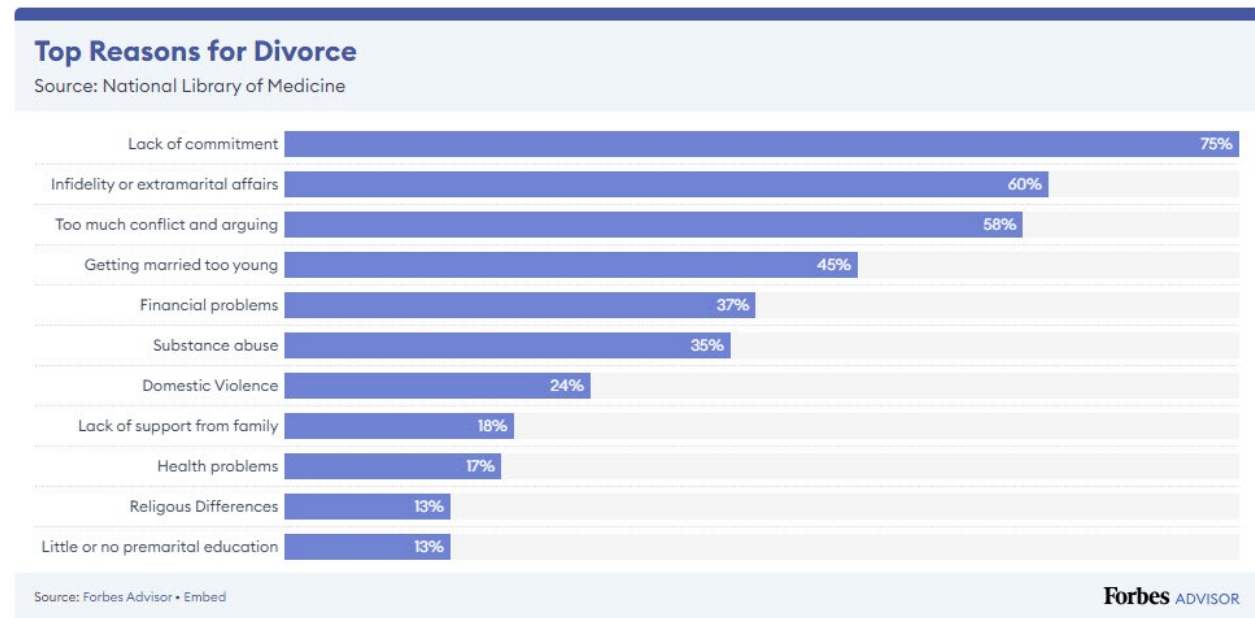


## Introduction

There has been a tremendous decline in the family unit over the past few decades. While I was working as a prison chaplain, they had a statistic that 86% of the inmates grew up without a father. The role of fathers is significant, and the negative impacts of homes without fathers is staggering. This statistic is just one of many that points to a breakdown in family units, and relationships.

A 2024 Forbes report on divorce gave the following statistics.<sup>1</sup> Half of first-time marriages end in divorce, and the average time for first marriages to fail is eight years. Sixty-seven percent of second marriages fail, and seventy-three percent of third marriages fail. A lack of commitment was given as the top reason for divorce, and it was responsible for seventy-five percent of the divorces. A survey by the Oklahoma University Bureau for Social Research in 2022 showed that lack of commitment was responsible for eighty-five percent of divorces. Too much conflict and arguing was responsible for fifty-eight percent of the divorces.



As I read that, I thought about love. Love is not an emotion or physical drive; love is a commitment to the other person. Love is committed to resolving conflict. Love is patient, which is key in resolving conflicts. Love does not seek its own, and I think that selfishness is a root cause of most of the conflicts. Love is not provoked, and this is another key in resolving conflict. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered. In other words, love forgives and forgets an offense after dealing with it. Love bears all things, which is a strong commitment. Our culture either separates or sues, and we have become litigious, which is another indication of our relational problems. Our country suffers from relational problems, and marriage is just one of the many gauges that we can use to spotlight the problem.

(1 Co 13:4–7) “Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, {5} does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, {6} does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; {7} bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/legal/divorce/divorce-statistics/>

What is the answer to our relational problems? The answer is love. The greatest and foremost commandment is to love God, and the second greatest is to love your neighbor as yourself. We looked at loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength last week. This week we are focusing on the second greatest commandment, to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are going to look at the command. Second, we are going to look at our neighbor. Third, we will look at some practical applications of what it means to love our neighbor.

### **The Second Greatest Commandment – Love Your Neighbor**

1. The Second Greatest Commandment
2. The Neighbor
3. Practical Applications

(Mt 22:37–39) “And He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ {38} This is the great and foremost commandment. {39} The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

#### **1. The Second Greatest Commandment**

The second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus quoted the last part of Leviticus 19:18, where the Lord said, “but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.” Verse eighteen is a contrast to verse seventeen, where God commanded us not to hate our fellow countryman in our heart. Instead of hating him, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus was always dealing with the heart, and we are not to hate in our heart, but to love in our heart.

(Mark 12:31) “The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

(Le 19:17–18) “You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. {18} You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.”

When speaking about love, God said that if we give our possessions to feed the poor, but do not have love, it profits us nothing. We can do things grudgingly or out of a sense of duty, rather than out of love. Sometimes, people act very nice in order to deceive and take advantage of us; their seemingly kind words and gestures are a front. God said that our actions need to be motivated by love, and if they are not done out of love, they do not profit us.

(1 Co 13:3) “And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”

This section in Leviticus dealt with many different types of commands. In chapter eighteen, God gave various laws on sexual immorality. Love is not going to defile our neighbor. Love looks out for the best interests of the other person; it does not seek its own, does not act unbecomingly, or rejoice in unrighteousness.

(1 Co 13:5–6) “does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, {6} does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;”

In Leviticus 19, God began by giving commands about living holy lives, keeping the Sabbaths, reverencing our fathers and mothers, and peace offerings. Then, He spoke about making provisions for the poor. We were not to reap the harvest to the corners of the field, or glean the vineyards. We were to leave some for the needy and the stranger. He spoke about not stealing, dealing falsely, or lying to one another. He said we were not to oppress, rob, slander, or act against our neighbor. In Leviticus 19:17-18, we were not to hate, take vengeance, or bear grudges, but are to love our neighbor as ourselves. All these other laws, that deal with our neighbors, hinge upon the command to love our neighbor as ourselves.

(Mt 22:40) “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

<b>Context of Loving our neighbor (Lev 18-19)</b>	
Lev 18:6-23	Sexual immorality
Lev 19:2	Holy lives
Lev 19:3	Reverencing parents & keeping the Sabbath
Lev 19:4	Idolatry
Lev 19:9-10	Not reaping or gleaning to the corners (provision for the needy and stranger)
Lev 19:11	Not stealing, dealing falsely, or lying to one another
Lev 19:12	Not swearing falsely by God’s name
Lev 19:13	Not oppressing or robbing our neighbor, paying our laborers
Lev 19:14	Not cursing a deaf man, or putting a stumbling block before the blind
Lev 19:15	Not being unjust or partial in our judgments
Lev 19:16	Not slandering, or acting against the life of a neighbor
Lev 19:17-18	Not hating, taking vengeance, or bearing grudges, BUT loving

## 2. The Neighbor

Matthew and Mark are parallel accounts of the Pharisees and Sadducees testing Jesus. In Luke 10, we have a similar question, but it is a different occasion. In Luke, another lawyer was testing Jesus, and he asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” The lawyer answered and quoted Deuteronomy 6:5, and Leviticus 19:18. Jesus quoted the same two verses in Matthew 22 and Mark 12. The Jews knew that the two greatest commandments were to love God and to love your neighbor.

After the lawyer had answered Jesus’ question, Jesus affirmed him, saying, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” The lawyer, wishing to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus’ reply to him ripped apart the cultural prejudices and arrogance with the parable of the good Samaritan.

(Lk 10:25–29) “And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” {26} And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” {27} And he answered, “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} And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” {29} **But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”**

Jesus could have answered this a lot of different ways, but he gives a story about a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jerusalem is set up on a hill. It has an elevation of about

3,000 feet. The reason that we have Psalms that are called Psalms of Ascent is because they were Psalms that were sung as people made their way up to Jerusalem to come to one of the three feasts that Jews were required to attend. This man has just left Jerusalem, and is on his way down to Jericho. Jericho is about 900 to 1,000 feet below sea level, so there is about a 4,000 foot drop.

(Lk 10:30) “Jesus replied and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead.”

Jesus continues with his story that “the man fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead.” The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was known to be dangerous and treacherous. It had many cliffs and drops along the way, making it dangerous. But it was also treacherous, in that it also had a lot of twists, turns, and rocks and caves that made it easy for robbers to attack those who were traveling on it. The story that Jesus is describing is very plausible, and the Sadducee could easily imagine everything that Jesus is saying.

Jesus gives three examples or three responses that people may have. The first example is that of a priest. “By chance, a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.” If you were the man that was left beaten to a pulp, and half dead, this would be a dream come true. You couldn’t ask for anyone better? God had sent a priest to your rescue. A priest should have been the perfect person to have. The priests were the ones who interceded for people. The priests were the ones who offered sacrifices for you. The priests were the ones who consecrated themselves and could enter into the holy of holies. A priest was discerning and wise. He was responsible for making distinctions between what was clean and unclean, what was holy and unholy. A priest was a spiritual leader. This was the perfect person to come along.

(Lk 10:31) “And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.”

But the priest passed by on the other side. I have done that before. We were in Italy a few years ago, and everywhere you turned there were beggars. You did not want to look at them, or you would never get them to stop bothering you. I do it in my car. I see people begging at the stop light. I look the other way when they hold up their sign asking for mercy, and blessing you for helping them. I walk on the other side of the road in my mind, not wanting to deal with the person. Now my wife is different. She rolls down her window and gives them a bottle of water. She has compassion on them. What is your response? Do you walk on the other side of the road when your neighbor needs help? That is what the priest did. The one who ought to have helped walked on the other side. As Christians, we are the ones who ought to help. What do we do when see a needy person?

The second example Jesus gives is of a Levite. Levites were also God’s workers, His servants. They made their living by serving the Lord. They were consecrated and served in the temple. They kept things clean. They assisted the priests. They also were worshipers. The singers and musicians that led in praise and worship were Levites. We would expect a Levite to help the badly beaten man by the side of the road. But the Levite saw him, and passed by on the other side of the road. He deliberately closed his hands and heart from helping the man. He deliberately walked by, and on the other side of the road. He too was lacking in compassion and concern for the man.

(Lk 10:32) “Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.”

The third example that Jesus gives is of the Samaritan. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews, so this would not be the person that a Jew, who was badly beaten and lying on the road, would expect to receive help. We assume that it was a Jew, because our text says that he was coming from Jerusalem. It is highly unlikely that a Samaritan would have been coming from Jerusalem.

(Lk 10:33) “But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him...”

Who were the Samaritans? After Solomon, Israel was divided into two kingdoms, there was a Northern and Southern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom was called the Kingdom of Israel or Northern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom was also called the Kingdom of Judah. When the Northern Kingdom was overtaken and taken into captivity, there were Jews who remained in the land. They intermarried with the Gentiles, which was strictly forbidden. Therefore, they were considered half-breeds and they were hated and despised by the Jews. They had no dealings with one another. Jews would walk around Samaria, rather than pass through it and come across a Samaritan.

When Nehemiah came back to rebuild Jerusalem and the wall, the Samaritans were the ones that hindered the work. The Samaritans, led by Sanballat tried to prevent them from building the wall. They threatened and discouraged the Jews. So, the Jews and the Samaritans had ill feelings towards one another that went back for a long time.

When the Samaritan came upon the badly-beaten man, he felt compassion. There are lots of hurting people around us. Jesus said that the fields are white for harvest. Do we see those fields. Are we like the Samaritan who saw the man and his needs? Are we like the Samaritan who felt compassion for the man? Do we care that someone is lying on the side of the road dying? Do we care that they are hurting and dying? One of my prayers for our body is that we would be soft-hearted and have compassion for people.

(Lk 10:33-35) “But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. {35} "On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.”

The Samaritan bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. The oil and wine were part of his provisions. He used what he had to minister to the man. The wine, because it was fermented, had alcohol in it. It was a disinfectant. The oil, softened up the tissue, helping it to heal.

The Samaritan also put him on his own beast. It could have been a donkey, mule, horse, or ox. That meant that he was now going to walk the rest of the seventeen miles to Jericho. We do not know if he was tired or not; we just know that he put the man on his beast and let him ride. He brought him to an inn and took care of him. He personally attended to the need of the hurting man. It is one thing to give money to the benevolence fund; it is quite another to personally go meet the needs of a person that is hurting. On the next day, he took two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “take care of him; and whatever you spend, when I return, I will repay

you.” Some scholars say that two denarii were enough money to take care of the man for almost two months. He was committed to helping the man until he recovered. He provided follow-up care for the man. Sometimes, the initial care for a person does not do the trick; it takes second effort.

Next, the Samaritan said that he would pay any extra charges that the innkeeper might incur in caring for the man. He said, when I return, I will repay you. The Samaritan was going to provide follow up on what happened. He cared about seeing the man through the whole healing process. This was not an item on his check list of good deeds. The Samaritan genuinely cared about the man.

(Lk 10:35) “On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.'”

The Samaritan was ministering to more than the beaten man. He was also ministering to the innkeeper. The innkeeper had a front row seat and was observing everything that was being done for the Jewish man, an enemy of the Samaritans. Many times, our actions speak much louder than our words, and the Samaritan’s actions were shouting from the rooftops.

Jesus asked the lawyer, “which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?” The lawyer responded, “the one who showed mercy toward him.” And Jesus told him, “Go and do the same.” The lawyer had asked the question to justify himself. Jesus gave this story to show the man that he was not loving his neighbor. The lawyer had a very narrow view of who his neighbor was. The lawyer lacked compassion on those who were hurting, and had not shown mercy. The lawyer had been unwilling to lay his own life down for others. Jesus tells him that he has not kept the command, but he was now to go and do the same.

(Lk 10:36-37) “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?” {37} And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same.”

### **3. Practical Applications**

The parable of the good Samaritan clearly teaches us that our neighbor may be a stranger. Our neighbor may be from a different culture or background. Our neighbor could be just about anyone that we come in contact with. The Greek word for neighbor in verse twenty-nine is *plēsion* (Strong’s G4139), which is a derivative of *pelas*, which means to be near. A neighbor is a person that is near you. The Samaritan had come near the man lying on the road, so it was now his neighbor. Our neighbors are the people that we come into contact with or that God brings into our lives. Our neighbors would include both believers and unbelievers. We are to show the love of Christ to all people. In Galatians 6:9-10, we are exhorted to do good to all people.

(Ga 6:10) “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

Paul wrote that we are to do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. From this, it is clear that we are to do good to all people, whether they are believers or not. When we find someone in need, like the man on the road to Jericho, we are to reach out to

them and help them. With this being said, we are to do good especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

While the parable of the good Samaritan reveals who our neighbor is, the command is to love our neighbor. Helping the man on the road was just one of the many applications that could be drawn. When we consider that all the other commands depend on the two greatest commands, the other commands give us other applications. In Romans 13, Paul said that we are not to owe anyone anything but love. We are not to commit adultery, steal, or covet. He said, “and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

(Ro 13:8–10) “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. {9} For this, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” {10} Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* law.”

God commands us to honor our father and mother. Today, very few children are being taught to honor their parents. In the school systems, the rights of parents are being stripped away, and parents are not being honored. Learning to honor and respect authorities begins at home, and when parents are not being honored, there will be bigger social problems that stem from this root cause.

(Ex 20:12) “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.”

We are not to commit adultery. Infidelity was listed as the second leading cause of divorce. Sixty percent of divorces were attributed to adultery. I do not believe that adultery stands by itself; sexual immorality is rampant. Our schools teach children that sexual involvement at an early age is normal and good. Safe sex is taught rather than abstinence. When there are no moral absolutes, the culture decides what is acceptable. If we are going to love our neighbor, we must understand that real love does not participate in sexual immorality, whether it is fornication, adultery, homosexuality, or pornography. When we begin to love our neighbor the way that God wants us to love them, the social statistics will begin to change.

Jesus taught that we are to forgive one another, just as He has forgiven us. When we ask God for His forgiveness, we are reminded that we must also forgive those who have trespassed against us. When Peter asked the Lord how often we should forgive our brother, Jesus told him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” This meant an indefinite number of times. It means that we are to keep on forgiving our brother.

(Lk 11:4) “And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.”

(Mt 18:21–22) “Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” {22} Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

Our culture has not been taught forgiveness, nor does it not practice forgiveness. We separate, divorce, or sue those that sin against us. We are a litigious society, which means that we are

excessively or readily inclined to litigate. We take arguments to a court of law for a decision, rather than working through the issue with the other person. The Corinthians were litigious, and Paul addressed the problem, and then said, “I say this to your shame.” He said that when we have conflicts in the church, we should appoint a wise person in the body to help us resolve the matter, rather than going to court. We are like the Corinthians, and do not know how to resolve disputes, either at home or in the church. We need to help people learn how to resolve disputes and conflicts. We need to regularly teach and remind people about forgiving one another.

(1 Co 6:1–5) “Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?... {5} I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren,”

Paul was continually teaching people how to love one another. We find instructions about how to love and relate to one another in all his letters. In Ephesians, he said to “let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” If the church would apply these relational principles, we would be well on our way to learning how to practically love one another.

(Eph 4:31–32) “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. {32} Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

In most of the marital counseling that I have done, the couples came to the meetings with a closet full of offenses. They had not dealt with the issues and resolved them; they had merely put them in their arsenal to use against their spouse. We must help people talk through their issues, and forgive one another. We must help them learn to repent of wrong-doing. When there is repentance and forgiveness, there will be no bitterness, wrath and anger and slander. If we are going to love our neighbor, we must learn and practice these relational principals. It is great to help a needy person on the side of the road, but that is only one application of what it means to love our neighbor.

In 1 John 3:16-18, John wrote that we know love by this, that Jesus laid His life down for us, and we ought to lay our lives down for the brethren. Christians are to lay their lives down for one another. We generally think in terms of serving one another, and that is certainly one way to lay down our lives for one another. John continues, saying, “But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?” Laying our lives down for one another means that we share our material possessions with those in need; it is not just helping or serving them. Loving our neighbor and our brethren must be in deed and truth. Our love of God will be evidenced by the way that we lay our lives down for others, especially the brethren.

(1 Jn 3:16–18) “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. {17} But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? {18} Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”

At the last supper, Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, which was a job that the lowliest or youngest servant would customarily do. The master of the house would certainly not be the one that washed everyone’s feet, but this is what our Master did. Afterwards Jesus said, “For I gave you



an example that you also should do as I did to you.” As believers, we are to humbly serve one another. If it means washing their feet, we should wash their feet. If it means helping them with some other need in their life, we should do that for them.

(Jn 13:13–15) “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. {14} “If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. {15} “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”

Last year I became aware of an outbreak of mold in the home of one of our leaders. I went and looked the situation over, and I went back to do some research. I knew that the man was struggling with his health, and breathing in the mold spores was very dangerous. Something needed to be done immediately. I looked up what would get rid of the mold, and then I went to Walmart and bought supplies. I went back to his house and put down a plastic sheet over the floor, and then I began to scrub the ceilings with bleach. I got rid of all the mold in the two rooms where that had been an outbreak. I recommended a dehumidifier to take the moisture out of one room, which the man went out and bought immediately. I did not strip down, gird myself with a towel and literally wash feet, but I had washed this man’s feet.

On another occasion, a man had foot surgery and was not able to do his yard work. Even though it is hot and dirty work, I mowed his yard for him I also brought my Echo weedeater over and weeded around their garage, house, driveway, and along the road to their house. Weedeating is not my favorite work, and it is not my primary spiritual gift. I was simply washing the feet of a man that needed help, and loving my neighbor in a practical way.

On another occasion, our next-door neighbor had a drainage problem. There was water collecting in their front yard. The husband had experienced some mental damage from a fall and was unable to do the work. I told his wife that I would help her, so she went and bought the necessary drain tile. I brought my shovels and pick axe and dug a seventy-foot trench for that drain tile so that the water would run into a ditch along the side of their property. It was hard work, but it was just another way to wash the feet of a neighbor. I invited the neighbor to church, but they never came. But I had washed their feet, and that is what God calls us to do. We are to love our neighbors.

Many years ago, when we lived in Florida, there was a family down the street that we reached out to. Rob had been offended by a preacher at one time, and was angry about it. He said that the preacher tried to save him in his own house! But I reached out in love to Rob. I took him to play Wallyball with our men’s group. I visited with him regularly and built a relationship with him. Anyway, one month, he was pretty upset, and as we talked, I learned that he was behind on his mortgage, and he was afraid of being foreclosed and losing his house. At that time, I was not making a lot of money. I had seven children, and was making just over thirty thousand a year. Our mortgage was 12.5% at the time, and a lot of my paycheck went to pay the mortgage. Anyway, we gave the man \$750.00 to pay one month’s mortgage. He could not believe that we would do something like that. The money was not the initial effort. It was just another opportunity to continue ministering to this man and his family. It was another effort to bring the man to Christ by showing him the love of Christ. In this case, laying down my life for my neighbor involved giving financially, which is what the good Samaritan had done. If we are going to love our neighbor, it will sometimes involve financially helping others out.

On another occasion, a man was out of money, his rent was overdue, and his car needed repairs. Karen and I paid his monthly rent, and we fixed his car. It costs us about \$2,000.00. Then, after

driving his car, it still did not work properly, so we told him we would pay for the second repair. We thought it would cost \$1,400.00, but it ended up costing much more. Since the man still did not have any work, we paid his monthly rent again. We have been praying for this man for a long time. We do not know if it will be the first, second, third, fourth, or fifth effort to reach this man with the gospel. We will just continue to pray for him, and look for opportunities to share the love of Christ with him.

In 1 Peter 4:8-10, we are exhorted to keep fervent in our love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. The Greek word for fervent here is *ektenes* (Strong's G1618), which really means without ceasing. The ESV reads, "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. There are going to be times when a brother or sister is going to say the wrong thing, or say something at the wrong time, or do something that offends us. We are to keep loving them. We are not to withdraw and separate; we are to cover that sin. Sometimes, loving our neighbor means that we confront them. James says that when we turn a brother back from the error of his ways, we will cover a multitude of sins. It also means that we must forgive them, and try to restore them. Sometimes, it means that we bear their burdens and help them. Loving our neighbor as ourselves means that we are committed to them and will work through offenses.

(1 Pe 4:8) "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins."

(1 Pe 4:8 ESV) "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins."

(Jas 5:19–20) "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, {20} let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

Peter gave another way to loving others; we are to be hospitable to one another without complaint. The word for hospitable is *philoxenos* (Strong's G5382), which is a compound word. *Philos* means a brotherly love, and *xenos* means a stranger. We are to show brotherly love to strangers, which is exactly what the good Samaritan did. He did it joyfully, without complaint.

(1 Pe 4:9) "Be hospitable to one another without complaint."

Sometimes we think in terms of hospitality of friends and family members. The Greek word implies strangers. Jesus said that when we give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. He said to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Loving our neighbor with hospitality may involve having strangers over.

(Lk 14:12–14) "And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and *that* will be your repayment. {13} "But when you give a reception, invite *the* poor, *the* crippled, *the* lame, *the* blind, {14} and you will be blessed, since they do not have *the means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

One year, while I was playing on the PGA Tour, I showed up to Pensacola, Florida early. I had made the cut in the tour event the week before so we went on to the next event, where I prepared for the Monday qualifier. Since I was not playing on Sunday morning, we attended Liberty Church. After the service, a man and his wife came up to Karen and I and asked us over for lunch. They did not know us; we were strangers to them, but they invited us over for lunch. We enjoyed a nice lunch at their house and I have never forgotten their hospitality to strangers.

Peter also gave another way that we are to practically love one another. As each one of us has received a special gift, we are to employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. That special gift is a spiritual gift. If we have the gift of mercy, like the good Samaritan, we are to use it to show compassion and care for others. If we have a gift of helps, we can mow a neighbor's yard. If we have a gift of exhortation, we can write letters of encouragement, or give verbal words of encouragement. The principle is valid beyond our spiritual gifts. We are to use our gifts and abilities, our lives, to serve one another.

(1 Pe 4:10) "As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

### **Conclusion and Applications**

The two greatest and foremost commands are to love God and to love our neighbor. There is nothing we can do that is a higher priority. As a church, our vision is to be a church that helps people connect with God and with one another.

We need to help people with their relational skills. The first place that people learn relational skills is in their family. The second-best place to learn relational skills is in your spiritual family, your local church. We need to help people learn to resolve conflicts. We need to help them learn how to confess their sins to one another, and to forgive one another. We need to help people learn to admonish one another. We need to encourage people to pray for one another and to serve one another. We need to encourage people to practice hospitality. We need to teach people to encourage, edify, and build up others. There are thirty-one "one another" commands that God has given to us so that we can learn how to love one another. Our goal is to teach, model, and encourage people to love God and to love their neighbors.

Our neighbor is not just our church family, or our neighborhood. Our neighbors are the people that God brings into our path. We need to be alert to the opportunities. We need to be willing to lay our lives down in practical ways to show them the love of Christ. When we do this, the world will notice. Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

(Jn 13:35) "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

### **Closing Prayer**

Father God, thank You for loving us. We love because You first loved us. Thank You for demonstrating Your love to us. Jesus, thank You for laying Your life down for us and giving us an example to follow. Thank You for washing the disciples' feet, giving us another example to follow. Help us to love You with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Help us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Give us willing hearts to help those that need help. Give us benevolent

hearts to help those with financial needs. Give us hearts of mercy and compassion so that we can show more tender love to those who are hurting. Help us to be a church that abounds in love for You and one another. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Introduction** (1 Co 13:4–7, Mt 22:37–39)

**1. The Second Greatest Command** (Mark 12:31, Le 19:17-18, 1 Co 13:3, 5-6, Lev 19:17-18, Mt 22:40)

**2. The Neighbor** (Dt 6:5, Le 19:18, Lk 10:25-37)

**3. Practical Applications** (Ga 6:10, Ro 13:8-10, Ex 20:12, Lk 11:4, Mt 18:21-22, 1 Cor 6:1-5, Eph 4:31-32, 1 Jn 3:16-18, Jn 13:13–15, 1 Pe 4:8-10, Jas 5:19-20, Lk 14:12-14)

**Conclusion and Applications** (Jn 13:35)