

The Second Command

I just love a yearly Bible reading plan. I am always amazed how much I forget, and how many things I think I see for the first time (of course, I might have felt like that last year, but I forgot). I saw something I've never noticed before in week's reading that has to do with the first and second greatest commands. The greatest command is a reference to Jesus' response when certain opponents tried to trap him in a question, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" (Mk. 12:28). Jesus answered by quoting Deut. 6:5: Love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind (Matt. 22:37-38; Mk. 12:29-30). Then, he mentioned a second command, which is a quote from Lev. 19:18: Love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:39; Mk. 12:31).

Last week we read from Lev. 19 and verse 18 jumped off the page. The first thing that came to my mind was the parable of the Good Samaritan in Lk. 10:25-37. Jesus told a teacher that to love God and to love his neighbor is the key to eternal life. But then the teacher asked, "And who is my neighbor?" In response, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan. According to D. A. Carson, "With the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus will demonstrate that even one's enemy is one's neighbor (Luke 10:25-37), contrasting dramatically with conventional Jewish interpretations."¹ This lines up precisely with Paul's teaching in Phil. 2:4: Look out for other people's interests. This is what it means to love one's neighbor.

Last week I noticed the context and not just the verse, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, *but you shall love your neighbor as yourself*: I am the Lord" (vv. 17-18). It is interesting to me that the original context of what it meant to love one's neighbor was not necessarily to care for everyone (although that is certainly implied just a few verses later: Lev. 19:33-34), **but to work out differences with your brother**.

Different versions treat the Hebrew in different ways. The ESV (quoted above) says to "reason" with your neighbor. The NASU uses "reprove" and the NIV/NKJV use "rebuke." I tend to think the idea is that expressed in Prov. 27:5-6, "Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." The idea is not necessarily to "call someone on the carpet," but to work through issues whatever they may be. After all, this person is a brother and a neighbor.

Sometimes this "working out" is going to call for an uncomfortable conversation. Both the ESV and NIV use the word "frank." Speak openly. Speak honestly. But speak in love (Eph. 4:15). The Faithlife Study Bible has a neat little note about this context, "Instead of harboring ill feelings, open communication is the way of holiness." A follow-up comment addresses the consequences of failing to follow God's way, "Vengeance is the natural consequence of harboring ill feelings and grudge-bearing. Personal offenses must be rectified."²

Do not misunderstand my point. Jesus painted a clear picture of what loving one's neighbor looks like in the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Lk. 10. We cannot fulfill the second commandment if we are not willing to

¹ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 82.

² John D. Barry, Michael R. Grigoni, Michael S. Heiser, et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software: 2012), Le 19:18.

extend ourselves to others who need help. But, that Jesus stated the second commandment by quoting Lev. 19:18, and since that context specifically says that to love one's neighbor is to work through problems and to not bear grudges, then doesn't it follow that a failure to work through problems is a failure to fulfill the second commandment—**especially** when grudges are held? I cannot claim to love you, nor you me if we cannot speak opening with one another—my neighbor, my brother, my sister. What is more, to harbor a grudge is to incur sin. Let us strive all the more to fulfill the second command.

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