



Dear Friends,

I was asked to speak at our church on February 12 on the subject 'A Loving Community'. While beginning to study through the Scripture I got overwhelmed with all the New Testament has to say about a Christian's responsibility to be a loving person and how I was going to present it. I hate to admit this but I did some fretting about it. Then, about two weeks ago Debi gave me four cassettes of sermons I had spoken in February 2005. I didn't even remember I had done them but she not only remembered them but found them and made my job so much easier! Thank you Debi!

The phrase "you shall love your neighbor" is found three times in Matthew and one time each in Mark, Romans, Galatians, and James.

Two times John quotes Jesus issuing a commandment to love.

John 13:34 *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."*

In I John, the Apostle twice repeats this command and adds some to it.

I John 3:23 *And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.* Here he combines John 3:16 and John 15:12: Believe and love each other.

Then in chapter 4 John makes a startling statement!

1 John 4:19 *We love because he first loved us.*

1 John 4:20 *If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.*

1 John 4:21 *And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.* This has to be a love that comes from God and is supernatural!

Then this issue becomes more complicated with the question "who is my brother?" Jesus gets this question in Luke 10:25-37 and his answer is now called the story of the 'Good Samaritan' where a stranger and foreigner aids someone that is ignored by his own countrymen. Jesus asks: "who is the good neighbor?" The man answers "the one who helped him."

Then Jesus said; *"Go and do the same!"*

James deals with a similar issue when he confronts partiality in church where the 'well to do' are treated differently, and better, than 'the poor'. Discrimination because of dress or being disadvantaged is seen by

James as judging with evil thoughts. His words not mine! He finishes this thought by quoting Jesus:

James 2:8 *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself", you are doing well.*

One last thought, in John 13:34. Jesus teaches a new commandment then makes a statement that many modern Christians don't seem aware of.

John 13:35 *"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

It's not good Bible doctrine or, going to 'the right church', that He thinks defines us to the world, but how we love the lovable and the unlovable.

God Bless!

Richard

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