

# 25 WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

"Who is my neighbor?" Jesus answered that question by telling a story that went something like this.

There once was a Jewish man who got mugged. The robbers beat him up, stripped him, and left him lying half dead by the side of the road.

Along came a priest. When the priest saw the man he quickly walked away. "He is probably dead," the priest thought. (They had rules about touching dead bodies.) "I just don't want to get involved."

Then came another religious leader, who also quickly walked away. "I don't want to brag," the leader thought, "but I would never beat someone and steal from them. Those robbers were terrible sinners."

Finally a Samaritan came along. When he saw the man, he rushed to

him, and began bandaging his wounds. The Samaritan took care of him and paid all the injured man's expenses while he was healing.

"Which of these men," Jesus asked, "was a neighbor to the injured man?"

"The one who showed mercy," came the reply.

"Go," Jesus said, "and be like the good Samaritan."

## 3 STATEMENTS

- Everyone is my neighbor: I must be loving to everyone.
- God has given us parents and others in authority to protect us.
- If a parent or other adult abuses you, get outside help; God does not want you to be hurt like that.



the  
*Source*

## LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR

The stunning thing about Jesus' story (see opening vignette) is that Jewish people hated Samaritans. They thought Samaritans were a bad race so tried not to go near them. But the Samaritan crossed over those racial boundaries and cared for the Jewish man.

Our neighbors are at the next table in the lunchroom, across the street, on the other team, across town at a rival school, in the next state or province, across the globe in another country, and across your family dinner table. If we understand Jesus, we have to say, *Everyone is my neighbor; I must be loving to everyone.*

BETTY GROSCHIN



*Everyone is my neighbor; I must be loving to everyone.*

Remember that Jesus said there are two great Commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

Jesus brought those two loves together, because that's where they belong! You cannot claim to love God if you don't love people. You cannot love God and hate people, any more than you can smile and frown at the same time. Our personal relationship with God, if it is real, must "go public" as it affects our relationship with others. There is nothing private about it. It moves us into community. "Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen" (1 John 4:20).

The first three Commandments protect the relationship between you and God. They are sometimes called the *First Table of the Law*.

The next seven Commandments protect the relationship between you and the people around you. They are sometimes called the *Second Table of the Law*.

## ORDER OUT OF CHAOS

When God first created the world, the Bible describes it as God bringing order out of chaos. When sin entered the world, we had chaos again. In a world where everyone wanted to do as they pleased, disorderly conduct was everywhere. So God gave us the last seven Commandments.

These Commandments protect human community by building up trust and peace among people. They protect us from others and others from us. For example, the Commandment "You shall not steal" protects your things and your neighbors' things. The Commandment "You shall not kill" protects your life and your neighbors' life.

But who is going to enforce those laws? Who is going to keep order in this chaotic world?

Parents, for one. And that's why God starts out this Second Table of the Law with the Commandment about parents. It brings order out of chaos.

## GOD'S PROTECTORS

The Fourth Commandment says, "Honor your father and your mother." It doesn't say obey your parents, but obeying is part of honoring, and the Bible makes that clear: "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord" (Colossians 3:20).



SAMUEL B. SAYLOR

*God has given us parents and others in authority to protect us.* Can you imagine a baby trying to live alone? Or six- and eight-year-old siblings trying to live together without parents there to break up any arguments? Perhaps at times you can imagine a fifteen-year-old living on her own, but how would she buy what she needs? How would she keep safe and warm?

For your sake, God has given you your parents. They protect you. They care for you. They help bring order into your life. And they love you!

The love of a parent is a sample of the love God has for us. Your parents are not perfect. They, too, are saints and sinners. They make mistakes. But through it all, most parents want what's best for you. It may not always be obvious, but they love you. Even when you might be arguing with them, beneath it all, they love you.

"Will I always have to obey them?" The Bible says *children* must obey their parents. Nowhere does the Bible say adult sons and daughters had to obey all their parents asked. But the job of *honoring* your parents never ends. Until the day they die, God wants you to honor them, show them respect, and love them.

"When will I be considered an adult?" That is not so easy to answer. Sooner or later you'll be making your own decisions and taking full responsibility for yourself. The trouble is that children usually want freedom too much and responsibility too soon. And parents often hold it back too long. That's one of the things that makes the teen years so difficult. That's why you may have found yourself having some conflict with your parents.

Sit down with one or both of your parents or guardians and circle the age you each think most appropriately answers these questions. Then discuss your responses to see if you can agree.

*God has given us parents and others in authority to protect us.*

### 1. When might I start dating?

student response:

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 other

parent response:

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 other

### 2. When can I get a job?

student response:

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 other

parent response:

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 other

### 3. When should I move out?

student response:

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 other

parent response:

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 other

### 4. When may I start driving a car?

student response:

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 other

parent response:

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 other

### 5. When can I be totally on my own?

student response:

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 other

parent response:

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 other

### 6. When might I get married:

student response:

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 other

parent response:

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 other

Your parents aren't the only ones to honor and obey. God has given you protectors all over the place. These people have authority over you—for your own good. You need to obey your teachers. (Can you imagine the chaos in the classroom if no one obeyed the teacher?) You must obey the police. (How safe would you feel without police protection?) You must obey your boss at work. (Neither your employer nor you could conduct business if there were no order in the place.) You must obey your government. (Like the police, the government is God's gift to you to protect you and provide for your needs.)

Thank God for these protectors! There would be chaos without them.

## WHEN PROTECTORS ARE WRONG

We all know that parents and others in authority make mistakes. We continue to honor and obey them because we trust that they are trying their best to be what God has asked them to be.

But sometimes our protectors are wrong. All good parents gently discipline their children and that is as it should be. But sometimes parents go too far.

Some parents, in the name of "discipline," hurt their children. Some parents threaten and say terribly hurtful things to their children. That is verbal abuse and that is wrong. Even parents who are good in many ways, sometimes strike out in anger and violently harm their children. That is physical abuse and that is wrong. Some parents in sick confusion use their children to satisfy their sexual lusts. That is sexual abuse and that is wrong.

*If a parent or other adult abuses you, get outside help; God does not want you to be hurt like that.* If a parent or other adult abuses you and tells you that you must not tell anyone, you must disobey. Often abusive parents threaten their son or daughter so they are afraid to tell. Go to your pastor or a school counselor or a doctor or a nurse

*If a parent or other adult abuses you, get outside help; God does not want you to be hurt like that.*

or a teacher or a principal. These people are God's protectors too. When parents are wrong, God has not left you helpless. Through these other protectors, God's presence is very real.

The same is true with governments. You should obey your government and others in authority. But there may come a time when you need to say, "No!"

This century saw Hitler come to power in Nazi Germany. This government brutally destroyed anyone in its path to power. It torturously invaded surrounding countries. It methodically murdered over six million Jews. And the government demanded obedience!

Sometimes there is a need for Christians to "obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 5:29). It is hoped this won't happen to you, but if someone in authority over you demanded that you break a Commandment or be unloving, you must disobey them in order to obey God.

## I THINK

If your employer told you to record some figures falsely to get around some government rules or to pay lower taxes, what would you do? What if he or she told you that you would be fired if you didn't do as you were told?

If your parents asked you to stop being with your friend because your friend is a different race than you, what would you do? What if they said you could never drive their car if you disobeyed?

If you knew a friend that was being abused by his or her parents but your parents ordered you not to get involved, what would you do?

*Shaping*  
life

## FRAGILE TRUST

Her parents were leaving town for a few weeks. They had decided that she was old enough to stay home alone. "It'll be okay," she had told them. "You can trust me. Everything will be fine."



Once they had gone, she had one thing on her mind: *party!* Her parents had told her she couldn't have more than one friend over at a time. But she had the party anyway. She figured they'd never find out.

But they did.

Something very precious was broken that night: trust.

After that, her parents weren't sure if they could believe her anymore. Every promise, every agreement, everything she said was suddenly questioned. "If she lied to us once," they thought, "she could do it again."

Their relationship was hurt. Her mother said, "I used to feel so close to you, like I really knew you. I trusted you. And now I don't know. . . ."

Her parents forgave her, it wasn't that, but it takes time for trust to grow back again.

Trust is fragile and so hard to repair that you need to be worthy of your parents' trust. Stand by your promises. Say what you mean and mean what you say. For the sake of your relationship with your parents, be trustworthy.

Imagine that you've disobeyed them in some way—any way. In the long run, it is better to have your parents mad at you after you've told them the truth than to have things temporarily peaceful while you cover up the truth. In this way you will honor your parents.

In fact, this is good advice for all your relationships. You can honor your neighbors by being trustworthy. That's what the last seven Commandments are all about.

Jesus summed up the Commandments by telling us to love. The depths of any loving relationship can be measured by the level of trust you share.

You cannot control how trustworthy someone else is. You may in time find you don't trust a certain person. But *you* are called to be trustworthy. You are called to stand by your word.

Take a few minutes to answer these questions and discuss your responses with your classmates.

1. List a time that you broke a promise or an agreement with a parent or guardian.

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What did your parent or guardian say or do?

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What did you say or do?

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2. List a time that you kept a promise or agreement with a parent or guardian, even when it wasn't easy.

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What did your parent or guardian say or do?

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What did you say or do?

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3. How did these experiences affect your relationship with your parent or guardian?

## FURTHER

# opportunities

### *Bible Reading*

The Book of James tells us that faith shows itself in works of love for others. You can't claim to have faith in God and not love others. If your life is not full of works of love, your faith is dead. Read James 1:26—2:5, 14-17. Do you think your church favors one class of people over another? Does your love stretch beyond your class or color? If you measured your faith by your loving actions, how alive would you say it is?

### *Memory*

Memorize the Fourth Commandment and its meaning. As an additional challenge, memorize one or more of the following: Proverbs 23:22; Luke 10:25-28; Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-2; Romans 13:8-10; Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21.

### *Activity 1*

Interview one or more of your grandparents. What kind of relationship did they have with their parents? What kind of relationship did they have with their children?

### *Activity 2*

Part of being obedient in a democratic country is taking part in the political process. It is your right. It is your responsibility. What are ways you could be involved? Make a list. Then add to it by asking your parents for further suggestions.

### *Activity 3*

At the dinner table some evening, discuss family trust. Share some of the ways your family life is built on trust. Honestly talk about ways in which trust may already have been broken. Discuss ways to rebuild that trust. End your family discussion with a prayer.

## FOCUS



### ON SAMARITANS

The Samaritan people and the Jewish people hated each other. This racial hatred had its beginnings early in the history of both peoples.

In 922 B.C., after the death of King David's son, Solomon, the 10 northern tribes of Israel rebelled against the new king. The northern tribes, which included the people of Samaria, set up their own nation led by Jeroboam.

The Samaritans also had their own understanding of God. They accepted only the first five books of the Bible. They had their own religious rituals that were similar to those of the Jews, but their worship centered on Mount Gerizim rather than on Mount Zion (Jerusalem).

In 721 B.C., the Northern Kingdom was invaded by a foreign army and the Samaritan people intermarried. After that, the Jews considered the Samaritans a mixed race.

About 200 years later, the Samaritans helped the invading Assyrian army in its war against the Jewish people. In response, the Jewish high priest burned the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim. Even during the time of Jesus, the hatred and violence continued.