

A STILL MORE EXCELLENT WAY

1 CORINTHIANS 12:31



- Do you have a hobby?
- When I was younger, “hobby” was used about preachers who were obsessively focused on a particular aspect of the scriptures: gambling
 - No matter what they were preaching about, it would somehow come up.
 - Lesson on Elijah and the widow; and the evils of gambling would inevitably arise



- The brethren in Corinth were concerned with a lot of things, and one thing they focused on was spiritual gifts (12-14)
 - Prophecy v. Speaking in Tongues
 - Both gifts given by God. Both have their own purposes
 - But each considered their gift as better: it was their “hobby”



- So Paul wanted to help them see a more excellent way
 - 1 Corinthians 12:31 And I will show you a still more excellent way.
 - What could be greater, better, more meaningful than a gift from the Holy Spirit?
- The Jews often had debates about which of God's commandments were most important

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
You shall love the LORD your God with all your
heart and with all your soul and with all your might.
Deuteronomy 6:4-5

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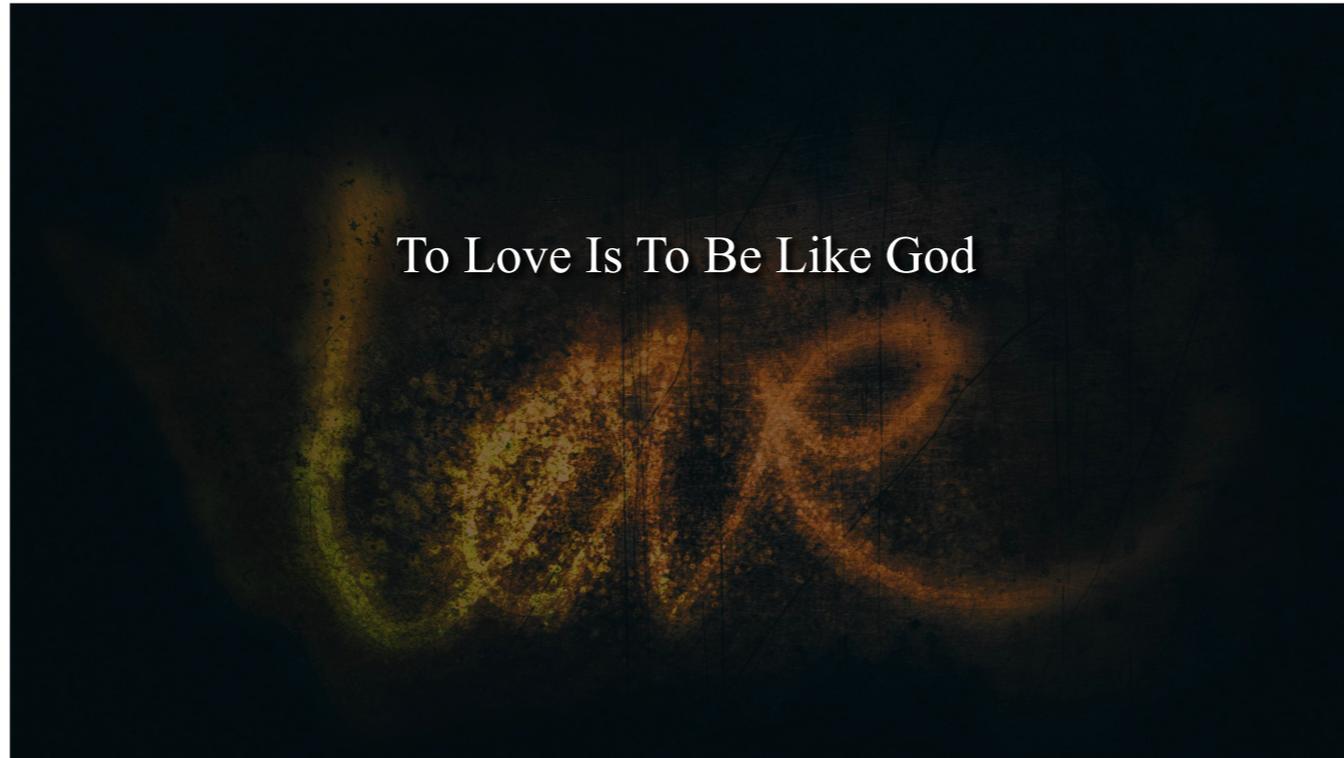
You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against
the sons of your own people, but you shall love your
neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.
Leviticus 19:18

- Leviticus 19:17-18 (ESV) 17 “You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

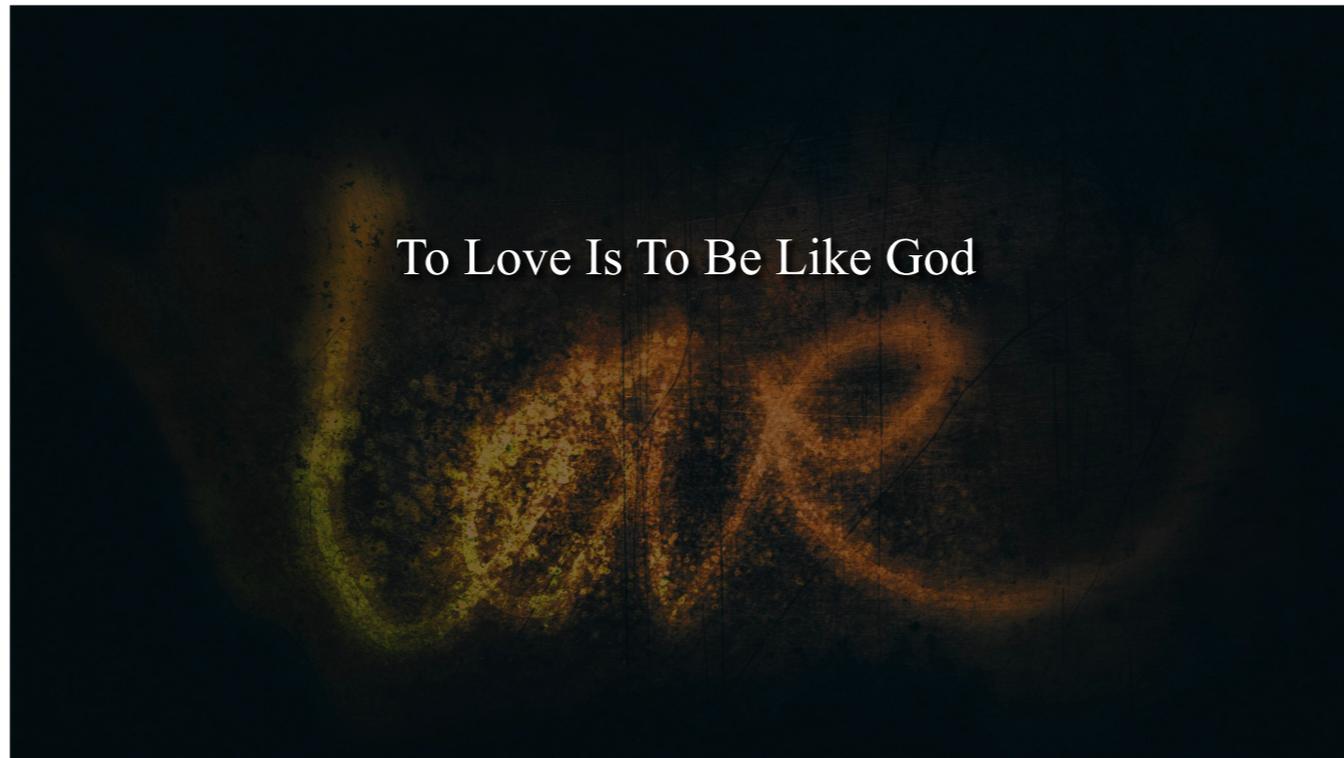
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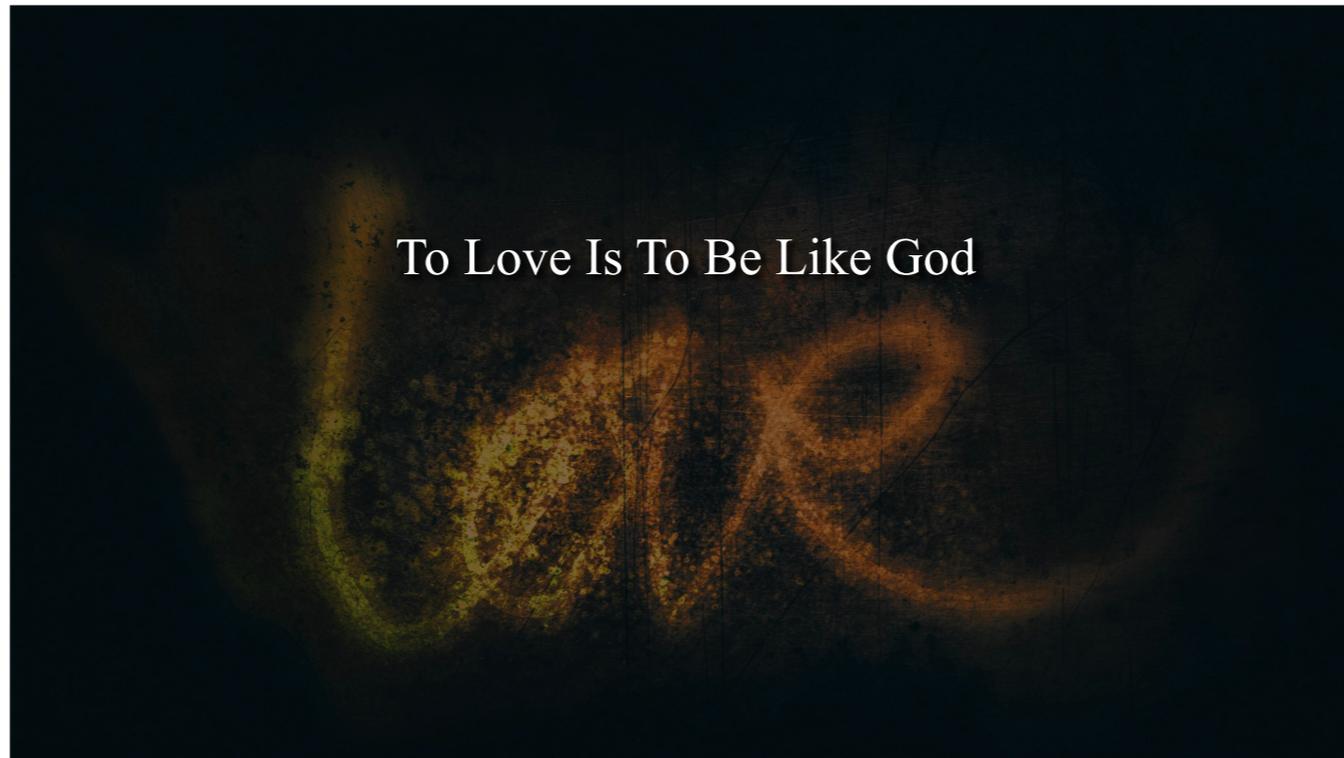
- Three times in Jesus' time teaching, these come up
- And they are very instructive about the importance of love.
- Matthew 5



- Matthew 5:20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
 - Jesus then explains this by giving several examples of what this means
 - Anger, Adultery, Divorce, Oaths, Vengeance



- Matthew 5:43-48 (ESV)
 - 43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.



- Love your neighbors and hate your enemy
 - Where did they get this from?
 - No where does God command the Israelites to hate their enemies.
 - Jesus is correcting the misunderstandings of the law as taught



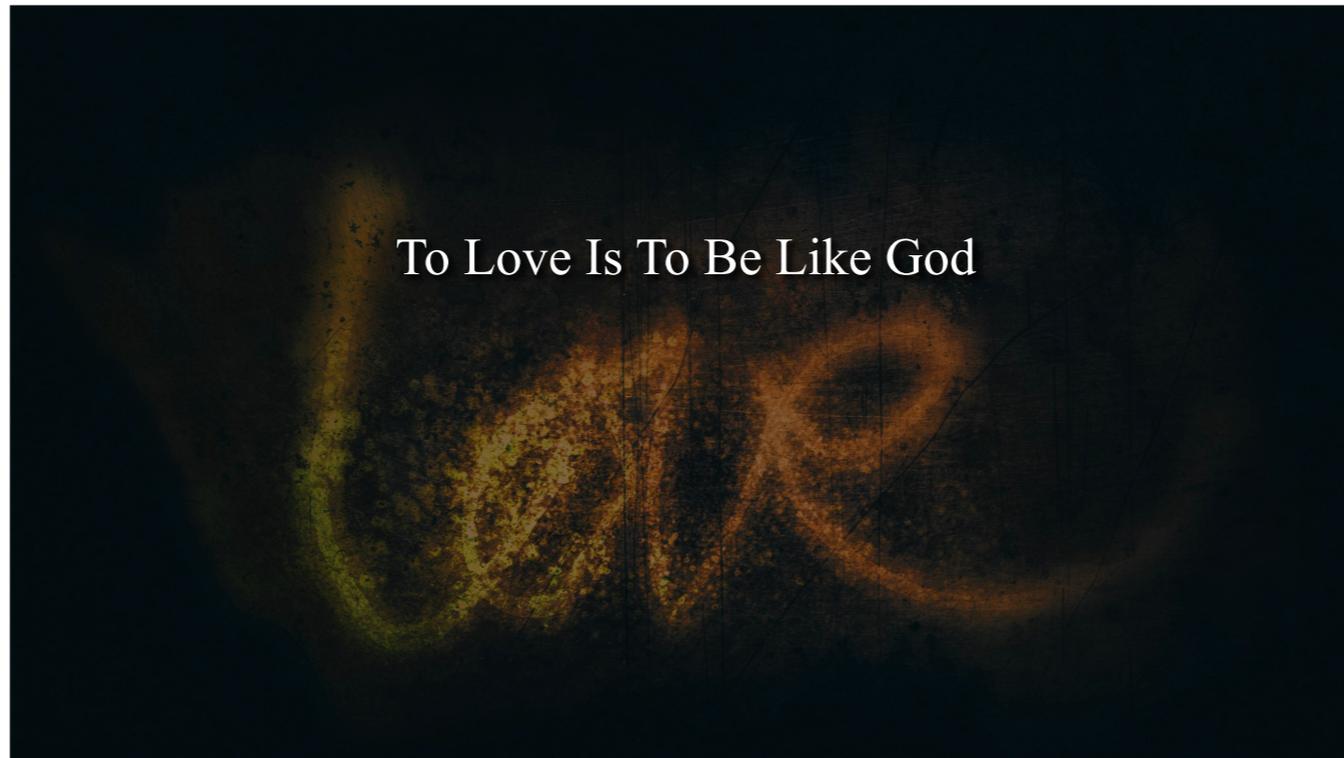
To Love Is To Be Like God

- Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute
 - THAT sons of your Father
 - sons = be like your father, have the same character
 - Sun rises on: Good and Evil
 - Rain on: Just and Unjust



To Love Is To Be Like God

- Rain on: Just and Unjust
 - Acts 16:17: to Lystra —
 - Witness (creator of heaven, earth, sea, and all in them them)
 - “did good sending rain and fruitful seasons”
- For us to be like our Father,
 - we must love not just the good and the just,
 - but also love the evil and the unjust.



- If
- you love those who love you
 - what reward?
 - even tax collectors
 - This is normal behavior (or at least should be, but often worldly people do this good thing)
- you greet only your brothers
 - what more are you doing than others
 - Gentiles do the same
 - Again, should be normal behavior



To Love Is To Be Like God

- We must go beyond what is normal in the world with regard to what it means to love.
 - Loving people who are easy to love or that we want to love is nothing extraordinary
 - everybody does that
- Loving those who have done evil to us, who have wronged us, who have sinned and hurt us. That's extraordinary.
- Praying for them ... that good happens.



To Love Is To Be Like God

- Therefore: You must be perfect as your Father is perfect
 - Looks to the completeness of God's love: good and evil; just and unjust
 - (Jesus isn't talking about a sinless life, the context doesn't fit)
 - Our love needs to be complete: extensive, extravagant,
- To love is to be like God!



To Love Is To Obey The Greatest Command

- To Love Is To Obey the Greatest Command
- Mark 12:28-34 (ESV)
 - 28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” 29 Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall 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: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” 32 And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. 33 And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” 34 And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.



To Love Is To Obey The Greatest Command

- Which command is most important?
 - A scribe questions Jesus about which commandment is the greatest.
 - He'd been impressed with how Jesus answered.
 - Scribes cared about the law and understanding it
 - Knowing which commandment was most important seems critical to knowing what we should do to please him.
 - It's a good and valid question



To Love Is To Obey The Greatest Command

- What kind of debates did the Jews have about which command was the greatest?
 - 10 commandments given from Mt. Sinai?
- Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18
 - Jehovah our God, Jehovah is one.
 - Love Jehovah with all your heart, soul, strength, mind
 - Love your neighbor as yourself.



To Love Is To Obey The Greatest Command

- It's worth noting that Jesus begins with a declaration of the essential nature of Jehovah.
 - It speaks to us not just of who he is
 - But also to his authority and why we should listen to what he says



To Love Is To Obey The Greatest Command

- There is no commandment greater than these.
 - Did you note that although these are in discrete passages, from different revelations and timing, Jesus speaks of them as a single commandment.



To Love Is To Obey The Greatest Command

- I think we still struggle with missing that aspect of Jesus' instruction.
 - Loving Jehovah and loving our neighbor are inextricably united.
 - Just like Jehovah is a united one. So is love.
 - Cannot have one without the other.
 - Law and love are not opposed to each other.



To Love Is To Obey The Greatest Command

- Matthew 23:23-24
 - 23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. 24 You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!



To Love Is To Obey The Greatest Command

- Tithing spices v Justice, mercy, faithfulness
 - Weightier matters —
 - some aspects of our lives and obedience to God are more important than others.
 - not encouraging neglect, rather reminding us of having perspective



To Love Is To Obey The Greatest Command

- The lawyer agrees with Jesus (32-33)
 - Beginning with the unity of Jehovah
 - Is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices
 - 34: Jesus saw that he answered wisely (infer that this answer is correct?)



To Love Is To Obey The Greatest Command

- Wow! Sacrifices were about sin. Atoning for sin and forgiveness.
- How can love be more important than these?
 - Without love for God, the sacrifice becomes meaningless
 - Without love for one another, the sacrifice becomes meaningless
 - (because they are united!)



To Love Is To Obey The Greatest Command

- Jesus: (34) You are not far from the kingdom of God
 - By showing that he understands the importance of love, the lawyer is on the right track to being in the kingdom.
 - Love is vital and important.
 - But that doesn't mean there are not other aspects that are necessary
 - Faith, repentance, baptism, etc.
 - But without the love, none of those other things matter.



To Love Is To Be A Neighbor

- To Love Is To Be A Neighbor — Luke 10:25-37
- 25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”
- 26 He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”



To Love Is To Be A Neighbor

- 27 And he answered,
 - “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind,
 - and your neighbor as yourself.”
- 28 And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”



To Love Is To Be A Neighbor

- 29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”
 - Parable of the merciful Samaritan
 - 30 Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’”



To Love Is To Be A Neighbor

- 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?”
- 37 He said, “The one who showed him mercy.”
- And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”



To Love Is To Be A Neighbor

- So who is my neighbor?
 - Jesus makes it clear that I am to be the neighbor.
 - It doesn't matter who the other person is.
 - I am the one to show mercy.
 - And so prove to be a neighbor.
 - It's not about them, it's about me.

To love is to be like God.....CHARACTER

To love is to obey God.....AUTHORITY

To love is to be a neighbor.....RELATIONSHIP

- To love is to be like God — Character
- To love is to obey God — Authority
- To love is to be a neighbor — Relationship

To love is to be like God.....CHARACTER

To love is to obey God.....AUTHORITY

To love is to be a neighbor.....RELATIONSHIP

- Romans 13:8-10 (ESV)

- 8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.
- 9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
- 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

To love is to be like God.....CHARACTER

To love is to obey God.....AUTHORITY

To love is to be a neighbor.....RELATIONSHIP

- Love fulfills the law
 - The purpose of the commandments is to teach us what it means to love
 - adultery, murder, stealing and coveting are not love for others, but selfish
 - love doesn't wrong
 - Love is about obeying God
 - Loves doesn't hurt others

To love is to be like God.....CHARACTER

To love is to obey God.....AUTHORITY

To love is to be a neighbor.....RELATIONSHIP

- Galatians 5:13-15 (ESV)

- 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers.
- Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
- 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
- 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

To love is to be like God.....CHARACTER

To love is to obey God.....AUTHORITY

To love is to be a neighbor.....RELATIONSHIP

- Freedom
 - Not about pleasing ourselves
 - biting, devouring, consuming
 - through love, we serve others

To love is to be like God.....CHARACTER

To love is to obey God.....AUTHORITY

To love is to be a neighbor.....RELATIONSHIP

• James 2:8-13 (ESV)

- 8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.
- 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.
- 10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.
- 11 For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.
- 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.
- 13 For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.
- Mercy triumphs over judgment.

To love is to be like God.....CHARACTER

To love is to obey God.....AUTHORITY

To love is to be a neighbor.....RELATIONSHIP

- The Royal Law
 - the law belonging to the king
 - the apex rule
- Fulfill — obedience
 - doing well!
 - suitable, proper

To love is to be like God.....CHARACTER

To love is to obey God.....AUTHORITY

To love is to be a neighbor.....RELATIONSHIP

- Showing partiality is sin — just like adultery or murder
 - One danger we face is that we tend to think that we can get away with doing wrong to our neighbor as long as it isn't too bad.
 - I only gossiped a little about that person
 - The fact that it almost destroyed them ... it was just a little ...
 - But if it's a sin, then we still fail to keep the law of love

To love is to be like God.....CHARACTER

To love is to obey God.....AUTHORITY

To love is to be a neighbor.....RELATIONSHIP

- Speak and act
 - judged under law of liberty (!)
 - mercy triumphs over judgment
 - The parable of the Samaritan: the Levite and the Priest were judging? showing partiality?
 - The Samaritan showed mercy
 - fulfilling the law.
 - judging someone because of how they are dressed when they come to worship (poverty) is a sin — we are inferring something about them.
 - SHOW MERCY

And I will show you a still more excellent way.

1 Corinthians 12:31

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these
three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

- 1 Corinthians 12:31 And I will show you a still more excellent way.
 - In all of these, we see that we are called to love beyond what is normal for our society and world
 - If you think that love is easy, you've missed the point
 - Love is hard and requires us to be excellent.
- 1 Corinthians 13:13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

We implore you
on behalf of Christ,
be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:20

Call to Action

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The Greatest of These

#02

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A Still More Excellent Way

1 Corinthians 12:31

Synopsis: Loving God and loving one another are the greatest command. In this lesson we look at the conversations Jesus had about how important love is.

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“Let all that you do be done with love.”