

Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.' This is the most important and first on my list. But there is a second to set alongside it: "Love others as well as you love yourself.' These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them." Jesus

Matthew 22:37-40, *The Message*

*But who is my neighbor?*

". . . Which one of these three, do you think proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to them, "Go and do likewise." Jesus

Luke 10:36-37, NRSV

"You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best--the sun to warm and the rain to nourish to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. Jesus

Matthew 5:43-45, *The Message*

"In a word, what I'm saying is, Grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you." Jesus

Matthew 5:48, *The Message*

"This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus

John 15:13, NRSV

Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, "How can I help?"

That is exactly what Jesus did. He didn't make it easy for himself by avoiding people's troubles, but waded right in and helped out. "I took on the troubles of the troubled," is the way the Scripture puts it. Even if it was written in Scripture long ago, you can be sure it's written for us. God wants the combination of his steady constant calling and warm, personal counsel in Scripture to come to characterize us, keeping us alert for whatever he will do next. May your dependably steady and warmly personal God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well as Jesus gets along with us. Then we'll be a choir--not our voices only, but our very lives singing in harmony in a stunning anthem to God and Father of our Master Jesus!

Paul

Romans 15:1-6, *The Message*