



Approaching God

Begin your time with an opening prayer

Take a moment to quiet your heart and ask God to help you experience his presence today. Ask Him to free you from any distractions as you begin to read and meditate on today's passages.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation - Slowly Read the Following Passages

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

Mark 12:28-34

28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" **29** "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **30** Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' **31** The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." **32** "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. **33** To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." **34** When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Romans 13:8-10

8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. **9** The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." **10** Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Thoughts to Ponder - Making Room for Your Neighbor

Read the short essay from Kaitie Stoddard - <https://shereadstruth.com/making-room-for-your-neighbor/>

"I'm embarrassed to admit how often I don't love my neighbor. One of my neighbors is a man who regularly stands on a corner near my house. Pangs of guilt shoot through my heart every time I shift my eyes away from him as I pass by. I have a long list of excuses for my inaction, of course—mind tricks and rationalizations to push away the guilt. It might not be safe to interact... I might enable an addiction... I can't make a difference anyway. But is ignoring his very existence the way of the gospel? When asked point-blank to identify the most important commandment, Jesus responded:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other command greater than these" (Mark 12:30-31).

Notice how Jesus snuck two commandments into His answer? With this twofold response, Jesus showed just how interrelated and inseparable these two commandments really are. To truly love God, we must also love people. On our best days, we want to obey Jesus's command. But if we're honest, some people are easier to love than others. Maybe they require less sacrifice, they love us back, or they just caught us in a good mood. Whatever our reasons, Jesus challenged this preference and inconsistency: "For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same?" In other words, don't expect a gold star for only loving when it's easy.

When we feel guilty, we often want to justify our actions. When the Holy Spirit whispers to our conscience, we might argue away that sense of conviction by asking, Who really is my neighbor? In the book of Luke, we see a lawyer asking Jesus for clarification on the very same question ([Luke 10:29](#)). Jesus responded with the parable of the good Samaritan, a story that still offends our sensibilities, no matter how many times we hear it. Jesus told this parable to show His followers both who they should love and how they should love. The Good Samaritan and the man in the ditch had nothing in common, except for this one important detail: they were both journeying on the same road. For Jesus, that was enough of a reason to stop, to care, to be a neighbor. Anyone in our path—or on our path—is our neighbor, and we are called to love them.

How can we possibly love every person we meet? The truth is, in our own strength, we can't—not perfectly. But the command remains. Scripture tells us that those who are in Christ are able to love because He first loved us ([1 John 4:19-20](#)). The life we live and the love we give are by His power and for His glory ([Gal 2:19-20](#)). The Son of God is the ultimate embodiment of the good Samaritan. Jesus left heaven to become one of us ([Phil 2:6-8](#)) to seek us out and meet us in our deepest need, when we were still lying dead in the ditch of our sin ([Eph 2:1](#)). He left His throne room to rescue us, even to the point of death on a cross. Let us love our neighbors with this same otherworldly love, the love of Christ.

Daily Reflection Questions

1. What do today's scripture passages teach us about making room for our neighbors?
2. How can we make room for our neighbors? What are 1 or 2 ideas that come to mind for you?

Close in Prayer:

Take some time to thank God for the community he has placed you in. Thank him for the neighbors that you have met and ask him to bring to mind individuals and families that you need to remember are your neighbors. Pray for opportunities to meet them or connect with them.