



Jesus left no doubt as to the fact that loving our neighbor as ourselves is not a choice but a command.

After giving the command in Mat 12:30 saying, “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,” He added in verse 31, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”

In essence, the whole Law of God is resumed in these 2 commandments, “Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself.”

To love our neighbor was highlighted in Lev 19:18 in these words, “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.”

James 2:18 confirmed this: “If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well.”

Jesus clarified His command in Mat 7:12 saying, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Finally, Jesus specified it this way in John 15:12: “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

Introspection: How do I understand the command of loving my neighbor as Jesus loved me?

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To the question as to why we must love our neighbor as ourselves, 1John 4:16 says, "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him."

What more?

Love fulfills the law:

Gal 5:14: "For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Psalm 19:7-9: "The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether."

Love covers sins:

1Peter 4:8: "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

Pro 10:12: "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins."

What is however the core reason for Christians to love our neighbor?

Gal 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Introspection: Do I understand the responsibility of loving my neighbor just as Christ loved me, to the point of dying for my sins?

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How does scripture define genuine love for our neighbor?

1John 3:18: "Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions."

1Peter 1:22: "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart."

1Cor 13:4-7: "Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

John 15:13: "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

Psalm 8:3-4 demonstrates God's love for us, undeserving people: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?"

In Luke 10:25-37, we find the parable of the Good Samaritan who unlike many religious hypocrites, went over and above the call of duty to help a man that had been beaten and left for dead.

Introspection: Do I love for my neighbor from the heart, or is my love superficial?

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Perhaps the best description on how to love our neighbor is found in Luke 6:27-28 when Jesus said: “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.”

And verse 31 adds, “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.”

What better proof can there be to loving our neighbor as much as we love ourselves, than in desiring that they know the truth about Christ, so they can believe, repent, surrender and be born again, just as the Lord enjoined us to do in the great commission?

What else does loving our neighbor implies?

Rom 15:2: “We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord.”

Philip 2:3: “*Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.”

Eph 4:25: “Therefore, putting away lying, *let* each one *of you* speak truth with his neighbor.”

1John 4:18: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”

Introspection: Do I apply myself to love my neighbor in truth, forgiving them, and sharing the love of Christ with them?

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To what extent must we love our neighbor? Here are scriptures that highlight true sincere love:

Col 3:12-14: "Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."

Eph 4:1-3: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

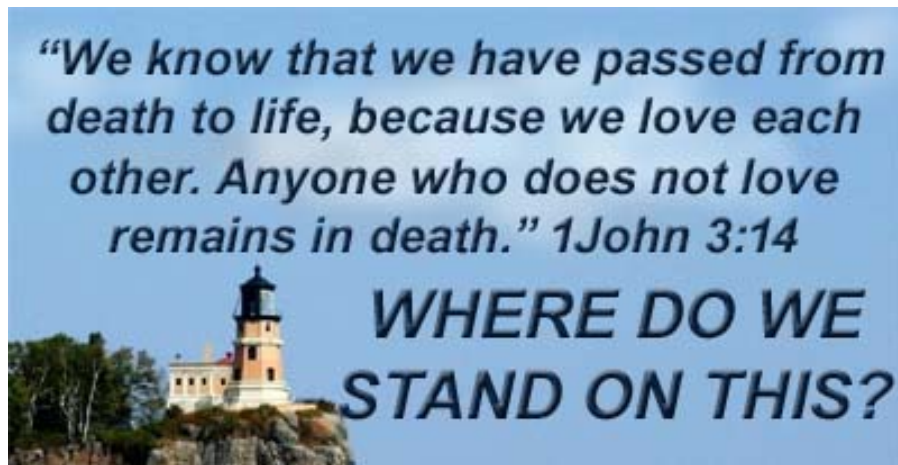
James 1:27: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

Job 6:14: "He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty."

Luke 6:38: "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

Introspection: In light of scripture, how extensive is my love towards my neighbor?

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Evidently, our faith in God and Christ can only be proven by our actions. The reason Jesus said in Mat 5:13: “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”

In other words, without the flavor of love, our faith is dead.

What else does scripture say on this?

1John 4:7-8: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

1John 3:17: “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

Finally, 1Cor 13:1-3: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”

Introspection: How far does the love for my neighbor extend?

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