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Question: "What does it mean to love your neighbor as you love yourself?"

Answer: An expert in the law tried to test the Lord Jesus by asking Him to declare what was the greatest commandment in the Law of Moses. In one masterful statement, Jesus condensed the entire law that God had given Moses: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37–40).

When we read the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, we are struck with the realization that they focus on these two issues. Certainly we are to love God supremely. But what does it mean to love our neighbor as ourselves?

Jesus is quoting here from Leviticus 19. Let's look at its context:

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God. You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning. You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I am the LORD. You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor. You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:9–18).

Notice that loving our neighbor would include sharing with the poor and the alien; compassion and absolute honesty and justice in our relationships with others; impartiality; a refusal to be a party to gossip or slander; an absence of malice toward anyone and a refusal to bear a grudge; taking care never to put another's life at risk and never taking private vengeance upon another. It is also interesting to note that when we have an issue with anyone, we should strive to make it right by going to him or her directly. James calls this the "royal law" (James 2:8). Our Lord taught that we should do to others as we would have them do to us (Matthew 7:12).

It is a fact that anyone who does not have a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ will die in his sins and face eternity in hell. Therefore, we owe it to our neighbors to lovingly share with them the good news of the gospel. True believers have been forgiven, possess eternal life, and have blessings forever as the result of others who have shared the gospel with them. God's love is evidenced in us as we communicate this precious gospel and love others as we have been loved.

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