



First Things First Week 2: Loving Your Neighbor

September 17, 2023

What are your priorities?

Matthew 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.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Nothing is more important than loving God and loving others.

1 Corinthians 13:3 MSG — “...no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I’m bankrupt without love.”

Without love, everything is nothing.

The second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. The only way to be able to genuinely do commandment number two is to do commandment number one. When you love God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength, you are able to love your neighbor as yourself.

You can focus on the needs of others when you are convinced that God will take care of your needs.

Luke 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.’”

The trip from Jerusalem to Jericho was about 20 miles and 3600 feet down. It was a dangerous road nicknamed “the bloody way.”

Luke 10:31-32 — “‘And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.’”

Along comes a priest, a religious leader, probably returning from a period of duty in the Temple to his home in the country (Jericho was one of the main country residences for priests). This priest had probably been on duty for several days, and now he was going home. A Levite then passes by as well. Levites were the official worship leaders in the Temple. He was probably also on his way home to the country.

Both pass by, probably for some very convincing reasons. Maybe it was fear, maybe they were tired, maybe it was too much time or hassle.

Luke 10:33 — “‘But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion’”

The Jews hated the Samaritans so much that when referring to them, the Jews would simply call them “dogs.”

Jesus brings this character into His story to show that God sees people differently than we do. He sees past the outside of the person, straight into the heart. This Good Samaritan now becomes our example of what it looks like to love your neighbor as yourself.

“Loving your neighbor” means that you must *see* their need.

If you are unaware of needs, you can’t care about needs.

There are wounded people all around us all the time, but we don’t see it. Why? Busyness. **Hurry is the death of kindness.** If you want to become a more loving person, you’ve got to slow your life down in order to see the needs of the people around you.

“Loving your neighbor” means you must *sympathize* with their pain.

Luke 10:33 — “‘...when he saw him, he felt compassion’”

It’s not enough to just see others’ needs, you must sympathize with their pain.

“Loving your neighbor” means you must *seize* the moment.

Seize the moment to be kind. Don’t wait!

Luke 10:34 — “‘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.’”

The Good Samaritan probably wasn't a doctor, and probably didn't have a first aid kit. The bandages he used are probably his own clothes that he ripped up.

In order to seize the moments of need and take action, we must be willing to do two things:

1. We must be willing to be interrupted. Kindness doesn't happen on our schedule; at any moment, we must be willing to drop everything. **Love is inconvenient.**
2. We must be willing to take risks. Many times the one thing that keeps us from being kind is our fears. The truth is: **Fear can make us unkind.**

1 John 4:18 — "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear..."

"Loving your neighbor" means spending whatever it takes.

There is always a cost to kindness. It inevitably causes you to sacrifice time, money, energy, reputation, or privacy.

Luke 10:34-35 — "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. 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.'"

Start seeing the needs of others, sympathizing with their pain, seize the moment, and spend whatever it takes to help them.

Jesus finishes His story with a final question:

Luke 10:36 — "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?"

Jesus answers the question "Who is my neighbor?" with another question. "Which example proved to be a neighbor?" In other words, which one loved his neighbor as himself?

Luke 10:37 — "And he said, 'The one who showed mercy toward him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do the same.'"