

Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself



Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself

This is a short, three-day version of a YouVersion Reading Plan by GlobalRize.org

The full reading plan is available here: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/20831>

You need a (free) account with YouVersion for this.

One of the best-known commandments in the Bible is to love your neighbor. Jesus even says this is the most important command, next to loving God. But who is our 'neighbor' and what does it mean to 'love' him? In this Reading Plan, we will read some of Jesus' teachings and some real-life examples.

Day 1: Loving your neighbor is God's commandment

Bible References:

Exodus 20:1-17

Mark 12:28-34

Romans 13:8-10

The Bible, especially the Old Testament, contains many commandments of God. They have multiple purposes.

The most obvious purpose of God's laws is to guide people's behavior. The Lord wants his people to behave in certain ways. A clear example is the "ten commandments", a kind of constitution about people's relationship with God and with each other. Whenever people obey these basic rules, society will function far better than when everybody just does as he pleases. God's constitution is a blessing.

A second function of God's laws is to help people gain insight in the problem of their sinful hearts. See Romans 3:20 (ESV): "By works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin". Whoever tries earnestly to obey God's commandments, has to acknowledge that he doesn't manage to live up to God's standards. He needs to have his heart cleansed from sin — and that is exactly what the Lord is so very willing to do!

When asked what the major commandments are, Jesus mentions two: loving God and loving your neighbor. If you really do that, all the other commandments will be obeyed automatically. After all, it's impossible to love somebody and murder him, or to love God and misuse His name.

The commandment to love your neighbor, like the other commandments, has this double function to motivate us to 'do the right thing', and to make us aware of our inability to love wholeheartedly, so that we may acknowledge our need for the Holy Spirit to cleanse and renew us.

Please take a moment to reflect on your life in light of this commandment. Do you love people around you? Which aspects of your life still need renewal?

Day 2: A very high standard: loving as Jesus loves us

Bible references:

John 15:1-17

1 John 4:7-12

Jesus has obeyed all of God's commandments completely, including the command to love other people. God's love for humans goes so far that the Father sent His one and only Son, and this Son was prepared to deny Himself, to be born as a human baby, and to die a horrible death in order that people might have eternal life instead of eternal death. That is ultimate love.

It cost God everything to save humanity. John rightly says that "God **is** love" (1 John 4:8). And Jesus Himself says: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). It is mind-blowing that Jesus actually didn't give His life for His **friends**; He reconciled us to God while we were enemies (Romans 5:10). We can hardly understand the breadth and length and height and depth of that love (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Jesus commands us to abide in His love and to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). That's a very, very high standard. We can't meet that standard on our own. It requires the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, whose fruit (among other things) is love. That's what Jesus says as well: "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, ESV).

Do you abide in Jesus' love?

Day 3: Prisca and Aquila loved the apostle Paul

Bible References:

John 13:34-35

Romans 16:1-16

Christians should be recognizable by their brotherly love. And that's exactly what we see in Paul's letters. He greets a lot of people, expressing his love and his concern for their well-being. He also tells how two fellow Christians, Prisca and Aquila, risked their necks for Paul's life. So evidently they loved him as well.

A letter of Tertullian in 197 AD describes how this Christian love caught the attention of outsiders: "See, they say, how they love one another, for themselves are animated by mutual hatred; how they are ready even to die for one another, for they themselves will sooner put to death." This is exactly what Jesus wants His church to do: to love each other and so to spread God's light in the world.

Paul's letters make also clear that this ideal situation is not self-evident. Wherever people interact, there are irritations, conflicts and strife. Christians are not immune to that. And if brothers or sisters in Christ are sinning or spreading false teachings, we have to address that, instead of keeping silent for the sake of peace. But our calling always is to reconcile whenever possible, to seek the best for one another, and to love each other.

Do you experience brotherly love from (and for) fellow Christians?

*The full reading plan is available here: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/20831>
You need a (free) account with YouVersion for this.*