

Chapter 2: “Love Thy Neighbour as Thyself”

The gospel teaches us to have charity for all and to love our fellows. The Savior said: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, ... soul, and ... mind, this is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” [Mt 22:37–40] (GAS)

1. Who is my neighbor? (Lk 10) (see NT 14 lesson)

²⁵ <On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”> ²⁶ He said unto him, What is written in the law? ... ²⁷ And he ... said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, ... soul, ... strength, and ... mind (Dt 6:5); and thy neighbour as thyself (Lev 19:18). ²⁸ And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. ²⁹ But he, <wanting> to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

Who did he expect Jesus to include and exclude?

How did Jesus answer his question?

2. Where in the Law is “love thy neighbor”? (Lev 19)

The Lord told Moses to say to the Israelites: <Be holy because I, the LORD ... am holy.> The Lord then explained how to be holy. Honor parents; keep Sabbath; no idolatry; leave part of harvest for the poor and strangers; not steal, lie/defraud, deal falsely, rob, slander, endanger neighbors; not mistreat laborer, deaf, or blind; justice in courts for rich and poor; not hate kinsfolk; honest in business dealings. The Lord says:

¹⁸ Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against ... thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD. ... ³³ If a stranger <or *alien*> sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not <*mistreat*> him. ³⁴ *But* the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in ... Egypt: *I am the LORD your God*.

The 10 Commandments and the two great commandments.

- Love God:** not worship other gods, idolatry, take/bear His name in vain, break Sabbath
- Love neighbor:** honor parents (care for aged); not murder, steal, lie (fraud), adultery, bear false witness, covet what belongs to others and is not for sale.

Paul: Thou shalt not commit adultery, ... kill, ... steal, ... bear false witness, ... covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Rom 13:9)

3. What did “love ... as thyself” mean to the rabbis?

Love (*’ahab le*) implies doing not feeling. The preposition (*le*) means “for, on behalf of, for the sake of”; that is, do good as you would do for yourself. The expression *’ahab le* applied to the alien (v. 34) means to do him good, treat him kindly. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, love is a doing verb. “To love each his brother as himself by supporting the poor, the destitute, and the convert” (CD 6:20–21) (Anchor, 1653)

Rabbi Hillel (110 BC–AD 10): What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow: this is the whole Torah [Law]; the rest is the explanation; go and learn (Talmud, Shab. 31a).

Jesus: ¹² All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. ... ³⁷ Thou shalt love the Lord ... ³⁹ [and] thy neighbour as thyself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Mt 7:12; 22:37–40)

Maimonides: Whatever I wish for myself, I am to wish the like for him; and whatever I do not wish for myself, or for my friends, I am not to wish the like for him. ... “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: [that is to say], all things that thou desirest that others should do unto thee, thou thyself shouldst do unto him who is thy brother in respect of the Law and the Commandments.”

Rabbi Eliezer says: Let the honour of your fellow be as dear to you as your own ... **Rabbi Yose** says: Let the property of your fellow be as dear to you as your own. (Texts)

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” **Rabbi Akiba** says, This is a great principle of Torah. **Ben Azzai** says, A greater principle is: “When God created man, God made him in the likeness of God” (Gen 5:1). So that you should not say, “Since I despise myself, let my neighbor be despised with me; since I am cursed, let my neighbor be cursed with me.” **Rabbi Tanchuma** said: If you do so, know who it is that you despise – “In the likeness of God made He him.” (Anchor 1056; Texts)

If we love someone, we will love their children.

If we do not love the children, we do not love the parent.

Paul: ¹⁶ Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? ¹⁷ If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are. (1 Cor 3:16–17)

Abraham Ibn Ezra (c. 1100): “You shall love your neighbour,” (*le-re’acha*) many think the [*le*] is superfluous, ... but in my opinion it means quite literally that one should love the good *for* one’s neighbour as for oneself. And the meaning of “I am the LORD” is: *because* I, the One God, created [both of] you. (Texts)

Just as we love ourselves despite the faults we know we have, so should we love our fellows despite the faults we see in them.

4. “As yourself” (*kamoka*)

- Adjective modifying neighbor:** “who is a person like you,” or “who is like you” since he too was created by God.
- Adverb modifying love:** “Love (the good) for your fellow as you (love the good for) yourself. In *Jub* 30:24: “Be loving of your brothers as a man *loves himself*, with each man *seeking for his brother what is good for him*, and acting together on the earth, and loving each other as themselves.
- Reflexive sense is intended:**
 - First, you should love the Lord your maker, and secondly, your neighbor as yourself. And whatever you do not want to be done to you, you should not do to anyone else. (Didache 1:1–2; c. AD 100)
 - Love your neighbor, for what is hateful to you yourself, do not do to him, I am the Lord. (*Tg-Ps. J.*) (Anchor, 1655)

Mosiah: There should be no persecutions among [you], that there should be an equality among all men; ... that every man should esteem his neighbor as himself, laboring with their own hands for their support. (Mosiah 27:3–4)

Talmud: If someone is chopping and in doing so cuts one hand, does he avenge himself on the other hand which held the knife by cutting that hand too? Since all Israelites form one single body, anyone who takes vengeance on his fellow punishes himself. Therefore the answer to any injustice one has suffered is not revenge, but love: ‘and you shall love your fellow as yourself’ (*y. Ned. 9:4*) (Anchor, 1653)

Paul: ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. ... ²⁸ So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. ²⁹ For no man ever yet hated his own flesh <or body>; but

nourisheth <or feeds> and cherisheth <or cares for> it, even as the Lord the church: ³⁰For we are members of his body. ... ³¹A man ... shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. ... ³³Let every one ... so love his wife even as himself. (Eph 5:25–33)

5. Who should we love? (George Albert Smith, chapter 2)
We look upon all men as our brothers, all women as our sisters; we look upon the face of every human being that is in the world as a child of our Father, and believe that as each is in the image of the Father, so also each possesses a spark of divinity that if developed will prepare us to return to His presence. (GAS 13)

Our love should pass beyond the border lines of the Church ... and reach out after the children of men. (GAS 15)

[My father] said, “I have never seen a child of God so deep in the gutter that I have not had the impulse to stoop down and lift him up and put him on his feet and start him again.” (GAS 14)

6. How to show love? (George Albert Smith, chapter 2)
Let us evidence by our conduct, by our gentleness, by our love, by our faith, that we do keep that great commandment ... “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (GAS 15)

[Everyone has the] opportunity ... to go about radiating sunshine, developing happiness and lifting up those who are discouraged, and bringing joy and comfort to those who are in distress. (GAS 16)

The Lord says this: “See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires. ... And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace.” ... We need to exercise charity, not only in imparting of our substance to those ... in need, but we need to have charity for the weaknesses and failures and mistakes of our Father’s children. (16)

Thou shalt not covet thine own property, but impart it freely (D&C 19:26)

Coveting what belongs to others and is not for sale leads some to kill, steal, commit adultery, and bear false witness. Coveting my own property prevents me from keeping the law of consecration and the commandment to help those in need.

“On a cold winter morning, the street cleaning crew [in Salt Lake City] was removing large chunks of ice from the street gutters. ... One [temp worker] wore only a lightweight sweater and was suffering from the cold. ... [President Smith] asked the worker, ‘... Where is your coat?’ The man replied that he had no coat to wear. [He] then removed his own overcoat, handed it to the man and said, ‘This coat is yours. It is heavy wool and will keep you warm. I just work across the street.’” (GAS 13)

Reach out a little farther from the circle with which [you] are identified, and say a kind word, or teach the truth to some of our Father’s children. (GAS 16)

President Smith often went “on errands of personal comfort and blessing to many who are sick ... [or] down-hearted. ... Before and after office hours, [he was] walking hospital halls, visiting room after room, blessing, encouraging, and cheering.” (GAS 11)

I have only good will in my heart for mankind. I haven’t any animosity in my heart toward any living human being. I know some that I wish would behave themselves a little better than they do, but that is their loss, not mine. If I can get my arm around them and help them back on the highway of happiness by teaching them the gospel of Jesus Christ, my happiness will be increased thereby. ... You cannot drive people to do things which are right, but you can love them into doing them, if your example is of such a character that they can see you mean what you say. (GAS 16)

7. Love of enemies

⁴³ It is written also, that thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy; ⁴⁴ But behold I say ... love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you; (3 Ne 12:34–44; Mt 5)

Friend vs. Enemy: Hebrews focused on the ends of a continuum as a way of describing the whole continuum. For example, Alpha and omega (A to Z), friend/enemy, good/evil, Church of God/Devil.

The people of Nephi did seek diligently to restore the Lamanites unto the true faith in God. But our labors were vain; their hatred was fixed. (Enos 1:20)

8. Schools of love

In schools, skills are taught, practiced, and tested.

How are families, wards, and missions “schools of love”?

To improve human relations, treat people like humans and not like relations.

How are businesses and government “schools of love”?

Laws of Love and the three kingdoms

- Love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy.
- Love thy neighbor as thyself.
- Love one another as I [Jesus] have loved you.



Quotes

George Albert Smith: Our ministry is one of love. Our service is one which enriches our lives. ... If we are living as God intends ... [and] ministering as he desires ... , [then] every day of our lives is enriched by the influence of his Spirit, our love of our fellowmen increases and our souls are enlarged until we feel that we could take into our arms all of God’s children, with a desire to bless them and bring them to an understanding of the truth. (14)

If the gospel of Jesus Christ ... has not planted that feeling of love in your hearts for your fellow men, then ... you have not enjoyed the full fruition of that wonderful gift that came to earth when this Church was organized. (GAS 14)

Your happiness will be in proportion to your charity ... kindness and ... love of those with whom you associate. (GAS 17)

What a happy world it would be if men everywhere recognized their fellowmen as brothers and sisters, and then followed that up by loving their neighbors as themselves. (GAS 14)

Ezra Taft Benson: The proud depend upon the world to tell them whether they have value or not. Their self-esteem is determined by where they are judged to be on the ladders of worldly success. They feel worthwhile as individuals if the numbers beneath them in achievement, talent, beauty, or intellect are large enough. Pride is ugly. It says, “If you succeed, I am a failure.” If we love God, do His will, and fear His judgment more than men’s, then we will have self-esteem. (“Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989)

Ezra Taft Benson Men and women who turn their lives over to God will discover that He can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends and pour out peace. (*Teachings of ETB*, 361)

Sources

- GAS = George Albert Smith, chapter 2 of lesson manual
- Anchor = Anchor Bible, *Leviticus* 19:18.
- Texts= <http://www.cmcsoxford.org.uk/downloadlibrary/Q%20&%20B%20LOVE.pdf>