



# Sunday Teaching Guide

Love Your Neighbor, Week 1

October 1, 2023

## Bible Texts

- Matthew 22:37-39
- 1 John 3:16
- Philippians 2:1-11

## Important Terms

- LEVAV: This Hebrew word means "heart."
- NEPHESH: This Hebrew word is normally translated as "soul," but means more like "wholeness of our being."
- ME'OD: This Hebrew word is an adverb that gets translated as "strength" but means "very."

## Sermon Notes

- Jesus tells that there are two connected commandments that sum up the law. The first is to love God with the very essence of our identity. We are to love God with the throne of our heart, removing myself and putting God first. We are to love God with the very breath in our lungs; our lives are a gift to be given. We are to love God with the power of our lives, the power to choose what to do with the resources we have been given.
- The second commandment is to love our neighbors as ourselves. Jesus wants us to live sacrificially for our neighbors, an act with Jesus demonstrates for us with his life and death. In 1 John, the writer tells us that just as Jesus laid down his life for us, we should lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.
- The time of communion is an opportunity to examine our lives upon reflection of the cross. During communion, we remember what Jesus did for each and every one of us as an act of his love for all of us. As we consider that, we also think about how we should not look for our own interests, but look out for the interest of others. We should consider Jesus' example: how he took the nature of a servant to serve and to be with us.

## Reflection Questions

- What would you have described were ways to love your neighbor before listening to the sermon?
- The author of 1 John explains that we should lay down our lives for our neighbors. What do you think that means in 21st century America?
- The author of Philippians explains that Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. What lesson do you think we can learn from Jesus' example here?
- Which do you think seems easier: loving God fully or loving your neighbor fully? Are they both equally hard?
- Why do you think Jesus wanted to add that we should love our neighbors as ourselves? How would we understand following Jesus differently without this additional commandment?

## Prayer for the Week

- God, your son Jesus taught us the importance of loving our neighbors just as we love you and love ourselves. Send your Holy Spirit into our lives so that we can follow this commandment even when it seems an impossible task. Amen.

## Additional Readings

- John 13:34-35
- Galatians 5:14
- James 2:8