



Striving to Reflect God's Heart in Our Love for Others

by Esther Neal
Singles' Track | August 21, 2022

And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people . . . 1 Thess. 3:12

God's Supreme Example 1 John 4:16, 19

God's Two Greatest Commands

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."
Matthew 22:39-40

A. To Love God First (Matt. 22:38-40; Eph. 3:17-19)

Being rooted and grounded in love . . . and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Eph. 3:17

Reflect: *Are you filled up to all the fullness of God? Is His love flowing into you, and overflowing into the lives of others? Or have you been drinking at broken cisterns?*

B. To Love Your Neighbor

1. Love Yourself – See YOUR part in God’s story
 - A love without fear (1 John 4:18)
 - An honest evaluation (Rom. 12:3)
- a. Understand fully your identity in Christ (Gen. 1:26; 1 John 3:2; 1 Pet. 2:9)
- b. Get a good grasp of your callings and boundaries (Eph. 4:1)
- c. Understand your gifts, steward them well (Matt. 25; Eccl. 9:10)

He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much. Luke 16:10

- d. Learn to cultivate a grateful heart

The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me. Psalm 16:5-6

“We convince ourselves that God’s goodness to us will come in the form of our choosing – healing, rest, better friendships, a spouse, a child, or a better job. However, our ideas about what is good are not always the same as God’s ideas . . . At every moment, God is working to conform each of us into the likeness of Christ . . . Both our blessings and our trials propel us towards this ultimate and better good.” Melissa Kruger

2. Love your neighbor – see THEIR part in God’s story
a. As you love yourself (Matt. 22:39-40) → p. 2

In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you . . . Matt. 7:12

Who is your neighbor? _____

- b. As God has loved you (John 13:34-35)

Reflect: *How do you respond to people you meet every day? Are you able to see your own worth as well as others in being an image bearer of God? In the callings and giftings God the Creator has entrusted to you and them?*

God’s Heart for His Church

A. God LOVES the church (Eph. 5:25-29)

. . . for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church.

Reflect: *Do you love the church? Do you count yourself as one of the beloved?*

B. The unity of the church showcases the Gospel

. . . that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. John 17:20-23

Reflect: *Do you have a strained relationship at church? Does anyone have a bad impression of the church because of what you have done or said?*

C. The church is Christ's Body (Eph. 4:12-16; Rom. 12:10)

And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. . . . And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 1 Cor. 12:14-25

"You don't *find* community; you create it through love. . .
the Jesus questions that create communities are,
'Who can I love? Who is left out?'" Paul Miller

Troubleshooting

- **Conflict, envy, irritation** → p. 2 (James 4:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:22; 3:9; Rom. 15:7)

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart. 1 Peter 1:22

Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead. 1 Pet. 3:9

Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. Rom. 15:7

"If I fail to honor God's sovereignty in the influences he has placed in your life, and the way those influences have shaped you, I will attempt to take God's place and clone you into my image. I will tend to think my way is better than your way, my culture better than your culture, and my customs and manners more appropriate than yours." Timothy Lane & Paul Tripp

- **Be all things to all people** (Phil. 2:7; Rom. 15:1-3)

Troubleshooting

- **Besties** (Prov. 17:17; 18:24)

“Your family and closest friends have greater access to your life, plenty of one-on-one time with you in private, so why should they also have all your public time? They can talk to you later. One friend and I have made a pact that when we find ourselves gravitating toward each other, one of us will announce, ‘Come on! Let’s go touch some sheep!’” Elizabeth George

- **Loneliness** (Psalm 25:16; Isa. 53:3)

“Because Jesus is our friend, we no longer walk into a room alone and in need of friendship. He is with us! We are liberated to be a companion to someone else, rather than seeking one out for ourselves. We are freed to be the most interested person in the room, not the most interesting . . . You don’t have to be an extroverted, life-of-the-party type of person to apply this. It simply means that you are willing to greet others rather than waiting to be greeted. It means choosing to ask about their lives rather than looking for ways to share about yours. Good friends initiate conversations, ask questions, and listen well.”
Kelly Needham

- **Redemptive Speech** (Eph. 4:15; 1 Thess. 5:11)

Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. 1 Thess. 5:11

But speaking the truth in love . . . Eph. 4:15

Reflect: *Do you see yourself as an integral part of the church body? Does someone here think you have no need of them? Are your friendships only with people who are like you? Are you building up or tearing down with your speech?*

D. The Church is God's family (Mark 3:32-35, John 19:26)

... For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother. Mark 3:32-35

Have I aimed to have a relationship with:

- My family
- Single women I connect with
- Single women my age
- Single women younger than me
- Single women older than me
- Single brothers younger / older than me
- Single brothers in my age group
- Children
- Teens
- College Students
- Single moms
- Married couples w/o children
- Married couples with children
- Middle-aged couples
- Elderly couples
- Older widows / widowers
- People from our neighborhood

Am I practicing good works? (Isa. 1:17; Rom. 12; James 1:27)

... having a reputation for good works ... shown hospitality to strangers ... assisted those in distress ... devoted herself to every good work. 1 Tim. 5:9-10

Troubleshooting:

• How do I even start reaching out?

Come early, stay late. Don't be a pew warmer. Get out of your comfort zone. Learn names. Use every tool at your disposal: Prayer sheet, social media, mutual ministry.

• What about weddings, showers, sickness, funerals?

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 1 Cor. 12:26

Reflect: *Don't be afraid to invest in families. Do you have friendships outside your own status / gender group? Ask someone outside your group to pray with you. Be transparent and listen. Build a bridge. Adopt a family. Adopt an older friend. Practice good works. Bring a friend along!*

God's Heart Reflected

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you . . . Eph. 5:1-2

A. God is compassionate. He moves toward us.

(Titus 3:3-5; Eph. 2:1-7)

For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out." Ezek. 34:11

"There is tremendous relief in knowing that his love to me is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery now can disillusion him about me, in the way I am so often disillusioned about myself, and quench his determination to bless me." J. I. Packer

Reflect: *Are you moving towards people in their messiness? Even if they reject you or fail you? Aren't you glad God moves toward us?!*

B. God is gentle with us

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matt. 11:29

. . . Your gentleness makes me great. Psalm 18:35

*So, as those who have been **chosen of God, holy and beloved** put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you . . . Col. 3:12-13*

Reflect: *Are you gentle on others? Does your gentleness embolden them in their walk with Christ?*

C. God does not show partiality (Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 12:16)

At the judgment, Jesus will treat ministry to “*even of the least*” of our brothers as ministry to Himself. Matt. 25:40

If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. James 2:1-9

Reflect: *Who are your friends at church? Are you seeking position or power? Do your relationships point to Christ?*

“On the last day, Jesus will not ask about our IQ, social status, health, or wealth. He will ask how our relationships were. And the chief characteristic of a good relationship is love.”

Alfred Poirier

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STRIVING TO REFLECT

God's Heart

IN OUR LOVE FOR OTHERS

“What is the chief end of man?”

The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.



ETERNITY

“Theologically,
intellectually, we know
that God is good. But deep
in many of our hearts,
there lurks a suspicion that
He may not really be good
– at least, that He has not
been good *to me.*”

Nancy Demoss Wolgemuth





“Our relationship to God becomes the source of identity, belonging, direction, and purpose when we feel rudderless or lost at sea.”

Jennifer Marshall

“... God has ordained where we are to live and work out our daily lives. He orders whether we will be rich or poor. He has designed our physical assets or lack thereof, and the state of our health. And he has determined if and when we will be single or married. **Around the life of each one of his daughters God has drawn the lines in which we are to live, and it is only within those lines that each of us can find true contentment.**”

Lydia Brownback

“After we have done our best to communicate to a lost world, still we must never forget that the final apologetic which Jesus gives is the observable love of true Christians for true Christians.”

Francis Schaeffer



“Coveting blinds us to the hardships of our neighbor and instead focuses in on the ways the Lord is blessing her with what we desire. Her hardships will seem light in your eyes – how can she have any significant struggle when she has the one thing you desire? Coveting is the antithesis of Christ’s command to ‘love your neighbor as yourself,’ because our neighbor becomes our enemy simply by possessing what we desire. We cannot love well those whose lives or belongings we covet.”

Melissa Kruger

“... Neither our sin nor our environment defines us. We are not trapped by our own moodiness or despair. We can change because an infinite God is personally involved in the details of our lives. As bearers of God’s image, we can cry out for mercy and see God act in our circumstances or in our hearts. Jesus’s ‘judge not’ is a call to give people space to change, to back off from locking in on exclusively negative views.”

Paul Miller

“In some sense, [Jesus] may have been the loneliest human in history . . . No one has experienced or understands the depths of loneliness like Jesus.”

Jon Bloom



“Women who give generously in their particular season will most likely be women who have friendships that span different life stages. They seek to give understanding to other women in a different set of circumstances, and share their lives with those who may not completely understand their own struggles.”

Melissa Kruger



My family

Single women I connect with

Single women my age

Single women younger than me

Single women older than me

Single brothers younger / older
than me

Single brothers in my age group

Children

Teens

College Students

Single moms

Married couples w/o children

Married couples with children

Middle-aged couples

Elderly couples

Older widows / widowers

*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor . . . contributing to the needs of the saints, **practicing hospitality.***

Romans 12:10-13

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

James 1:27

*A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, ¹⁰ having a **reputation for good works**; and if she has brought up children, if she has **shown hospitality to strangers**, if she has **washed the saints' feet**, if she has **assisted those in distress**, and if she has **devoted herself to every good work**. 1 Timothy 5:9-10*