

The Neighbor
Proverbs 11:12-13
April 17, 2016

Introduction

Jesus tells us that the two greatest commandments are the same: Loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself. We know from Solomon that fearing God is the same as loving Him. Solomon's whole collection of Proverbs is about the skill of living a life in the fear of God. How do we live a life that pleases God? What should be our attitude that shows that we fear God? How do we deal with other people?

When we fear God, we also show love to other people. Notice what God says in the book of Leviticus.

Leviticus 19:16-18 *You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord [YHWH]. 17 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord [YHWH].*

Notice that God says "I am the Lord" twice. He is telling us that His commands reflect His character. He is the God of justice and fairness. He wants people to treat each other right and not maliciously. He expects and demands that we love our neighbor as ourselves because He is love.

Who is my neighbor and why is God so concerned about how I treat my neighbor? My neighbor is anyone who I meet. My neighbor can be my family, my friend, or a stranger that I meet for the first time. When I love my neighbor, I am revealing God's character and giving God all the glory and honor that is His alone. By being willfully malicious to my neighbor, I am showing hatred to my neighbor, and I am dishonoring God's name and character.

Solomon tells us what to do and what to avoid when dealing with our neighbor.

Proverbs 11:12-13 *He who is devoid of wisdom despises [or derides, NIV] his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his peace [or tongue, NIV]. 13 A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter [or keeps a secret, NIV].*

I. Hating Your Neighbor (12a, 13a)

- Lacking wisdom
 - This person does not know God or fear God
 - In general, absolute term—this person is not a believer
 - However, this also applies to believers who are living in disobedience
 - Believer is temporarily out of relationship with God, living fleshly
 - He temporarily does not love what God loves
 - This believer gets into trouble
- Deriding the neighbor

Note: Verse 12 could be read in two ways. 1) This man openly scorns his neighbor, and the wise man holds back retort. 2) A foolish man scorns his neighbor publically and/or privately (per **verse 13**) and a wise man holds back any type of scorn. Both views are equally true and biblical, but I chose the second view because of its connection to **verse 13**.

- Attitude of belittling a person
- Denies God as the only Judge of human character
- Does not care about neighbor's reputation
- Derision includes
 - Gossip, slander, false witness, boasting, quarreling
- All contempt (belittling) is sin

Proverbs 14:21 *He who despises his neighbor sins; but he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.*

- Wicked heart (unforgiving heart) pours out evil

Proverbs 15:28 *The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.*

- Being resentful and bitter is to be unforgiving
 - Wanting to commit character murder
- Such talk and derision is foolishness

Proverbs 12:23 *A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.*

Proverbs 15:2 *The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.*

- Reveals a heart that does not fear God
- Talebearers reveal secrets
 - Talebearer = gossip = revealing secrets

Proverbs 20:19 *He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips.*

- Someone telling you in confidence does not want this information shared
- Knowing secrets and wishing to share with others is pleasurable

Proverbs 18:8 *The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body.*

Proverbs 26:22 *The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body.*

- A person thinks they have the privilege of knowing something that no one else knows
 - Revealing secrets to another changes the person's perception of others
 - Very damaging to self
- When we tell others someone's secrets
 - We lose friends

Proverbs 16:28 *A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.*

Proverbs 17:9 *He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.*

- We can ruin our reputation
 - People no longer trust us
 - Whenever we promise something, it is viewed with suspicion
- For Christians
 - Recognize that knowing secrets and sharing secrets are very tempting and attractive
 - It is a feeling of power and superiority
 - When we despise our neighbor (by revealing secrets) we are dishonoring God
 - We develop a reputation of being a liar—our words and promises are not true
 - Recognize that such feelings are not from God

James 3:14-16 *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.*

II. Loving Your Neighbor (12b, 13b)

- Man of understanding and man of faithful spirit
 - This is a person of wisdom
 - This is a person who loves and fears God
 - In the same way, he loves others
 - He knows the difference between right and wrong
 - He recognizes the degrees of wrong
 - He uses knowledge in the right way

Proverbs 15:2 *The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.*

- He studies God's word, and as a result, he knows how to answer people wisely

Proverbs 15:28 *The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.*

- He is a faithful spirit = trustworthy
 - He shows himself to be trustworthy by not sharing secrets with others
 - He knows when to hold his feelings and words back

Proverbs 29:11 *A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.*

- He carefully watches what he thinks and thinks before he speaks
- Holding your tongue and keeping secrets
 - The best way to show love to your neighbor is to say nothing (damaging)

Proverbs 17:9 *He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.*

- By not saying bad things about another
- By not revealing secrets

- You are keeping your neighbor's secrets in confidence, protecting your neighbor
- By keeping silent, it kills gossip and conflict

Proverbs 26:20 *Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.*

- By keeping silent, it protects us

Proverbs 21:23 *Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.*

- Further thoughts

- Confidence is like a jewel—protect it at all cost
 - We should not be careless with another's confidence
- Do not be quick to learn secrets
- It is an act of love to keep the reputation of another safe
- Revealing past sins of another person is always harmful
- Words are easily misunderstood
- We are to pursue God's wisdom and apply it to our lives
 - This is a daily, life-long pursuit

James 3:17-18 *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*