

*And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." - Mark 12:28-31*

In the Jewish way of thinking, those two commands were inseparable; you could not love God and avoid loving your neighbor. These are linked concepts. Not only does the love of God enable us to love others, it compels us to love others.

We may be tempted at times to go beyond neglecting love for others and begin to actively dislike or even harbor hatred toward them. We within the church are not to *"repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing"* (1 Peter 3:8-9). Through Paul's writings the idea is expanded beyond the walls of the church to include everyone with whom we interact: *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all"* (Romans 12:18). A life without conflict is not always possible; there will always be someone who is unhappy about something. But we must make every effort to offer (and seek) forgiveness, pursue reconciliation, live with peace and show honor to others.

**Prayer prompt:** Take some time to honestly, thoughtfully and carefully reflect on the following questions from the book *Returning to Holiness* by Gregory Frizzell as well as the corresponding verses for each question. As you read, think and pray, if God convicts you of anything

related to relational sins, confess those sins to him, repent, and then thank him for his faithfulness to forgive (1 John 1:9).

- Is there anyone or any situation about which you harbor the slightest bitterness or resentment? (Matthew 6:14-15; Ephesians 4:26-27, 32).
- Are you secretly annoyed over the accomplishments or advancements of another? Are you secretly pleased over the misfortunes of another? (Proverbs 14:30).
- Have you grown cool toward gathering to worship with others? (Hebrews 10:25).
- Husbands... Do you lead your family, show Christ's sacrificial love by putting your wife's needs ahead of your own and strive for a loving and nurturing spiritual atmosphere at home? (Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 6:4).
- Wives... Do you treat your husband with honor and respect, seek to bring your heart in line with the pattern God has set in Scripture and display the strength of a gentle spirit? (Ephesians 5:22-23; 1 Peter 3:3-4).
- Parents... Do you model joy before your children when worshipping God and seek to lead them with wisdom? (Deuteronomy 6:7)
- Children/Teenagers... Do you honor your parents, listen to their guidance and respect them? (Ephesians 6:1-3; Proverbs 1:8-9; Colossians 3:20).

*Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. - Proverbs 19:11*

*If a brother or a sister is a Christian, we're in the same family; we're even in the same body. So if you hurt them, you dishonor the Father and harm yourself. - Adrian Rogers*

*Conflict is inevitable. Resentment is optional. - John Ortberg*