

**“Love your neighbor as yourself”
What does it mean to love yourself?**

All occasions of “Love your neighbor”

- Leviticus 19:1 – 18 A repeat of the Ten Commandments with some explanation, ending with “...but you shall love you neighbor as yourself.”
- Matthew 5:43 Jesus repeated a common misuse of the passage in the Sermon on the Mount, “You have heard that it is said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies...”
- Luke 10:25 – 37 A lawyer tested Jesus by asking, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replied by asking for the lawyer’s opinion, who answered, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’” The lawyer asked, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied with the parable of the Good Samaritan.
- Romans 13:8 – 10 Paul summed up the Law with, “‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the Law.”

Observations

- The applications of “Love your neighbor” all address how to treat someone else. No passage offers an explanation of “as yourself.”
- God’s teachings are consistent, so a reasonable assumption is that the ways in which we are to love our neighbor is the way we should also love ourselves.
- The verb is ‘agape:’ doing what is best for a spirit. The ideas of affection or attraction or thinking good thoughts are not included in the meaning. Other Greek words were used for those ideas. When explaining ‘agape,’ the idea of self-sacrifice is often included, but that does not work with the idea of loving oneself. Rather, the idea is selfless – not considering self.

When loving myself goes wrong

- Feeling good about my flaws.
- Treating others as worthless because I am worthless
- Treating others with anger because I am angry with myself.

Translating the examples of “loving my neighbor” to “loving myself”

- Loving myself means doing (not just thinking) what is best for my spirit.
- Leviticus 19:
 - 9 – 10 Leaving something for the poor. Leave something for yourself.
 - 11 – 15 Be honest and ethical. Be neither too hard on yourself nor too easy.
 - 16 – 18 Do not gossip about, hate, work against, or take vengeance against a fellow citizen of the Kingdom, but rebuke as necessary. Give yourself the same break.
- Matthew 5:
 - 33 – 37 Let your yes be yes and your no be no. Do not excuse your promises to yourself.
 - 38 – 44 Do good for those who abuse you. Kill yourself with kindness.
 - 45 – 48 Love as God loves. God thinks you are worthy; so should you.
- Luke 10:
 - 25 – 28 God thinks you can answer your own questions.

- 29 Beware of loopholes for me; be neither stricter nor easier, but consistent.
- 30 – 37 Take the time and bear the expense of being merciful.
- Romans 13:8 – 10 Do no harm Do not punish yourself.

Other passages about loving. Including myself in those I love.

- Matthew 7:1 – 5 Get the log out of your eye so that you may see clearly to clean the specks
 - Prioritize. Attack the big things first.
 - Faith is the cure; sin is just a symptom of malnutrition.
 - Liberty frees us from domination by others but enslaves us to God.
- Galatians 6:1 – 5
 - Gentleness
 - Objectivity
 - Rejoice in the successes of faith
- 1 John 3:10 – 24
 - 10 Failing to practice righteousness says that I do not love myself
 - 11 – 15 Hating your shortcomings can lead to murder of your spirit
 - 16 – 18 Lay down my physical life for my spiritual life
 - 19 – 21 We have confidence because God is greater than our hearts
 - 22 – 24 Monitor the work of the Spirit