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### **Transcript**

### **Love Your Neighbor – Part 2 – A Kingdom Value**

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This presentation is a continuation of our series, *Love Your Neighbor*. This is part 2. The title is *Love Your Neighbor, A Kingdom Value*.

In the first of this series, which we called *The Good Samaritan*, we saw that loving our neighbors as ourselves is the second great principle of God's law. We also saw that to follow this principle requires a total commitment to it – so much so that very few of us have the resources to completely commit to all the needs of others that we encounter. There is a reason God holds this expectation out to us and we're going to talk today about why God wants us to learn to love our neighbors *now*, and why He gives us chances to learn this value every day.

Let's think first about how much we have to learn to be a viable human being. The womb is a different place from being out in the world. When a baby is born, they know nothing about their new life and new environment. Everything a baby needs to know to be successful in adult life must be learned. A huge amount of time is taken by parents to socialize a child. "Don't go out in the street." "Don't eat dirt." "Don't chew with your mouth open." "Keep your elbows off the table." "Don't kiss the dog on the mouth – or anywhere, for that matter." "Don't talk about bathroom issues with your teacher and friends." "Wear your pants right side out – the side with the belt loops is the right side." Or, as we saw with Ruprecht, "Don't stick a fork in your eye." And on and on it goes. There's so much to learn to become a human. And parents need to be extremely patient, and watchful, careful with their children.

I remember once, when our oldest was barely old enough to walk, and Elaine had just returned from shopping. So, I took my daughter and I plunked her down on the floor out of the way so that we could bring in the groceries. It was hot out, so we were bringing our food into the house from the trunk of the car as quickly as we could, trying to get all the groceries in where it was cooler. On one of my trips back and forth, on my way in, I saw my daughter had, in just a few

seconds, managed to get the childproof lid off a quart bottle of Clorox and was working at getting her mouth around the opening. Terrifying! A disaster averted just in time. How that happened, I will never know. I mean, we were right there with her. So, there are iffy things about raising children, right?

There's also so much for us to learn to be a viable God. We're just like children when it comes to the spiritual world and spiritual principles. We're spiritual infants.

Let's look in 1 Corinthians 3:1.

**1 Corinthians 3:1** – *But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh – still thinking that way. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?* That's why the first beatitude – which they're all attitudes necessary for success in the spiritual realm – is to be poor in spirit – to understand that we know nothing about God unless God shows it to us. We're on our own – never going to figure it out. So, we need to listen up!

When we're called by God, and when we accept Him as our God, we learn that He has set us on a journey – a pilgrimage – headed toward eternal life with God as God. And yet, we know nothing about where we're going, what it will be like, and how we should get there. God's our parent and it's His job to socialize us for life in His Kingdom.

Some of the things we have to learn, and have such a hard time learning, are so simple to God. Love God with all your heart. Don't make idols of Him. Don't carry His name in vain. Rest and worship every Sabbath. Love and respect your parents. Don't kill. Be faithful to your mate. Don't steal. Don't lie. Don't covet. Love your neighbor as yourself. Keep your eyes on God so you don't sink. These are all simple things for God, but hard for us because we're spiritual infants.

So, God stands over and beside each of us, like a good parent, every day of our God-infancy, teaching us how to be a successful member of His family. Perhaps that's why Jesus said, “If we don't stand guard over God's other children, a millstone may be in our future. All God's children are important to Him, and He wants them to be important to us too.

So, all these things seem impossibly hard for us. There's a family story about something I said when I was five. I don't remember saying it, but I remember this story being told periodically as I was growing up. You know how kids say those things that are kind of memorable and endearing? My mother was cleaning house and she asked me to empty my father's ash trays – he smoked. And I told her I didn't want to do that. And she said, “It won't take long. There are only

two of them.” And I said, as I moved toward the first one, “I have to do all the work around here.” So, you know, when we suffer great loss – we lose our life mate, or our child, or when other loved ones are lost to us, when we have terrible trials, or even when we’re feeling unjustly put upon – “I have to do all the work around here” – God sympathizes with us, but He keeps the learning process going. We still need to learn those things. I think, sometimes, He may wonder how long it will take us to get it. We need to understand all the things of God, just like we need to learn not to chew with our mouths open. All those things that He wants to teach us will make up our life in eternity. It’s not just for now. It’s how things are going to be all the rest of our eternal lives.

Sometimes, He saves us from our foolishness and sometimes He lets us experience the consequences of our own foolish actions, so that when the trumpet sounds and we’re changed, we will already know how to act.

Elaine and I were watching *The Chosen* last night – season 3, episode 7 and 8. Earlier, Jesus had sent out His disciples two by two to prepare various areas for His eventual arrival. Philip and Andrew were sent to the Decapolis with instructions to preach only to the Jews there. But there were many Gentiles living in that area, as well as Jews, and they heard what Philip and Andrew preached. This caused friction between the two groups. After Philip and Andrew had returned to Capernaum, messengers soon came from the Decapolis, begging that they would come back, because the whole region was in a violent uproar – Jews against Gentiles. So, they went back and it only made it worse. They were like little children. They were not proficient yet. But God sent them out on a training mission, and they messed things up. So, the experience taught them that they didn’t know everything. That’s important. Right? So, finally Jesus took all twelve disciples with Him to the Decapolis to calm things down. I thought the writers of this program did such a great job of showing the patience that Jesus had to exhibit to deal with His disciples, let alone the crowd, who even after watching Him heal hundreds of people, and after healing people themselves, were essentially clueless about what they were supposed to be learning. Like little children, they needed to hear and see over and over how to act like Christ acted. At one point, as people started to show up, He made His disciples sit down on the ground around Him, in the midst of this agitated and argumentative group. And His disciples didn’t want to. They felt vulnerable – frightened them sitting among a standing mob. So they wanted to argue and fight with the crowd. At one point, after an insult had been hurled at them, James and John – you remember they were the Sons of Thunder, right? – they stood up ready to rock. And Jesus told them to sit down. The last thing this crowd needs is thunder! You could see, by the looks on their faces, they realized they had made an error. After watching Jesus treat everyone in a loving and respectful way many times, the Sons of Thunder had still not learned their lesson. While they were sitting there, they were worried about their safety. Jesus told them, after all that they had seen, that they had short memories. They were going to be okay. And they should have known that. That’s what He was saying to them. In the process, He healed a man with an infected leg, and soon the entire mob of 4,000 people sat down as well. They were ready to listen after seeing only one miracle while the disciples still hadn’t gotten the message. So, this event in the

Decapolis is in the Bible, but not the details. In creating the extra-biblical picture, the writers were actually helping us to understand why Jesus kept saying, “Oh, you of little faith!” So, the writers understood the point and made it alive for us. It was not like something was added to the Bible, but a way to make the Bible more easily understood.

Earlier in this series, there was a flash forward to sometime after Jesus had died and been resurrected. John, who had been assigned the care of Jesus’ mother, was talking to Mary, reminiscing about events of their lives with Jesus. John exclaimed, “He put up with so much from us!”

We’re all babies and God is our parent, every day getting us ready for His Kingdom. Just like when parents have children, they have to protect them and watch over them, and there are so many things they have to teach them. Well, He has to keep teaching us the same things over and over and over again. But we often remain clueless.

Our neighbor is just the same as we are, and we all need the same things. We’re all headed the same direction. We’re all clueless about God life and yet we’re all loved by God, as He stands right beside each one of us – Christian and non-Christian alike. We’re supposed to love each other. But it’s so hard for us.

We think of *love your neighbor as yourself* as the second principle of God’s law. And it is. We think that way because Jesus said that. But do you know what else it is? Love your neighbor is a Kingdom principle. It’s the second greatest principle of God’s nature. It’s the way life works in God’s family. And it’s the way God works. All the members of God’s eternal family will love each other. And God is committed to teaching us how to do that – with the same kind of commitment He has.

There’s a story in the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel, where Daniel prayed and fasted for three weeks for some information from God. After three weeks of praying and fasting, a mighty angel appears to him – probably Gabriel, although it doesn’t specifically call him that by name in this event. We know that Gabriel had had interaction with him previously. This angel tells him that he is greatly loved by God. And from day one of his prayer, this angel had been sent to answer him. But he tells Daniel that he was resisted for three weeks by the prince of Persia. Now that clearly isn’t the true prince of Persia – the physical prince – but probably an arch-demon or maybe even the devil himself. He then tells Daniel that Michael – one of the two greatest angels of all – an archangel – came to help him fight his way through to Daniel so that he could deliver the message

Have you ever listened to soldiers talk about the experience of battle? They all say the same thing. They say when you’re in the thick of battle, the only reason you’re there fighting is for each other. In the thick of battle, that’s all they have – is each other. All the politicians that started

the war, and all the munitions manufacturers, they aren't around anywhere. So, all you have is each other.

So, as these two immensely powerful stood, perhaps back to back, fighting off the evil hordes, how do you think they felt about each other. Yeah. They had love and respect. So, love your neighbor is a foundational Kingdom principle. We need to learn that before we get there or we'd mess things up. It's more important than getting to work on time or eating dinner. Excusing ourselves because we don't know CPR – when we wheel up on an auto accident and we just drive by, excusing ourselves because we don't know CPR, or because it will make us late going to work – that doesn't cut it.

Here's the thing: We can be as stubborn and as dense and hard-hearted as we want, but resistance only prolongs the lesson. You know, if you didn't eat with your fork and you continued to eat with your hands, the lesson went on until you finally got it. And that's how this works too. God is going to teach us how to love our neighbors and He's going to be successful at it. We *will* learn, but how hard will it be on us to learn that? Well, that's the question, isn't it? God is love. And we are learning to be loving, though not easily. It's tough slogging for us and for God for us to learn how to love God and love each other.

I remember, again, in *The Chosen*, where Jesus had come to His home town, Nazareth, and when He spoke in the synagogue, He explained that He was the Messiah, and they were absolutely enraged. The rabbi said, "If you don't renounce Your words, we will have to kill you, as it says, 'A false prophet' in the law and the prophets." And Jesus said to the rabbi, "I am the Law and the Prophets" – that is the embodiment of them in the flesh. He *was* the Law and the Prophets. He lived it. God will one day, in an instantaneous resurrection, change our bodies to spirit and finish the work in our hearts that He had started now, teaching us to love God and love our neighbors, like everyone does in the Kingdom. That's the whole point of all of it.

Now, there are roadblocks. I want to talk about some of them for a while. Let's go to Matthew 16:5. They're on a trip – they're on a boat headed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

**Matthew 16:5-11** – *When they reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring bread. Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, "We brought no bread." But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."* So, it seems that they could watch Him do miracle after miracle and still not see His ability. When there was no food, Jesus did not have anxiety about what He was going to eat like they did. He didn't worry about what was going to happen for dinner. The disciple blew right by His statement about the leaven of Pharisees,

because they were worried about what to eat. “Oh, no! Terrible! What are we going to have to eat. We forgot our bread.” And He chides them about how many times they’d seen Him feed large groups of people from nothing. So, they didn’t know yet that God would take care of all their needs, if they would just put the Kingdom of God first in their thinking. And they didn’t know any more about how to do that than we do.

Let’s look in Mark 9:33.

**Mark 9:33-37** – *And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. They kind of suspected that wasn’t going to fly with Him. They were concerned about status and power. And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” One of those great Kingdom paradoxes. And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.” Children don’t care about who’s in charge. They don’t care about status. They just believe what parents tell them without questioning. They believe it.*

Mark 10:13. Now, right after He said this to them – just a few verses later – it says:

**Mark 10:13-16** – *And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.*

So, if a child had seen Jesus make bread out of nothing, they wouldn’t be worried about what they would have to eat. They would just want something to eat when they were hungry. They would trust that God would provide it. That’s what He’s telling them. We need to be like children. Now, the child that He had was probably not an infant. The analogy still holds true about socialization, but a child – maybe a second grader, kindergartener.

What is it about kids that we need to be like? Well, He told them that they needed to be like a child, and there they are, running them off. In that culture, much like ours, children had no status – not important. So, He’s saying status isn’t important when He tells them to be like a child. But they don’t get it. They don’t get that we have to change our thinking about what’s important.

Let’s look in Mark 10:17.

**Mark 10:17-25** – *And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him,*

*“Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone – very humble. No status. You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”*

So, what was Jesus telling this man to do? Why did he need to get rid of his wealth? Well, it says he was young, so he’s probably single. Probably had no one to take care of yet. No responsibilities – to feed and house and clothe – other people. With all this wealth, and what it takes to steward all of that, all the status that comes from money, and all those things that he had because he had wealth would just get in his way. So, telling him to get rid of his treasure, his status, his importance, his easy life, you see, and seek treasure and relationship with God. Put that first.

Now, we know that many of the patriarchs in the Bible were rich. Abraham was a wealthy man. This isn’t so much about the money as it is a priority. Where does it fit on the priority list? “Follow Me.”

Little children – here we go again – do not care about status or even about things. We cannot prove to a child that we love them by giving them things or taking them places, like soccer practice, or even by being important in our community. Children learn that they are loved one way only, and that’s through relationship – a loving relationship. When we love children, and we know how to express that to them, that’s when they feel loved.

So, God *wants* us to focus on our relationship with Him. “Follow Me.” Don’t think about all the things you have to do in your life. Think about following God. “Start doing what I do and start thinking like I think.” The disciples – a few verses earlier – were arguing about who was going to be the greatest among them. They just didn’t get it. Maybe more than people today who vie and maneuver for ordination in the church. So, they saw this, and they heard Him say that you couldn’t enter the Kingdom of God if you were rich and ....

**V-26** – *And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “Then who can be saved?” To them, it sounded impossible! Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”* And that’s how the things of God can be possible for us.

And that is the subject of the third and final part of this series, *Love Your Neighbor*.

This is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.

We are a youth advocacy ministry. One of the reasons we made this presentation is to strengthen you in the faith, not just for yourself, but so that you can help all your congregation's children, who are a vital part of your spiritual family, and a walking example of how you need to trust God in your life. Remember, as an adult member of a congregation in the Church of God, you are responsible to help promote peace, safety and inclusiveness of all children in your congregation. The children in your congregation are your neighbors too. And, if you live with that knowledge, you are closer to God.