



"There are many ways to measure success, not the least of which is the way your child describes you when talking to a friend."

—Anonymous

23-Jan-15

You Shall Love Your Neighbor (Part Three)

In Part Two, we saw that both [God](#) the Father and [Jesus Christ](#) have modeled how we are to [love](#) one another. After giving the pattern in the life of Jesus shown in the Gospels, we are instructed "to walk just as He walked. . . . He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him" ([1 John 2:6](#), 10). How we show love to our neighbors reveals whether we are walking in the light or not.

God's instructions to Israel in Leviticus 19 help us learn the right perspective on loving our neighbors. Notice the first three verses:

And the LORD spoke to [Moses](#), saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.'" ([Leviticus 19:1-3](#))

Verse 2 is a kind of specific purpose statement for all of the nation of Israel then and for the [Israel of God](#) today ([Galatians 6:16](#)). God thunders that His people shall be holy—different and separate from [the world](#) around them—

because God Himself is holy. The people are to reflect the God they worship. When others see the people of God, they are to see an [image of God](#) Himself in how they treat one another. In this way, God's people represent Him to the world. So Jesus teaches His disciples, "You are the [salt of the earth](#). . . . You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" ([Matthew 5:13-14](#), 16).

Then, in verse 3, God gives the first and most important of the physical instructions in how to treat others. It begins with one's parents, as they are the neighbors that children come into contact with first and most often. Children see their parents in the same way as we come to understand what God is to us, and we learn to love God by loving them. So our first lessons in loving our neighbors happen within what should be the friendly confines of the family.

It is interesting that the duty of showing reverential love to one's parents is connected to the proper observance of the [Sabbath](#). This indicates a link between the fifth and fourth commandments. We show love to neighbor, first of all, by revering our parents, and we show love to God, first of all, by keeping His Sabbaths. They are foundational starting points for proper interactions within those two most important relationships.

In [Leviticus 19:9-10](#), we see another instruction on loving fellow man:

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God.

Loving one's neighbor expands from the family to take in "the poor and the stranger." Obviously, this is showing concern and giving charitably to the disadvantaged of society. We are to learn to give with an open hand to others ([Deuteronomy 15:7-11](#)), not hoard the product of our labors. Love for neighbor includes generosity and looking out for the welfare of others, as needed.

[Leviticus 19:13](#) brings up another situation in which we can choose to love a neighbor: "You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning." In other words, employees are to be paid on time, and the employer—whether he runs a huge corporation or is paying to have his lawn cut—is not to withhold a worker's wages. The employee needs the agreed-upon money to support himself and his family.

Verse 14 brings up another point: "You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD ." This injunction deals with our thinking and compassion. We are not to make fun of the handicapped or do anything to take advantage of their condition. A deaf person cannot hear or respond to a curse, and a blind person cannot avoid an obstacle.

The intent goes further than this, however. God intends that we understand that we are never to exploit *anyone's* disadvantages. We should never take advantage of the simplicity, ignorance, or inexperience of another. We are instead to treat our neighbors as we would want to be treated if we were in their circumstances. Is that not the Golden Rule? "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise" ([Luke 6:31](#)).

[Leviticus 19:15](#) regulates our making of judgments: "You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor." In general terms, we are to be just, judging circumstances by their merits. We are not to judge a matter to benefit ourselves, nor are we to allow the social status of the parties involved to sway us one way or the other. God desires equity [under the law](#), and making equitable judgments is a way of showing love to neighbor.

The next verse concerns telling stories about each other: "You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people" ([Leviticus 19:16](#)). The Hebrew word beneath "talebearer" describes more literally a "peddler," one who trades in [gossip](#) and spreads it all over the countryside. This is a sure way to sow discord among neighbors, doing no one any good. It is a terrible evil

that destroys relationships. If we want to show love for others, we must put an end to rumormongering and gossip, for, as the apostle James writes, "[The tongue] is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" ([James 3:8](#)).

These are some of the ways we show love to our neighbors, and in so doing, we reflect the loving nature of God Himself, setting ourselves apart as His people. The apostle John writes, "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world" ([1 John 4:17](#)). Can we say this about ourselves in how we treat our neighbors?

- John O. Reid

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Holiness Code](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

A portion of Leviticus has been dubbed "the holiness code"; it describes how God lives. When one approaches this section without God's Holy Spirit, the exercise becomes empty unproductive legalism devoid of real sanctification or godly character. Holiness is the quantum difference between what we are and what God is. Because God does the sanctifying, we do not become holy by following the holiness code, but we do keep and maintain what God has made holy, developing, over an entire lifetime, righteous godly character. The more we grow in Christ's image, the more sanctified we become. Christ's instructions in the Sermon on the Mount actually expanded (not did away with) the application of the holiness code.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[My Parents Won't Let Me!](#)

by Clyde Finklea

Keeping the Sabbath definitely marks a person as different. Perhaps the

feeling of being odd that comes from Sabbath observance affects young people most of all. Clyde Finklea recounts the story of a friend's momentous choice regarding his keeping of the Sabbath, a decision he had to make all on his own.

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