



“Loving God and Neighbor”
Lev 19:18; Deut 6:4-9; Luke 10:25-37
June 8, 2008

Intro: How do we live out our faith? Love, loving God, loving others.

Loving God

In this parable, Jesus reminds us that love for God and love for neighbor are interwoven. When asked, the law expert, affirmed Deuteronomy 6, that we are to *“Love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your strength.”* Loving God involves a commitment of all of who we are to Him. We are reminded that due to our sin and selfishness, we hold back love from others. Our relationship with God is to be different. Loving God will also mean we love others, for we cannot say we love God, unless we also love others, in a self sacrificial manner. John reminds us of this in 1 John 4:19-21, where he says, *“If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates their brother, they are a liar. For anyone who does not love their brother, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love their brother or sister.”* Is your life punctuated or marked by love for Him? Is God alive in love in your hearts?

Loving Our Neighbor

It is important to point out that no reasonable Jew or holy person would deny the need to love others. The second half of this man's affirmation was from Leviticus 19:18, to *“love your neighbor as yourself.”* Jesus refers to this teaching as well in Matthew 5: 43-44, saying, *“You have heard it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,”* Jesus is saying then that the Law demands we love not only those who are easy for us to love, but also those who are challenging, or egr for us. We are to love others based on our shared humanity. In fact, Jesus directly challenges and dismisses any limits on who they should love. The Good Samaritan is a figure that would be a surprising role model for them, but is the Samaritan alone who pours out a true love offering in worship to God. We also see what love is. Love is being willing to selflessly care for the real needs of others. Instead of walking by, or looking for excuses of why someone else should help them instead of us, we stop, we enter into their life and we affirm and restore their humanity, by reminding them with loving kindness that they too matter to God. Are we dehumanizers or rehumanizers? Do we treat others as family, in God and of God? Do we love generously or begrudgingly? Our neighbors are not just fellow believers, but rather each and every person we encounter each day. Just as God is gracious to us, regardless of what we have done and in fact, despite what we have done, so too are we to be gracious and loving to others, regardless of what they have or have not done.