

Part 4- Mandated (The HEART of the CHURCH)

Key Idea: If we love God, we must express that love by loving others.

Key Points From Past Weeks:

- The early believers are **united with Christ** and **united with one another**.
- A clear **mission and vision** are **healthy expressions of unity**.
- The **GREAT COMMISSION** deserves a **GREAT COMMITMENT**.

Robert Lupton (President and founder of Focused Community Strategies- Urban ministry) story in Compassion, Justice, and the Christian Life

He asked a group of seminary students what the number-one mandate was for the followers of Christ. The students' answers included words and phrases like "evangelize" and "make disciples." Lupton pushed harder, asking, "What did Christ actually say was the most important mandate for his

followers?" After a pause a student recited the Great Commandment—Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself. Lupton responded, "I agree with you. That's how I read it too. Our Lord called it the Great Commandment, didn't he?"

Matthew 22:37-40

³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'[a] ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'[b] ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

"The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."(Mark 12:28–31)

"The LORD is our God, the LORD alone (echad)"

The Hebrew word for love, **ahavah**, means "to act lovingly toward" or "to be loyal to."

- For you to be committed, you have to be devoted. If you truly are devoted, it will be manifested.

³⁹ And the second is like it: '**Love your neighbor as yourself.**'[b] ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Who is our neighbor? Luke 10:27-37

"Love your neighbor as yourself" can be interpreted with more than one meaning.

1. It can mean “love your neighbor like you love yourself.” This is how it is commonly understood. Think of ways you would like to be loved, and love others the same way. For example, because your name is important to you, it’s important to know the names of your neighbors. Because you love yourself, you pray for yourself; likewise show love to your neighbors by praying for them. There is nothing wrong with this. In fact, it should be encouraged, because this is the Golden Rule: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” It is a biblical command. But this is not what this verse means.
2. The other way to understand this verse is “love your neighbor who is like yourself.” The context supports this meaning. Jesus quoted this command from **Leviticus 19:18**, and just a few sentences later, the following admonition was given: “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt” (v. 34). Tverberg rephrased it this way: “You shall show love to foreigners, because they are like yourselves— yourselves—because you were once foreigners in Egypt.”⁸ Love your neighbor, who you think is weird, because they are human. By the way, you’re weird too. Like you, they are amazing messes and made in the image of God and have fallen short of that image. This verse is an affirmation of the Imago Dei of all humanity and a confession that we all fall on the grace of God.

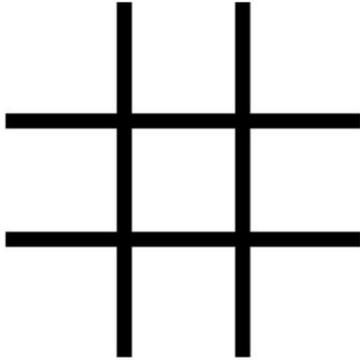
Tverberg added: “All people, including ourselves, are flawed and sinful, but we need to love them because we ourselves commit the same sins. We’re alike in our weaknesses and frailties. We are to love those who do not seem worthy because we ourselves are unworthy and need God’s mercy.”

Our Lord called it the Great Commandment, didn’t he? Given that Scripture declared this to be our number-one mandate, then what courses do you have here on neighboring? I know you have an entire department of evangelism. Who teaches Neighboring 101?”

Back to Robert Lupton

“A church (or any Christian training institution) that steps over the basics of loving God and loving our neighbors on the way to “deeper” theological pursuits can hardly be considered biblically faithful.” **Robert Lupton on Compassion, Justice, and the Christian Life**

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[Slide 13] *A new question must be asked by every Christ follower: “Would my neighbors care if I left?” Some people call this model incarnational. We call it “being the church where you live.”*
Mavis, Brian. The Neighboring Church: Getting Better at What Jesus Says Matters Most

Loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves is not just a good idea. It is the proof that we are in Christ. Francis Chan

[Slide 14] **Key Idea: If we love God, we must express that love by loving others.**