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## *Devotion for November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021*

### *Matthew 22:23-46*

**Today's reading comes from Matthew 22:23-46, focusing on verses 34-39.** These verses likely sound very familiar to you, especially verse 39, "Love your neighbor as yourself." This verse is quoted often by Christians and non-Christians alike. Oddly enough though, oftentimes the first commandment that Jesus shared is left off.

If you've met me in person, you likely know by now that I tend to prefer to be a positive person, tend to put the best construction on things. So without being overly pessimistic, I think it's fair to say that this section of verses is very frequently used out of context. It's not up to us to make God's Word fit to what we want it to say, God has already established the Bible to mean exactly what it says. Many times "love your neighbor as yourself" is used as "let your neighbor get away with anything" or "don't worry about your neighbor" or "don't lovingly correct your neighbor."

But when we read this verse in context, when we see first that we are to love the Lord and then we are to love our neighbors, we can understand what it means to love our neighbor. It means when we love, we follow the example we are given by our God. We try to love unconditionally, we forgive, and we care for each other's needs. This also means we may need to lovingly point our neighbor back to God, to remind them of this first commandment and what it means to live a Christian life.

In a sinful world we will fail at this, there will be hurt and brokenness, especially if we are put in a position to speak out about the sins of others. However, the joy of Christian life is knowing we live in forgiveness. We love each other so much that we acknowledge our own sinfulness, and we forgive those who have sinned against us. We then together work to improve our relationships, both with God and man.

I pray that you might be encouraged today to let love for your neighbor truly infuse every interaction.

*God's blessings,  
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