit, we're a little bit further down the road, doesn't mean we're not perfect, but we've become stronger.

Okay? We're not stronger than everybody, but see what he's saying? We who are strong, watch this, have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. Now, let those words sink a little bit.

I mean, he's saying we take responsibility. We who have become stronger, not because we're great or anything, but because God has worked in us, we who have some experience, we who have some maturity, who have been humbled, have an obligation.

God expects us to take responsibility for the weaker one. In what way?

[52 : 06] How does he say it? to bear with the failings. What's my responsibility toward the weak? I gotta go fix them.

No, no, no, no, no, that's not what he said. Bear with. Give them room. Treat them as you would want to be treated.

You're younger, you're fallen, you're a new believer. I don't want to be fixed yet. I do want some help, but, you know, I want someone to come alongside me.

Love me and, God, I've been there. You'll be all right. Yeah, you follow, that's where you learn how to get back up. And then he says, let each of us please his neighbor for his good to build him up.

Why? For Christ did not please himself. Christ's whole life was not about him, not about him pleasing himself, doing what was good for him, but as it is written, the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.

[53 : 22] In other words, Jesus suffered. Jesus went to the cross. He took our reproaches on himself. And then Paul goes on and says, whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction.

In other words, all of this is for our help. That through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you, watch this now, where's he going with all this?

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another. Huh, that's an interesting twist. Christ. Why does he want us to live in such harmony with one another?

In accord with Christ Jesus, that, live in harmony with one another. Why? That together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, it's not about us. Christ. It's about him. That we may live in harmony with one another. Why? So that God gets glory. See, it's not about being a church where we're all the same kind of people and all the same kind of background and all the same values, well, we have same values, but same interests.

[54 : 43] You know what I mean? It's not about all us looking like we're all dressed the same and act the same and, you know, we're a homo, what are they, homogeneous church. It's how you grow a church, by the way.

You want to grow a big church, you get everybody that have all the same things. Okay? Learned that long, long time ago. It's how you did youth ministry.

Now they call it church. Gather a crowd, get them, because you get them all to, because they all like the same thing. It's marketing.

But that's not the kind of church I read about in the New Testament. The kind of church I read about in the New Testament is about people from entirely different backgrounds.

Right? Different colors, different interests, and coming in harmony. That's the miracle. You can get people who are all like each other and gather and they have unity.

[55 : 46] Why? Because they don't have any differences. But you gather people from different backgrounds, Jew and Gentile, Samaritan, and Coloradan, Californian, and you got some mix.

You got some different, you got some, well, we didn't do it that way, or we, you know, oh, okay. Well, let's all do it different. Let's find out how we should do it together.

Let's get some harmony. That means my preferences, take a back seat. How do we do church, folks?

We rub up against each other. We sharpen and we dole and we cry and we hurt and then we say, forgive me and I'm with you.

And then when he brings us together, we say, see, that's Jesus. We couldn't have. Because the only way we overcome our differences is by getting on our knees before the Lord and saying, I'm sorry, Lord, give me my love, give me love and forgiveness for my dear brother and sister over here who are so different than me that I don't get them.

[57 : 20] But I want to get them. Okay? Okay? Romans 15 ends with the phrase, I didn't even realize I didn't finish the reading, welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.

Yeah, there you go. Welcome one. So how did Christ welcome you? Well, broken, sinner, undeserving, you know, messed up.

Oh, so that's how I work. So they don't have to clean up before I welcome them? No. They don't have to look like me before I welcome them? No. Are you ready to do that?

I'm praying and hoping that God will bring to us people that are different than us. Not different in the sense that they're not broken. I mean, I just want God to bring broken people.

I don't care what color they are, what, what. I just want to bring broken people, like we are. And then we can get around them and say, yeah, we're broken too.

[58 : 33] But we know who the victory is. Right? We know who patches us up. We know who's always the good Samaritan. Right? The one who comes to us and finds us. So loving others is an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, to take responsibility, and that's going to cost something.

That's going to cost me my time. That's going to cost me my convenience. It might cost me some reputation. to please, let us please our neighbor for his good.

What does it mean to please him? Well, to make allowances for them, to accommodate to them, to, love covers a multitude of sins, right?

How does love cover a multitude of sins? By covering them up. I'm not going to expose my brother or sister.

Oh, they've got a weakness. Hey, you know what? I'm not going to do that. I see the weakness. I'm going to pray for them. If God leads me, I'll go. Cover it up, though.

[59 : 54] I don't want to spread that. Do I want someone spreading my weaknesses? I don't want to spread my God. And the way Paul puts it, the ultimate goal is together in harmony with one voice we glorify God.

By loving each other, by accepting each other, by working in harmony with each other, God gets glorified. We prove to be his disciples by our love for one another.

So how do we live in harmony? Let's all live in harmony. just get along. Right? Kumbaya. We sing kumbaya.

And we just hang out. I have trouble with that thing. No, it's a little stickier than that. It's a little messier than that.

Right? It comes down to we live in harmony by not seeking to please ourselves. We come to give, not to get. If I come without thinking, I will come to get.

[61 : 04] Because that's natural. When I walk in that door, if I'm not prayed before, if I'm not thinking about why I'm here, I'll come to get. And I'll probably walk out dissatisfied.

Because we didn't sing the song I wanted to sing. And so and so didn't even greet me. You know. Whatever. Right? I saw the way that person was looking at me.

He was probably thinking about something else. I've learned not to trust the looks I see on people's faces. I've learned that. because they could be like, oh man, they're mad at what I said.

And I'll laugh towards the beginning. God, that was great, man. Oh, okay. I thought you were mad. How'd I get on that? We recognize each other's weaknesses and we bear with them and forgive them.

So not coming to get, we come to give. That's where I was going with that. So, it's simple.

[62 : 16] Love your neighbor as yourself. It means loving, showing mercy to anyone in your path with an obvious need. And it means treating them in the same manner as you would treat yourself.

Simple. It's not easy, but simple. May God give us grace to do that with one another and with those who are outside these walls.

May God be glorified as we come in harmony, which takes work. All right, let's pray.

Father, we thank you. thank you on this day, Father, where we begin with such sad news. We thank you on this day that you can still teach us and still work with us and still pull us up and give us hope.

And remind us, Father, on this day when we are talking about loving others as ourselves, and we look at and remember Jody, one who loved others as herself.

[63 : 34] Thank you for that overlap that I didn't even see before. So, Father, be gracious to us.

Make us more and more to be a community of people who love one another and who are not afraid to love those who come across our path. We pray in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Okay.

Boy, amen. We love the end because he first loved us and so then we loved others. Only God could put a certain topic like that together and like this and let's stand, please.