

## "Love Your Neighbor" Workshop Dallas Willard to Pastors, 2012

**Scribe's Comments** - The session was transcribed from the recording in good-faith effort but it is not verbatim. The **bold** and underline offer the scribe's emphasis and the [brackets] refer to other Willard teachings.



### "Love Your Neighbor"

[49:35]

[See Willard, "The Neighborhood Initiative"]

START - [Start 2:20]

I'm trying to start a movement to introduce speakers by listing their infirmities

Paul - *"I boast in my infirmities"*

Grace is not a consolation prize, it is the first prize.

However good of what we were doing, it has run out of gas. You find people searching, which is good. If you seek me, you will find.

### **The command to love your neighbor as yourself.**

People are generally wiped out by this command. Partly due to the fact that in our world, there are so many people. A lot of people have trouble identifying their neighbors. But, if that isn't done, how do you love your neighbor?

**Leviticus 19:18**, *"You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge towards the sons of your people. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."*

Loving your neighbor is founded in "I am the Lord."

**Mark 12 & Luke 10** - *"Love the Lord your God with your all...and your neighbor as yourself"* go together.

The illusion in our world that we can carry on the ethics of Jesus without the theology and the life that ties in to God that makes it possible not just to justice and hate them all equally. the equal and love them. We live in a world that is sick with justice with love. You have to go to love before you can go to justice. Justice will never do justice to justice. Love does not substitute for justice, it makes justice what it's supposed to be.

**Leviticus 19:34**, *"The stranger as the native among you and you shall love him as yourself."* The stranger is also the neighbor. How that works we'll have to talk about. This is one of the most improbable things that shows up

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in scripture. Your relationship to people included people who are not like you. culture, body, money, whatever. Under God, you are to love them as yourself. That's a part of our neighbor. God has increasingly forced people who are unlike together because it is his intention to pull every kind of people together in one love that is a social structure in love.

When Jesus came, He left them with the command to go to all nations - all kinds of people. The fundamental passage is to break down barriers. How to love across all boundaries - no Jew, Greek...male, female. Why? They are all persons inserted into a world in a particular place. We don't love people for diversity but for sameness. Diversity is a secular war cry as though there is something good about diversity. The idea is to get beyond diversity to what is the same.

*"You were aliens in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."*

\* The Good Samaritan is not in the text but there is not such thing as a 'good' Samaritan.

### **1.) What is Love?**

[13:40]

The intention to do good. That's how we love our neighbor - we seek what is good for them. We seek good for ourselves. Everything needs to be brought under God to understand you are your closest neighbor. You need to take care of what is good for you. That is not selfish. Selfish is where you want what you want. Under God and walking with Christ you've come to understand what you want is your main problem. You who think your desires are not your friend, winds up in the situation where we are today with money - people doing what they desire not what is good for them.

Desires are not your friend. Young people think "love" is "desire".

\* Love Chocolate cake. You don't love it. You want to eat it.

### **First Step - Be a Person of Compassion**

[17:15]

Love your neighbor is not special acts, it is an attitude towards people. A person of compassion is someone who has become able to love people. Deciding to become a person of compassion is crucial to loving your neighbor.

The Samaritan had compassion. The other two did not have compassion. Their problem was not that they were busy, they were not compassionate people. He felt for people. You have to be willing to do that. it is very threatening. It can overwhelm you if you don't have resources to work from.

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You have to go back to God to live as a compassionate person. Living as a compassionate person is the main thing we have to think about if we are thinking about loving our neighbor.

**Ephesians 3:13** - *"Not to lose heart...God from whom every family derives its name. Being rooted and grounded in love...to know what surpasses knowledge."*

You're reaching for compassion and God fills us because we are able to love because we have been loved. The foundation is our character as a compassionate person. You have to have a firm hold on the adequacy of God in order to feel what others feel. If not, you'll back away. If you don't feel that, you won't be compassionate and you won't love your neighbor a yourself.

**2nd Step - You have to decide who will be your neighbors.** [22:00]

Old way - "neighbors" are the people who are next door. The neighbors is who you have intimate involvement. Spouse, work, staff, fellowship.

*"Who is my neighbor?"* He thought he was off the hook.

Jesus said, "Who was a neighbor to the man in need?"

Our question - to whom will I be a neighbor? I pay special attention to. Who my neighbor is depends largely upon me.

We need to try to love the people who live next door. That is often a futile effort. They often don't want to be known.

People we are in contact with.

Prayer - "Am I to be a neighbor to this person?"

Don't start with a lot of people. What defeats the cause is people take on too much. Try to be a neighbor to one person for a few weeks. Invest in their life as you live with them. You listen to them, get to know their circumstances, pray specifically and begin to see the hand of God move in their life

The greatest thing is to give your neighbor the assured knowledge of God working in their life. What they really need is to know God.

Witnessing has been debauched. It is to bring someone to know. It is not "soul winning". It only occurs once in the Bible in Proverbs.

\* "wit" in witness refers to knowledge.

They need to know that, not just be talked into something. If you talk people into doing things, you've got a full time job for the rest of their life.

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Bring people to now the reality of God in their lives. Think small - one, two, three persons. Sometimes we lose our family because we did not love them as our neighbor. They didn't come to know and they drift away because they did not know the reality of God.

**3rd - List the people with whom you are intimately engaged. [30:55]**

Don't be over ambitious. To be a neighbor can be a significant undertaking. Really invest in people. Help them to find what they need.

Don't start with AIDS in Africa. Most people can get trapped in sentimental abstractions. People at a distance are much nicer than those who are right up against us.

**4th - Devote serious, attention and prayer to 2-3 people. [33:25]**

It may take a few months until it become a grace-sustained habit.

Then you can bring more people into that circle.

This is what we should be do in our churches.

*"Mark of a disciple is how we love one another."*

*We've cut that down so that doesn't mean a whole lot.*

How do we work that in our groups? The church is a witness of how life should be. The church should be a hospital in all sorts of stages.

A place where people live in healing love under the power of God.

We may need to change what we do. they may not be conducive to love our neighbor.

Don't announce the revolution. Teach it.

There is not hope apart from the churches. It is the pastors who must lead. They have the content, position and the power. No one else does.

Education is progressively coming to understand this but they don't know what to do about it.

"What they teach at Harvard is responsible for the mess we are in."

They are well meaning people who are doing their best. They don't have the content of "the kingdom of God is at hand". That will enable us to love our neighbor as ourselves. That comes as we learn how to live richly in from the Kingdom of God.

**5th - Necessary to Practice disciplines of spiritual life [36:30]**

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The growth required to live a life of neighbor love. You'll never feel adequate. The needs are too great.

You're not supposed to do it. A community is supposed to emerge. That's what our churches can be where people grow together to address their world with the good news of the adequacy of God to every human soul to love the Lord our God with all... That's something we do. It is not poured on our head as we walk out of church.

How can I love God with my all...heart, mind, strength, soul  
That's a whole life as laid out by Doctor Jesus.

The church is the natural unity of community. You can't get it without the church. We come as failures. If we are to be redeemed and reach out, it must be these little gourds that grow in power and wisdom so they can be the teachers of the nations.

That's why we are appointed to do - make disciples, submerge them in the Trinitarian reality and teach them to do all the things Jesus commanded.

Do you think that would make a difference? It would address the problems of individuals and groups that are unsolvable apart from what the redeemed people of Jesus Christ have to bring to the world. Nothing else will do it.

We've had a lot of time to try different things. Nothing else works. The redemption that comes to the people who are living as disciples of Jesus together...

**What does this require?**

[41:15]

The intention to do it.

You are apt to think, "What are we intending to do?"

What do we give most of our mental intention in church?

Is it forming communities of love that are so astonishing that people can not miss the

God should dwell in his people. That's His attention and He will make it come to pass.

*Is that our intention with our neighbors and in our fellowships?*

~ ~ ~ **End of Teaching @ 42:45** ~ ~ ~

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~ ~ ~ Q & A

**Q** - We want to serve our neighbor but we don't bring the gospel?

**A** - [42:49] - Young people are embarrassed by the gospel they've heard but they are not embarrassed to serve the poor. The problem is that "justice" is not the gospel. The proclamation that we live in a universe that is presided over by a being whose love is so great it is incomprehensible.

What is often called the "bringing of the gospel" is that the gospel gets lost. That means there's no real hope beyond human efforts.

The real issue is "What is our message? What are we preaching?"

The good news is - *"You're off the hook and you get to go to Heaven when you die."* Not much is said about if you will like it when you get there. If you don't like God, you won't like heaven.

**Q** - [45:15] Social gospel of "justice" - the only

**A** - [46:45] Without me you can do nothing, you will realize if you do nothing, it will be without Him.

They don't understand that grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude.

I Co 15, *"I have accomplished more than any of them, not I but the grace of Christ in me."*

We need to teach people how to be a part of the flowing of grace in the Kingdom of God. We don't do a lot of that in our churches.

Find the ones in the congregation ready to go and work with them. Minister to others, love them, teach them but work with the ones ready to go. Especially the ones out in the public. The public square comes to our church every day.

The church is for discipleship. Discipleship is for the world.

How to live their ordinary life in the Kingdom of God and that transforms the world and nothing else does.

~ ~ ~ End of Video @ 49:35 ~ ~ ~

For information & resources about Dallas Willard Ministries — [dwillard.org](http://dwillard.org).

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For a "Willard Teaching Toolbox" with dozens of teachings with A/V links & transcribed notes — [JesusCollege.com](http://JesusCollege.com)