

Love Your Neighbor, as Yourself? Careful, Don't Wound Your Neighbor!

by Chaplain Frank Wm Nagy

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first great commandment. 39 The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor, as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Mark 12:29-31 Jesus answered, “The first of all the commandments is, ‘Hear, O Israel, *the* Lord our God is one Lord, 30 and you shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This *is* the first commandment. 31 The second *is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor, as yourself. **There is no other commandment greater than these.**”

In Luke 10:26-28, a certain lawyer stood up to test Jesus:

Jesus asked him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”

27 Answering, the lawyer quoted, “You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor, as yourself.”

28 Jesus said, “You have answered correctly.”

You Shall Love Your Neighbor, as Yourself.

Please, please, puh-leeese, don't love me, as you love yourself, until Jesus gets a hold of you to show you how you should love yourself. Don't try to love me if you aren't forgiving yourself, or if you don't really know God has forgiven all you owe. And don't try to love me if you refuse to forgive one another of your brothers or sisters.

Don't Try to Love Me, If You Aren't Forgiving Yourself.

An emotionally crippled woman I met was totally unable to forgive herself for her past. One evening she had a revelation from God. She took hold of the power to forgive herself of what she had felt was unforgivable. From that moment, she was dynamically transformed. She became full of Christ's joyful life. Three years later, her pastor was able to report this change was indeed permanent.

Now, if you're still not forgiving yourself for something you've done, what makes you think you will get away with that? How do you dare keep holding this against yourself when God has told you, He has forgiven you? Who is the better judge? You, or God?

Do you see how ridiculous this is? Isn't the Perfect God able to recreate you into someone He finds worthwhile? Yet, you, the created, declare, “I am unsalvageable junk!” to the One, who created you. If I were God, I'd call those fighting words! I'd let you know, in no uncertain terms, “I am your God, and, believe it or not, what I say about you trumps whatever you think about yourself!”

John says, "If your hearts condemn you, never mind. God is greater than your hearts!" (1 John 3:16-24)

By this we have known the love *of God*, because He laid down His life for us. We ought to lay down *our* lives for the brothers. 17 Whoever has this world's goods, sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart and goods from him, how does the love of God dwell in him? 18 My children, let's not love in word only, but in deed and in truth. 19 In this we know we are of the truth, and can assure our hearts before Him. 20 **If our heart accuses us, God is greater than our heart. He knows all things.** 21 Beloved, if our heart doesn't accuse us, we have confidence toward God. 22 So, whatever we ask, we receive from Him, because we keep His commands and do what is pleasing in His sight. 23 This is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He commanded. 24 He who keeps His commands lives in Him, and He in him. How do we know He lives in us? By the Spirit He gave to us (1 John 3:16-24).

Remember the lady I mentioned before? The one who finally forgave herself? What happened to her? She became such a fountain of love to others. Now, why in the world would God let little ole' you keep damming up His grace from flowing out from you to His other children?

Oh Woe, I Owe!

How are you relating to God? as a slave or a son? Are you still in fear for what you owe him? Are you still shouldering impossible debt? Did you forget it was laid at the foot of the cross? Are you still touchy? ready to get after anyone you feel is indebted to you? Don't try to love me, if you don't really know God has forgiven you all. Please.

Please don't try to love me if you refuse to forgive your brothers. I really don't want any of you grabbing me by the throat for what you think I owe you. For our example, let's look at Jesus' parable about the servant, who was forgiven the multi-million dollar debt, he could never pay. The man turned to exact a measly, "penny" debt from his fellow servant:

Matthew 18:23-35: The kingdom of Heaven has been compared to a certain king, who made an accounting with his servants. 24 When he had begun, one was brought who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 As he had nothing to pay, his lord commanded he, and his wife and children, and all he had, be sold, and payment be made.

26 "Then the servant fell down and worshiped him. He cried, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

27 "The servant's lord was moved with compassion. He released him and forgave the debt.

28 "But this same servant went out, found one of his fellow servants, who owed him a hundred denarii. He laid hands on him, took *him* by the throat, and said, 'Pay me what you owe.'

29 "His fellow servant fell down at his feet begging him, 'Have patience. I will pay you all.'

30 “He would not, but went and cast him into prison, until he should pay the debt.
31 “When his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry. They told their lord all that was done.
“Then his lord, called him, and said, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave all that debt because you begged me. 33 Shouldn’t you also have pitied your fellow servant, even as I had pity on you?’ 34 So, his lord was angry, and delivered him to the tormentors until he should pay all due to him.””

This fellow refused to forgive the same way he had been forgiven. His master calls him a “wicked slave!” Even those, with a slave-mentality should know enough to share what their master has given with their fellow servants! Jesus ends his parable with a solemn promise, “Likewise shall My heavenly Father do to you, unless each one of you, from your hearts, forgive his brother their trespasses (Matt 18:35).”

Love Your *Brother* As Yourself

Zechariah 3:1-5 gives us a clear picture of how he supported a fellow believer:

The Lord showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

2 Jehovah spoke to Satan, “May Jehovah rebuke you, Satan! May even Jehovah who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! *Is* this not a brand plucked out of the fire?”

3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy clothes, and stood before the Angel.

4 The Angel answered and spoke to those who stood before him, saying, “Take away the filthy clothes from him.” He spoke to Joshua, “Behold, I have caused your sin to pass from you. I will clothe you with ceremonial robes.”

5 So I said... (The Prophet Zechariah speaks up), “Let them set a clean turban on his head.”

So they set a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, as the Angel of Jehovah stood by.

We see Zechariah put his two-cents worth in support of this one abused by Satan, but loved by the Lord. We too can find creative ways to come to others’ comfort and aid. Whatever we do, in any situation we find ourselves, **we must show ourselves uncompromisingly *for* our brother.**

Years ago, when he was speaking on this same topic, Charles Simpson put his face up to his finger to share a good-humored parable:

Now Finger, I bin watchin’ you. I bin seein’ you messin’ up. I know you bin fixin’ to get hung in that car door again. When it happens don’t ‘xpect me to be cryin’ for you. You’re just gettin’ what you deserve.

No! When you get your finger hung in the door, you are all over blessing it. Oh, it hurts. You fuss over it. Probably kiss it. Kiss, kiss, kiss. That’s my finger.

“Don’t you think you’re over-doing that a bit?”

No, that’s my finger. That’s MY finger. MY FINGER! That’s my brother! That’s my sister!

Consider those in the Body of Christ our own flesh and blood and you will act differently toward them.

How Does God Love Us?

1 John 4:19 says, “We love Him, because He first loved us.”

We love God because He first loved us. (Read that, “He first *forgave* us.”) Once we’re assured of the truth of His Love, we dare not cling to it, while refusing to forgive our brothers and sisters.

When God tells us, “You shall love your neighbor, as yourself,” we better know that God practices what He preaches. See what Jesus prayed in John 17:20 and 23:

“Father, I do not pray for these alone, but for those also who shall believe on Me through their word... 23 ... **You have loved them, as You have loved Me** (John 17:20 and 23).”

Isn’t that something! God loves Jesus, as He loves Himself! God loves us, as He loves Jesus! So, God loves us, his neighbor, as He loves Himself!

Let’s think about this for a while. God loves us, as He loves Jesus! Our place in God is like Jesus’ place. As Jesus has been elevated to the throne of God (Acts 2:32-35), so are we. We, as the Body of Christ, are seated in the heavens with Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7). Even the worst Christian alive, who might think of himself as a heel, rests himself on Jesus’ enemies, as God places Jesus’ enemies under Jesus’ feet.

God said in the Old Testament, “I am Jehovah; that is My name. My glory I will not give to another (Isaiah 42:8).” “I will not give My glory to another (Isaiah 48:11).”

Yet, what does Jesus say about Himself in John 17?

John 17:1 Jesus spoke these words and lifted up His eyes to Heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son so Your Son also may glorify You... 4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work You gave Me. 5 Now Father, glorify Me with Yourself with the glory I had with You before the world was made.

In John 17:22, Jesus goes on in his prayer to the Father, asking Him to share His glory with us believers:

He said, “I have given them the glory You have given Me, so they may be one, even as We are one. 23 I in them, and You in Me. May they be made perfectly one. So the world may know You sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me... 26 I made Your name known to them. I will make it known, so the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

God loves us, as He loves Jesus, and wants His love, and even His glory to dwell in us. Human love pales in comparison to God’s love, as we join the family of God. To love correctly, we need to love

God and others by plugging into God's supernatural love and loving with His power. In John 13:34 Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, so you love one another. **As I have loved you, you should also love one another,**" and in John 15:12 Jesus said it again, "This is My command, so you **love one another, as I have loved you.**" Now how in the world do you think we're going to do this without God's supernatural love taking the place of all pale substitutes?

John, in one of his letters to the early church, made it clear loving God is bound up in loving our brothers and sisters. John wrote, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For if he does not love his brother, whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20)

Doesn't it make sense we need to get some practice in loving our brothers and sisters in Christ first! If we can't love as God has shown he loves you at home with the household of God, where will we be able to do it? If one can't do this, how can one even think about going out to love the lost, who are bound to act like the hell-bound scoundrels they are?

Love Your Enemies!

Some of Jesus hardest words were, "You have heard it said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those, who despitefully use you and persecute you, 45 so you may become sons of your Father in Heaven (Matthew 5:43-45)."

Charles Shultz's comic character, Linus Van Pelt, often acts as Peanuts' philosophical pundit. We are all too familiar with Linus' feelings. "I love the world," he cries out, "It's people I can't stand!" His error resonates with us. Yet, Paul encourages us to take the highroad of God's more excellent way, "God showed His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)." This is the kind of love we must show to the world. There is no way to do this, but in God's power. We must have His vision. Ask God to give us His Heart. We need the Holy Spirit to enthuse us with the love of Christ, who went to the cross for the joy of seeing lost sinners have a chance to come back to God.

Let's Not Mess Around with Love!

Remember, we heard Jesus command us at the very beginning of this talk, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Now remember what I said earlier. Do not *try* to love others. Don't you *try* to do it. We do it in God's power, or might as well forget it.

Jesus propounded the problem when he told us to love others, as he loved us:

John 15:9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you: continue in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and live in his love. 11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. 12 This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.

It's a tall order to love your brother, as Jesus loves you. And when you realize God loves you and I the way He loves Jesus (John 17:23), we see how tall an order it is to love ourselves, as God loves

us. You and I need to continually ask for God's power to love ourselves, as God loves us and then to love others with this same super-powered, supernatural love.

Don't love others the way you love yourself, if you aren't forgiving yourself. If you are still holding things against yourself, you cannot forgive others, as you should love them. Repent! Wherever you aren't forgiving yourself, just repent. Turn from your thinking to gain God's opinion of yourself.

Don't love others the way you love yourself, if you don't really know God has forgiven you all you owe. Repent! Turn from your own ideas and ways to God's. If you really don't know God has forgiven you, get with God. Ask Him to convince you of His love and total forgiveness of all of your sins, past, present and future. Let him prove it to you He is able and at work to save all of us (even you and me) to the uttermost!

Do not *try* to love others. Love with the love God has for you. This is the Love we must dwell in before we can love our brothers and sisters, our neighbors, and even our enemies, as ourselves.

Be Convinced of God's Love for You and Me!

Let God show you His love and how to look at yourself as He sees you. For the God, who sees and knows all things, saw you as worthwhile when you were His sworn enemy. He scooped you out of the filth of this world and sin that still clings so closely. He values you enough, that if you were the only one to take Him up on His offer of salvation, He still would have sent Jesus to die, just for you. You have accepted Jesus' payment for your sin and have come to the Father through this offered grace. He now sees Jesus in you. You have come to God, via the new birth of the Spirit. You are His son or daughter!

Let's receive God's word as He has spoken to us. Let's receive His revelation and be healed! God sees you and knows all things. Jesus has seen every good and bad thing you have done. Jesus knows everything you will yet do, both for and against him and still is not ashamed to call you his brother, his sister. The One who knows and has forgiven all this is your God. He has made a sure declaration about us. He has said:

“I HAVE FORGIVEN YOU!

YOU ARE COMPLETELY HOLY IN MY SIGHT!

HOW CAN YOU THINK ANYTHING LESS OF YOURSELF?

I HAVE FORGIVEN YOU, MY CHILD!

YOU ARE MY CHILD!”

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