

we truly loved our neighbours as ourselves?

“Love your neighbour as yourself”

Matt 22:39

Lev 19:18, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27

Do you ever find yourself applying different standards to yourself than you do to those around you? It can be easy to find reasons as to why behaviour that has hurt others is justified, but then not be as forgiving towards others when they behave in the same way. Whether you are more, or less, favourable towards yourself than you are to others, Jesus makes it clear that we are to love ourselves and our neighbours equally, with God's love for us as the standard that we aim for.

Biblical Love

The Bible tells us a lot about the nature of love and, through Jesus, shows us the ultimate example of how to love others perfectly.

Love is (or should be)...

Patient, kind, not envious, not boastful, not arrogant, not rude, not insistent on getting its own way, not irritable, not resentful, rejoices with truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, never ending. (1 Cor 13:4-8)

Humble, gentle, patient, accepting, unity of the Spirit, peace, compassionate, forgiving. (Eph 4:2-3 & 32)

Genuine, honouring to others. (Rom 12:9-10)

Sacrificial, servant-hearted (John 15:12-13)

The perfect bond of unity (Col 3:14)

The evidence that we are in God, free of fear, a command from God. (1 John 4:16-21)

The fulfilment of the law (Rom 13:10)

Constant (Prov 17:17)

The motivation for all we do (1 Cor 16:14)

Who are our Neighbours?

In the context of Matt 22:39, “neighbour” describes “any other man irrespective of race or religion with whom we live or whom we chance to meet” (Thayer's Greek Lexicon).

In other words, everyone:

Our spouses (Eph 5:25, Titus 2:4)

Our families (1 John 4:20, Prov 17:6)

Our brothers and sisters in Christ (Rom 12:10)

Non-believers (1 Peter 2:17)

Our enemies (Matt 5:43-58)

How do we Love Them?

“Dear Children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” (1 John 3:18)

This verse tells us that it's not enough to show love for people just with what we say. We need to demonstrate our love through our actions with honesty, integrity, justice and impartiality.

1 John 4:7-21 explains how God is love, and that our love for others is rooted in our certainty that we are saved, through Jesus, because of God's perfect love for us.

As such, if we want to love others effectively, we must also understand, and be convinced of, God's love for us.

This Month's Challenge... Set aside some time to meditate on the scriptures about God's perfect love for us and His command for us to love others. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can best demonstrate God's love for those with whom you live or chance to meet.
At the end of the month, reflect on how this has changed your interactions with your neighbours.