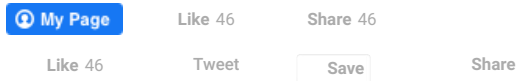


Who is My Neighbor



“Who is My Neighbor?”

The question comes to us from [Luke 10:29](#). A lawyer of the Jews had asked the Lord what he needed to do in order to inherit eternal life. It was a good question and one which we should all be interested in knowing the answer to. The Lord’s answer to this question was two-fold: “Love God with all your heart,” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (cf. [Luke 10:25-28](#)) These two commandments condensed all of the Old Testament Law down into two basic principles; everything else simply expounded on the how of the fulfilment. Thus, Jesus told the lawyer, even as He tells us, “Do this and live.” ([Luke 10:28b](#))

If you want to make it into heaven, God requires that you put Him first in your life. Additionally, He also requires that you treat your neighbor well.

It is unfortunate that most people totally fail in these two necessary requirements for eternal life. This assessment is one taught by Jesus Himself, who said in a different place, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” ([Matthew 7:13-14](#); NKJV)

The lawyer probably recognized that there were people in his life that he was not loving as he should. And so we read, “But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” ([Luke 10:29](#))



Do you have the mindset of how can I serve?

The lawyer’s question was essentially his way of clarifying: Who do I have to love? Or, put another way, who am I allowed to not love? Are there people who are sufficiently different from me that I am allowed not to love them? Who will God allow me to dislike and mistreat, or at least just ignore indifferently?

The lawyer should have known better. The commandment concerning love for neighbors, found in [Leviticus 19:18](#), is not the only place where God mentions properly treating one’s neighbors. If one turns back to the Ten Commandments, wherein God lays down some basic principles concerning the conduct He expected of His people, we read, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor,” and “You

shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's." ([Exodus 20:16, 17](#); NKJV)

God hatred of lying lips is a foundational principle in understanding the morality God expects of His people (cf. [Proverbs 12:22](#)). When God says not to bear false witness against a neighbor, He is not giving permission to lie to strangers. Likewise, when God told His people not to covet their neighbor's ox, He wasn't saying that coveting became alright so long as you didn't know the individual in question. Rather, we might more properly understand that God is teaching us that there is a brotherhood of man. All men are to be considered as neighbors, and all men are to be treated as neighbors.

We have those neighbors that live down the road from us, and then there are those neighbors that live across the globe. From God's perspective, enthroned above the world, there's not that much distance separating any of us. We should be treating all of them well, loving them as ourselves.

In point of fact, God wasn't too vague about any of this. He told the Israelites, "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates." ([Deuteronomy 24:14](#); NKJV) Whether a foreigner, or a kinsman, God expected the same treatment of both from His people, who were called by His name, and who were striving to live according to His standards.

When God says, Love your neighbors, Jesus explained, He meant you even need to love your enemies. (cf. [Matthew 5:44](#)) Because, we conclude, our enemies are neighbors also.

All men are to be treated as if they were your neighbors, because, from God's perspective, they are. You may not have met them yet, but that doesn't matter. Your neighbors are anyone you happen to run across in your foray through life.

You are not supposed to lie to your neighbor, which means you are not supposed to lie to anyone. You are not supposed to covet your neighbor's property, which means you are not supposed to covet anyone's property. You are to love your neighbor, which means you are to love everyone. Simply put, there is no one whom God gives us permission not to love and treat as well as possible.

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