



## Loving our neighbor opens the way for healing

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**The** town in which our family lived was one block wide and eight blocks long. It was completely surrounded by a large city. Despite the closeness of the city, though, it had managed to retain the neighborliness of a small town. When we first moved in, there were many proofs of this. Some people brought over food, others offered to help with heavy boxes. There was a real neighborly spirit.

In thinking about these kindnesses, I saw that they were part of fulfilling of the "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>1</sup> Christ Jesus cited this command as one of the two great commandments. To obey this command makes a difference in our lives; it opens up avenues to blessing and healing not only for us but for our neighbor as well. In order to obey it, though, a clear understanding of its meaning is needed.

Jesus' life example clarified how and to what extent we are to love our neighbor. And the parable of the good Samaritan<sup>2</sup> shows our neighbor to be not just one who lives next door but everyone we meet along our pathway of life.

As we walk down the street, drive a car, go to an auditorium or a courtroom—whatever we do—we have the opportunity to love our neighbor spiritually, to acknowledge, cherish, and appreciate the man of God's creating. We can behold each person as God made him: upright, pure, healthy, intelligent, just, eternal. We can recognize each individual's genuine identity as perfect man, the spiritual expression of God. Then we will refuse to identify our neighbor as helpless, aging, rebellious, unkind, hateful, conceited, sensual, sick, unjust. This spiritual view of man brings healing and blessing, as Mrs. Eddy points out when she writes: "Jesus

beheld in Science the perfect man, who appeared to him where sinning mortal man appears to mortals. In this perfect man the Saviour saw God's own likeness, and this correct view of man healed the sick."<sup>3</sup>

The good Samaritan parable also illustrates that in loving our neighbor we certainly do not ignore or pass by our fellowman's problems, but we help him in a wise way. Praying about the problems that face mankind in the world, whether in our neighborhood, city, or country, or elsewhere, is certainly evidence that we are addressing these situations. This way of loving is indeed an illustration of God's love and a fulfilling of the command.

Jesus' example toward his fellowman shows us the depth of his love for his neighbor, for he helped them by healing them, by showing them their wholeness and perfection as God's man. The master reformed the sinner, healed the sick and blind, and raised the dead. And his love came forth in forgiveness.

Our love for our neighbor, indeed our love for all mankind, will become consistent and wholehearted as we follow Jesus' example in our daily lives. This love for neighbor is powerful because it reflects the omnipotence of God, divine Love. As Mrs. Eddy assures us in *Science and Health*, "No power can withstand divine Love."<sup>4</sup>

We love because God loves us; it is His inexhaustible love that we are expressing. We are the very image of Love, God, and we love our neighbors because we and they are His image. Not only can we love our neighbor in this way, but we can understand that our neighbor can only see us in the same way. God is all-knowing Mind, and we as His reflection can only know man as God made him—in His image and likeness, spiritual and perfect.

An incident with my next-door neighbor helped me to gain a better understanding of the command to love and taught me that fulfilling the command can mean so much more than just kindness and thoughtfulness.

The family next door had a little boy who was friends with my son. One day it was warm enough for the two of them to play in the neighbor's plastic swimming pool. Suddenly, from next door I heard a scream of pain and found my son running into our house in tears. He

pointed to a red swollen patch on his back where he had been stung by an insect numerous times. The insect that had stung him was known to cause severe pain, and the effects of the sting generally lasted for a few days.

Scooping him up in my arms, I took him to his room and reminded him of the Bible statement "God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good."<sup>5</sup> From this verse we saw that God made *every* creature and that everything He makes expresses His goodness. God, infinite good, could not make a creature to cause harm. This was the truth of God's creation, which is wholly spiritual. A painful sting was clearly not a part of God's creation or of His infinite goodness and hence was not true.

The pain, as well as my son's crying, stopped within minutes. The effects from the stings were still evident, though, as well as a feeling of faintness. We continued to pray together and to sing familiar hymns from the *Christian Science Hymnal*. When he was resting quietly on his bed, I went to another room for a few minutes to pray.

In reaching out to God, I remembered an incident that had happened earlier during the day. The mother of my son's friend had come over to our house. I had been reading a three-volume biography of Mrs. Eddy. These books were out on the table, and she had made a brief comment about them and Christian Science.

In thinking of that incident in connection with the insect stings, I saw that instead of seeing the neighbor as being antagonistic toward Christian Science, I needed to obey Jesus' command to love this neighbor as myself. I needed to see her as the beloved and loving child of the one perfect God. In reality, she was the image and likeness of God, Truth, and could therefore in no way hate Truth. It became clear to me that there could be no sting to hatred of the truth, either expressed or experienced.

The Bible story of Jacob's reconciliation with his brother gave me an example of how to love my neighbor. It says that when Jacob met Esau he saw him as though he "had seen the face of God."<sup>6</sup> *This* was the way I was to love my neighbor: to see her so clearly as to see the very image, "the face," of God. Loving my neighbor in this way was infinitely more than neighborly

kindness. It was a recognition of the divine Love, God, and of man as Love's expression. It was being conscious of God's present, spiritual creation, which is described in the first chapter of Genesis.

In my prayers, not only did I see my neighbor in this light, but I included the whole of mankind in this divine embrace of Love. I could see that everyone was the beloved child of God, expressing His goodness. There could be no hatred of any kind in this all-encompassing expression of God, Love. My son therefore could not experience any sting of hatred.

Then I went back to my son's room. His back was turned toward me, and I saw that the red, swollen patch, along with all the other effects of the stings, was gone. There remained only a slight hint of pink. Less than fifteen minutes had elapsed since my son had come home. The feeling of faintness was gone too, and he wanted to go back to our house shortly to say, "I feel, so, so good, just loved all over!" He was feeling that divine, healing embrace of God's love that encompassed his neighbor and indeed all mankind.

Loving my neighbor in this way brought complete and quick healing for my son. But the blessing didn't stop there. It also opened the way to healing for my neighbor. One day she asked for prayer in Christian Science for her other son, who had been born with a hereditary birth defect. An operation had been scheduled. I gave her some Bible verses to pray with. One of them was "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."<sup>7</sup> The defect was healed in a short while, and the scheduled operation was never performed.

This experience showed me the results of obeying that simple and understandable command to love our neighbor as ourself. How far-reaching as well as immediate this command is if it is followed! It would permeate political, religious, and cultural barriers, reach the sick, needy, and homeless. It would go into the very heart of humanity and there bring the healing effects of God's omnipotent love.

We can begin to fulfill Jesus' command in our daily life and so spiritually love mankind that we refuse to see anyone as a mortal. The fulfilling of the command to love our neighbor as ourselves includes the neighborly kindnesses that our family experienced in that small town.

And it can expand and rise beyond that to the level of embracing the whole of mankind in God's love, beholding the man of God's creating, and seeing healing as the result.

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<sup>1</sup> [Mark 12:31.](#) ↑

<sup>2</sup> [See Luke 10:30–37.](#) ↑

<sup>3</sup> [Science and Health, pp. 476–477.](#) ↑

<sup>4</sup> [Ibid., p. 224.](#) ↑

<sup>5</sup> [Gen. 1:25.](#) ↑

<sup>6</sup> [Gen. 33:10.](#) ↑

<sup>7</sup> [Ps. 16:6.](#) ↑