

# Our #2

2<sup>nd</sup> most essential

2<sup>nd</sup> greatest

2<sup>nd</sup> most important

2<sup>nd</sup> maximum

2<sup>nd</sup> utmost

2<sup>nd</sup> top

2<sup>nd</sup> supreme

2<sup>nd</sup> key

2<sup>nd</sup> central

2<sup>nd</sup> most crucial

2<sup>nd</sup> absolute

2<sup>nd</sup> chief

2<sup>nd</sup> primary

2<sup>nd</sup> highest

2<sup>nd</sup> uppermost

2<sup>nd</sup> principal

2<sup>nd</sup> most basic

2<sup>nd</sup> ultimate

2<sup>nd</sup> main

## obligation.

(Love-hate #2)

### TWO BIG QUESTIONS IN JESUS' DAY:

The religious leaders in Jesus' day frequently debated two issues:

#1 – What is the greatest command?

- According to them, the Law contained 613 regulations. They wanted to prioritize the regulations (perhaps so they could downplay the less important ones?).
- When Jesus was brought into the debate, he embraced all the commands with the concept of "love" for God and neighbor. He shifted the focus to the attitude that should control our actions.

#2 – Who is included in the concept of "neighbor"?

- Most of the Jews wanted to exclude anyone who wasn't a Jew. Some wanted to exclude even Jews who weren't close relatives.
- When Jesus was brought into the debate, his focus was to include others (including "enemies"), not to exclude them. If we choose to be neighbors to them, they will (by definition) be neighbors to us!

## QUESTION #1 – What is the greatest command? (or group of commands)

- The religious leaders wanted to limit the number.
- Jesus embraced them all, by focusing on the attitude that would remove the "burden" from obedience.

Last time, we looked at the FIRST part of the answer:

### The #1 GREATEST of human obligations:

Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Deuteronomy 6:5 (CSB)

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.

2. THOU SHALT NOT MAKE IDOLS INTO WHICH ANY GRIVEN SHALT.

3. THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN.

4. REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY.

5. HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER.

6. THOU SHALT NOT KILL.

7. THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

8. THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

9. THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS.

10. THOU SHALT NOT COVET.

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This command summarizes all our obligations toward God.

### TODAY – THE SECOND PART OF THE ANSWER:

## The 2<sup>nd</sup> GREATEST of human obligations

- ❖ It's NOT one of the Ten Commandments. Though the Ten Commandments are an expression of it.
- ❖ It's summarized by the word "LOVE." A type of love that tends to be the opposite of what the WORLD promotes.

⇒ This obligation is:

... love your neighbor as yourself...  
Leviticus 19:18b (CSB)

Scripture gives us specific instructions about what this "LOVE" is, and who we are to express it to.

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10. THOU SHALT NOT COVET.

... love your neighbor as yourself...  
Leviticus 19:18b (CSB)

➤

**Our #2 most supreme important priority!**

**Second only to:** Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.  
Deuteronomy 6:5 (CSB)

- ❖ This specific command is mentioned
  - 1 time (and 1 time indirectly) in Leviticus (and no where else in the Old Testament).
  - 9 times in the New Testament.

YET IT ENCOMPASSES ALL OTHER COMMANDS RELATED TO INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE!

### GOD INTRODUCED THIS COMMAND IN LEVITICUS 19.

Leviticus 19 is an expression of the 10 Commandments!

(Not in the same order as found in Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5.)

- Sometimes the commands are quoted; sometimes applications of the commands are given. There are:
  - ❖ Moral obligations. (Example: "Do not lie.")
  - ❖ Ceremonial/religious obligations. (Example: "Do not wear clothes that are made of two types of material." The purpose of this was to symbolize the need for purity.)

"Love your neighbor" is at the end of a series of commands, most of them dealing with our interaction with people.

It isn't a direct expression of any one specific command, but it summarizes all the commands that involve interacting with people.

These commands in Leviticus 19 are based on God and who he is.

- They are not based on arbitrary whim, but on the very nature of the God of the Bible – God and his holiness!

Be holy because **I, the LORD your God, am holy.**  
Leviticus 19:2b (CSB)

Keep all my statutes and all my ordinances and do them; **I am the LORD.**  
Leviticus 19:37 (CSB)

- Throughout this chapter God re-affirms that he is the one giving these commands. (See verses: 3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36.)

In these verses, the word "LORD" (in capital letters) refers to the true God, the only God, the God of Israel, who's name is יהוה. (This is sometimes translated as "Yahweh" or "Jehovah.")

The command "Love your neighbor" is a summary statement, telling us how we are to interact with other people.

... **love your neighbor as yourself...**  
Leviticus 19:18b (CSB)

- It summarizes all our obligations toward people – both in the Ten Commandments, as well as in all the Law and the Prophets.
- It doesn't cancel any of the specific commands (moral obligations) given elsewhere, but embraces them.

**ALL THE COMMANDS INVOLVING OTHER PEOPLE CAN BE SUMMED UP BY THIS ONE COMMAND.**

The commandments, Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet; and any other commandment, are summed up by this commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself.  
Romans 13:9 (CSB)

The context of this verse: Love fulfills the law, because love will do no wrong to others.

**PEOPLE WHO HAVE THIS LOVE WON'T BREAK THE LAW!**  
They won't dishonor their parents, kill, commit adultery, steal, lie, or covet what does not belong to them!

THIS LOVE IS A "LAW" THAT MUST GOVERN HOW WE INTERACT WITH OTHERS!

THIS "LAW" ENABLES US TO SERVE OTHERS (NOT OURSELVES)!

\* ("Whole law" = The context limits its meaning. It only refers to commands related to people.)

Indeed, if you fulfill the royal law prescribed in the Scripture, **Love your neighbor as yourself**, you are doing well.  
Speak and act as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom.  
James 2:8, 12 (CSB)

For you were called to be free ... only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love.  
For the whole law\* is fulfilled in one statement: **Love your neighbor as yourself.**  
Galatians 5:13-14 (CSB)

NO!  
YES!

**ABOUT THESE TWO GREATEST COMMANDS:**

- 1) LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD...
- 2) LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.

- There are no greater commands than these.  
"There is no other command greater than these."  
Mark 12:31 (CSB)
- They are the basis of ALL our moral obligations.  
"All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."  
Matthew 22:40 (CSB)
- They are more important than ALL religious activities.  
"And to love [God] with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to **love your neighbor as yourself**, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices."  
Mark 12:33 (CSB)

- Obeying these commands is necessary for eternal life. (We do NOT "work" for salvation"; rather, we "live-out" our faith.)

"Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"  
"What is written in the law?" [Jesus] asked him. "How do you read it?"  
He answered, "**Love the Lord your God ...**" and "**your neighbor as yourself.**"  
"You've answered correctly," [Jesus] told him. "**Do this and you will live.**"  
Luke 10:25b–28 (CSB)

**#1 WARNING: LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR, THOUGH IMPORTANT, IS NOT ENOUGH.**

LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR IS NEEDED. HOWEVER:

"Teacher, what good must I do to have eternal life?"  
[Jesus answered...] "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." ... Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother; and **love your neighbor as yourself.**  
Matthew 19:16b, 17b, 18b-19 (CSB)

LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR IS ONLY HALF THE ISSUE.

The person who asked this question **PASSED** the "love your neighbor" part – or at least he thought he did.  
"I have kept all these," the young man told him.  
"What do I still lack?"  
Matthew 19:20 (CSB)

Sadly, he **FAILED** the "love for God" part – and he knew it. (He valued his own financial security more than he valued God's kingdom.)

"If you want to be perfect," Jesus said to him, "go, sell your belongings and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."  
When the young man heard that, he went away grieving, because he had many possessions.  
Matthew 19:21-22 (CSB)

The issue wasn't about "giving to the poor," but about his focus, and the source of his security: Would it be God, or wealth? (See Matthew 6:24.)

**#2 WARNING: DON'T EXPECT TO SUCCEED WITHOUT GOD'S HELP!**

YES, WE MUST DO THESE THINGS, IF WE WANT ETERNAL LIFE.

- ⇒ **Just as Jesus said** – Luke 10:25-28.
- ⇒ **Just as Paul said** – Romans 2:6-7, 10.

BECAUSE OF OUR SINFULNESS, WE WILL FAIL (EVEN IF WE SUCCEED IN PART).

- ⇒ **Just as the person who talked to Jesus did** – Matthew 19:16-22.
- ⇒ **Just as Paul did** – Philippians 3:4b-11.

THE GOOD NEWS MESSAGE (AND WHAT GOD ACCOMPLISHES THROUGH IT) IS THE "DOOR" THAT MAKES SUCCESS POSSIBLE!

- ⇒ **As Jesus said**, "without me, you can do nothing" – John 15:5.
- ⇒ **As Paul said**, we are "united with Christ"; we have "a righteousness from God, through faith in Christ"; and we can "do all things through [God] who strengthens [us]" – Romans 6:5; Philippians 3:9; 4:13.

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**WE NEED TO CLARIFY:**  
**WHO** does the 2<sup>nd</sup>-greatest command tell us to love?

In past centuries, we wouldn't have had to ask this question. But a new false teaching has come on the scene...

SUMMARY

- **God** tells us to love God and neighbor.  
There are ONLY TWO commands in the verses; and they have to do with GOD and NEIGHBOR.
- **Modern-day false teachers** have twisted this into a "command" to love ourselves!  
They turn it into THREE commands – inserting a "command" to love one's self. Then they put "love for neighbor" lowest on the list (below "self-love").

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**"... as yourself." WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?**

... love your neighbor **as yourself.**  
Leviticus 19:18b (CSB)

This phrase occurs always and only with this command.\*  
It does not occur anywhere else in Scripture!

**JESUS EXPRESSES THIS COMMAND IN A DIFFERENT WAY,** in the "Sermon on the Mount."

**He shows us:**

- ⇒ The meaning of "as yourself."
- ⇒ The all-encompassing nature of this command.

So in everything, **do to others what you would have them do to you,** for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.  
Matthew 7:12 (NIV); also in Luke 6:31.

\* (Including the indirect expression of this command, found later in the chapter.)

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**"GOD VS. FALSE TEACHERS."**

**In the last few decades:** Many churches have abandoned what God says about human nature. They have adopted the world's psychologized pretensions that were invented by people who openly rejected the Bible and what it teaches.

When it comes to this command, they promote self-love! They claim (contrary to Scripture) that we need to love ourselves MORE, before we can begin to love others!

... love your neighbor **as yourself.**  
Leviticus 19:18b (CSB)

... **do to others** what you would have them do to you, ...  
Matthew 7:12b (NIV)

⇒ Yet Scripture teaches us that we already DO love ourselves, and that we DO have specific ways that we want others to treat us. **And this shows us how we are to treat other people.**

↪ Scripture describes this "love" as a FACT, not a COMMAND!  
Our tendency is to put this "love" ahead of God and neighbor.

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**HOW MUCH DO WE LOVE OURSELVES? USUALLY IT'S TOO MUCH!**

**The very nature of SIN has to do with placing SELF-love above love for others!**

Self-love is the reason that people commit sins against other people. It's also the reason some choose to sin against (or harm) themselves, when things don't go the way they want. (Self-love convinces them that they deserve better... and the world reinforces such a view.)

Many church-goers will go to any extreme to justify, excuse, disguise, redefine, or in any other way, to promote self-love!

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be **lovers of themselves**, ...  
2 Timothy 3:1-2a (NIV)

Everyone else **looks after his own interests**, not after those of Jesus Christ.  
Philip. 2:21 (GW)

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**OUR NATURAL (SINFUL) FOCUS IS ON SELF.**

This is why Scripture has to keep telling us to start focusing on the good of OTHERS, instead of focusing on OURSELVES!

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, ...  
Romans 12:3b (NIV)

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate ... his own life—he cannot be my disciple."  
Luke 14:26 (CSB)

Do not seek your own good, but the good of the other person.  
1 Corinthians 10:24 (NET)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.  
Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others.  
Philippians 2:3-4 (CSB)

We must not just please ourselves. We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. For even Christ didn't live to please himself.  
Romans 15:1b-3a (NLT)

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## QUESTION #2 – Who is my neighbor?

- The religious leaders wanted to limit who this referred to.
- Jesus "expanded" the definition back to it's original intent – which is "everyone"!

>> WHICH IS IT? <<

**YES!**

**NO!**

OR

**YES!**

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## WHO IS THE "NEIGHBOR" I NEED TO LOVE?

- Leviticus 19:18 tells us how to treat our neighbor.
 

... love your neighbor as yourself...  
 Leviticus 19:18b (CSB)
- Later in the chapter, we are told that this same treatment is to be given to "outsiders"!
 

"When an alien resides with you in your land, you must not oppress him. You will regard the alien who resides with you as the native-born among you. **You are to love him as yourself**, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; **I am the LORD your God.**"

Leviticus 19:33-34 (CSB)

WE MUST DO THIS BECAUSE OF WHO GOD IS!

IN OTHER WORDS

Regardless of what we call them, we are to treat them all the same way!

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### How Jesus taught this in the "Parable of the Good Samaritan."

If we insist on limiting our LOVE to just "neighbors," we need to reverse our focus. That's the only way we'll obey the Leviticus 19 commands!

IN THE PARABLE: WHAT HAPPENED?

- Two religious Jews were unwilling to help the injured man.
- A despised foreigner showed love by helping him.

"Of these three men, who do you think was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by robbers?"

The expert said, "The one who was kind enough to help him."

Jesus told him, "Go and imitate his example!"

Luke 10:36-37 (GW)

★ WE MUST BE ACTIVE IN "NEIGHBORING"! ★

The issue isn't "Who is my neighbor" (= so we can exclude the others), but "How can I be a neighbor" (= so we can include the others).

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Even if we call them "enemies," we must still treat them with the same love that we have for those we call "neighbors."

THAT'S THE ONLY WAY TO BE LIKE OUR "FATHER IN HEAVEN"!

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I tell you this: Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.

In this way **you show that you are children of your Father in heaven**. He makes his sun rise on people whether they are good or evil. He lets rain fall on them whether they are just or unjust.

If you love those who love you, do you deserve a reward? Even the tax collectors do that! Are you doing anything remarkable if you welcome only your friends? Everyone does that!

That is why you must be perfect as **your Father in heaven** is perfect."

Matthew 5:43-48 (GW)

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## HOW CAN WE GET THIS LOVE?

- Love for God and neighbor are possible...** but only for those who have entered the freedom of following Jesus. (Until them, we remain slaves to sin.)
- This is where the Good News fits in!** It is the door that opens to a God-changed nature... and the world of freedom!

THIS LOVE IS CALLED "THE LAW OF FREEDOM."  
I WANT THIS FREEDOM!

"JESUS, CHANGE MY NATURE, SO I CAN BE FREE!"

⇒ How should we respond to all this?

- LOVE is not just a rule (though it is a rule). It's an ATTITUDE that empowers us to do what is right.
- The freedom to do what is right is possible only when we pursue the God who does what is right!
- When the love of God is in us, it will express itself through us!

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OLD Testament (Leviticus):  
LOVE them all! (Neighbor, v.18; outsiders, v.33-34.)

NEW Testament (Jesus):  
BE the neighbor who LOVES them all!

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