

# **“LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF:”**

**“set the believers an example  
in speech and conduct, in love, in faith,  
in purity.”.**

1 Timothy 4:12

“ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?

Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are  
you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Be perfect,” (in Love) “therefore, as your heavenly Father is  
perfect.”

Matthew 5:46-48

“ God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only  
Son into the world so that we might live through him.

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent  
his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one  
another.

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us,  
and his love is perfected in us.”

1 John 4:9-12

# **“LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF:”**

## **Introduction.**

### **A believer’s response to violence.**

This booklet was written in 1997 as a believer’s response to the ongoing violence at that time in Ireland. It was posted that year to most Catholic Priests and Protestant Ministers.

As I considered the situation in Ireland, I was drawn back to basics - what was the message of Jesus regarding relationships, and attitudes? I found that all relationships are to be based on “LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF”. As I realised this, I wondered what would happen if we could get all church people on this Island to stop and think of the implication of this message in terms of relationships with their antagonists?

Thankfully there was the Good Friday agreement two years later, but if vision of ongoing caring for one another is lost, violence and hatred can easily rise up again.

Recently there have been random killings in Europe motivated by religious radicalization.

We all, (Christians, Muslims and Jews) see ourselves accountable to the same God - God the creator - the God of Abraham.

All our scriptures include the concept of caring for our neighbours as ourselves. Caring for the stranger and alien are in the Jew’s Torah (Leviticus 19:18) Deuteronomy 10:19) and the Qur’an also tells us to be good to our neighbours and the alien [4:36] - to do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans; those in need-neighbours who are near and neighbours who are strangers; the companion by your side and the wayfarer.

All our scriptures record that one of the sons of Adam murdered his brother, and that this was not pleasing to God and that the murderer came to regret it (Genesis 4:1-15 - 1 John 3:11-15 Qur’an 5:57:32).

All our scriptures encourage helping the poor, e.g. Proverbs 14:31, “He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God”.

Both the Christian Gospel and the Qur’an acknowledge

- The angelic visit to Mary before the birth of Jesus Qur’an 3:42-53 [3.45] Behold! the angels said: O Mary! Allah gives you Glad tidings of a Word from Him his name will be Christ Jesus the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the hereafter and of those who are nearest to Allah.
- That the life of Jesus was accompanied by clear proofs and the Holy Spirit Qur’an 2:87 and 2:253
- In the Qur’an 3:52 there is commitment to be helpers of Jesus.
- Both state that Jesus is now in Heaven with God and will be present on the day of Justice. The Qur’an 4:159 that Jesus will be present on the day of judgement to be a witness against .....

Whether we are aware of what Jesus said or not, we will come face to face with Jesus being a witness against those of us who did not listen to what he taught:-

- About loving ones enemies; doing good to those who hate us, etc.
- About caring for those least able to look after themselves. When we realize Gods love for the neglected, abused, exploited, we understand the need for a day of justice.

For those interested in considering the implications of the teaching of Jesus, here is the study of his teaching on relationships.

The aim of the text is to get to the heart of what the Jesus taught. The importance of not taking text out of context is realised, therefore the following text is produced with context in *Italics*. One can choose whether to skip context or read them and the full passages are there for studying in depth. If you consider that I have taken the message of Jesus out of context or miss-applied it, please let me know.

May we all be examples of loving our neighbours as we love ourselves. Let us consider. “What would Jesus say to me in this my situation?”

Charles B. Lamb 29/6/2017

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# “LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF:”

## The basis of Christian morals.

The phrase occurs in eight passages in the Bible Lev19:18, Mt19:19,22:39, Mr12:31-33, Lu10:27, Rom13:9, Gal5:14, James2:8. As well as Jesus quoting it several times, the apostles Paul and James both stress it's importance.

To Jesus, obeying the commandment “**love your neighbour as yourself.**” was an important part of what was necessary in order to gain eternal life (Matt19:16 Luke 10:25 ). He appears to have quoted from Leviticus 19:18 which has quite a lot to say about relationships with neighbours.

Leviticus 19: 12 “And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord.13 **You shall not defraud your neighbour; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a labourer until morning.** 14 *You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.* 15 *You shall not render an unjust judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbour.* 16 *You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and **you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbour:** I am the Lord.* 17 You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself. 18 **You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.**”

It is worth bearing in mind the context of the quotation from the Old Testament as one considers the Quotations in the new.

Matthew 19:16 “Then someone came to him and said, “**Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?**” 17 *And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”* 18 *He said to him, “Which ones?”* *And Jesus said, “You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; 19 Honour your father and mother; also, **You shall love your neighbour as yourself.**”* 20 *The young*

*man said to him, “I have kept all these; what do I still lack?” 21 Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” 22 When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.”*

Note how getting eternal life is linked to loving ones neighbour as oneself.

## THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT COMMANDMENT

Matthew 22:36 “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” 37 He said to him,” ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 **And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’** 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Mark 12:28 “One of the scribes *came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?”* 29 Jesus answered, “*The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 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 neighbour as yourself.’** There is no other commandment greater than these.” 32 Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘*he is one, and besides him there is no other*’; 33 and ‘*to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,*’ and ‘to love one’s neighbour as oneself,’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” 34 When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” *After that no one dared to ask him any question.*”

Note how Jesus confirmed what the teacher said and consider whether the teachers phrase V33 in today’s language would not be “**to love one’s neighbour as one’s self -- this is more important than all your Religious Activity.**”

Consider the emphasis that Paul gives the phrase:

Romans 13:7. *“Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due. 8 **Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.** 9 *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, **“Love your neighbour as yourself.”** 10 **Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.”***

Galatians 5:13 *“ For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. 14 For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, **“You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”** 15 **If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.”***

Paul seems to echo the words of Zechariah 8:16 *“These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgements that are true and make for peace, 17 do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath; for all these are things that I hate, says the Lord.”*

James 2:1 *“My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? 2 For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, 3 and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Have a seat here, please,” while to the one who is poor you say, “Stand there,” or, “Sit at my feet,” 4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? 6 But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? 7 Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you? 8 **You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”** 9 *But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever**

*keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. 11 For the one who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. 13 **For judgement will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgement.***

How often do we want to justify ourselves like the legal expert in the following passage?

Luke 10:25 "Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 27 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 neighbour as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." 29 **But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"** 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, 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 while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' 36 **Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"** 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." **Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."**

Meditate on what Jesus did here. The legal expert wanted to limit the implications of being a neighbour and Jesus did the opposite; He expanded them to include his natural "antagonist"! Indeed, he went even further than this;



Matthew 5:43 Jesus said “You have heard that it was said, ‘**You shall love your neighbour** 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 children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. 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 and sisters, what more are you doing than others?** Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Luke 6:26 “*Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.* 27 “But I say to you that listen, **Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.** 29 *If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt.* 30 *Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again.* 31 **Do to others as you would have them do to you.** 32 “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35 **But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.** Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.”

Notice how both passages tell us to do good to those who hate you, to love and do good to your enemies. Does not Paul echo the same thought in the following passage?

Romans 12:9 “Let love be genuine; *hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good*; 10 love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. 11 *Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.* 12 *Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.* 13 *Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.* 14 **Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.** 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with

one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17 **Do not repay anyone evil for evil**, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 **Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”** 20 No, **“if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.”** 21 **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

Is not overcoming evil with good the business of all our lives? Going back to the previous passage note how Jesus connects love for enemies with mercy and forgiveness.

Luke 6:35 **“But love your enemies, do good**, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. 36 **Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.** 37 **“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven;”** again in Matthew 7:1 **“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. 2 For with the judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. 3 Why do you see the speck in your neighbour’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your neighbour, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour’s eye.”**

Luke 18:11 **“The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”**

Matthew 7:12 **“In everything do to others as you would have them do to**

**you; for this is the law and the prophets.**<sup>13</sup> “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. <sup>14</sup> For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Would it not appear from the above passage that doing unto others as you would have them do to you is the narrow gate that leads to life and that Jesus thought most would miss it and go the broad road that leads to destruction?

Do you agree that doing unto others what you would like them to do to you, and not doing to others what you would not like them to do to you sums up the implications of loving one neighbour as oneself?

## **“LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF:”**

### **The meaning of “Love”**

There are 2 Greek words that are translated “love” in the New Testament:

1/ “philia” indicating a liking for, i.e. human affection.

2/ “Agape” a word with much deeper implications meaning “to love, value, esteem; to feel or manifest a generous concern for; to be faithful towards; to delight in; to set store upon.”

Most translations translate both words into “love”, sometimes “philia” is translated into “brotherly affection” and sometimes “Agape” into “Charity”. When we use the word “love” we need to remember that for many today the most frequent meaning of “Love” is romantic or sexual love and not “philia” or “Agape”.

(Agape) or (philia) are put following their translation in the following passages:

1 Corinthians 13:1 “If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love (Agape), I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love(Agape), I am nothing. 3 If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love (Agape), I gain nothing. 4 Love (Agape) is patient; love (Agape) is kind; love (Agape) is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love (Agape) never ends. *But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9 For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 10 but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part;*

*then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 And now faith, hope, and love (Agape) abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love (Agape)."*

John 3:16 "For God so loved (Agape) the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

John 15:9 "As the Father has loved (Agape) me, so I have loved (Agape) you; abide in my love (Agape) . 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love (Agape) , just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love (Agape). 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. 12 "This is my commandment, that you love (Agape) one another as I have loved (Agape) you. 13 No one has greater love (Agape) than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Think of Jesus asking us to love (Agape) one another as the Father loves Jesus. How would we respond if we were in Peters place?

John 21:15 "15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love (Agape) me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love (philia) you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love (Agape) me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love (philia) you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love (philia) me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love (philia) me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love (philia) you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep".

2 Peter 1:5 "For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with mutual affection (philia) , and mutual affection with love (Agape) . 8 For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our

Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For anyone who lacks these things is near-sighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins.

Lord help us to add “Agape” to “philia”

**“LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF:”**  
**Relationships**  
**Forgiveness, Reconciliation.**

Is forgiveness conditional?

Luke 11:4 “And forgive us our sins, **for we ourselves forgive** everyone indebted to us.”

Matthew 6:12 “And forgive us our debts, **as we also have** forgiven our debtors.”

When we pray the Lords Prayer are we not only asking to be forgiven to the extent that we have forgiven others?! Think of the words of Jesus:

Luke 6:37 “*Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven;*”

Matthew 6:14 “**For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**”

Mark 11:23 “*Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. 24 So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 “**Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.**” (26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.)*

Does the “anyone” in v25 not include ones neighbour and ones enemy as well as ones friends?

Luke 17:3 “**Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. 4 And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive.**”

Note that the Greek word “brother” translated “another disciple” in the above verse can include as well as our narrow meaning:- “a near kinsman or relative” “one of the same nation or nature” “an associate” “a member of the Christian Community”

To forgive seven times a day on a human level seems impossible, yet how often do we need God’s forgiveness? Peter pressed Jesus further on forgiveness.

Matthew 18:21 “Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if my”... brother or my sister “sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. 23 “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents” (15 years wages for a labourer) “was brought to him; 25 and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. 26 So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ 27 And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii;” (One days wages for a labourer) “and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ 29 Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ 30 But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. 31 When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. 32 Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ 34 And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. 35 **So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.**”

Does not this passage mean that if we do not forgive others we will have our already-forgiven-sins loaded back on us again?! Can we really hope to get to heaven if we don’t let go of resentments and bitterness here?



Luke 23:33 “When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. **[[ 34 Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”]]** *And they cast lots to divide his clothing.”*

There are probably times in our lives when we find it difficult to forgive. At times like this I like to remember that we can ask to be filled with the Love that God has for the person we find difficult. Think of Joseph being sold as a slave by his brothers and the years of imprisonment he went through:

Genesis 50:15 “Realising that their father was dead, Joseph’s brothers said, “What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?” 16 So they approached Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this instruction before he died, 17 ‘Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.’ Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18 Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, “We are here as your slaves.” 19 But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? 20 Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. 21 So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.” In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.”

Are we prepared to speak kindly to those on this Island who may ask our forgiveness as well as being willing to ask forgiveness for ourselves?

When sins are not forgiven they are retained.

John 20:23 “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” When sins are not forgiven they go on affecting the situation as it is said several times in the Old Testament—for example in Exodus 34:5 “The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name, “The Lord.” 6 The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the

iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

Are we not reminding each succeeding generation of the wrongs of the past, and stirring up resentments? Do not resentments from 10+ generations ago stir up violence and fear on this island? Maybe it is justifiable fear of receiving just reward for the wrongs of the past. Maybe it is fear similar to that experienced by Joseph's brothers. Do we need to ask forgiveness as Joseph's brothers did?

Did not Jesus teach the need to ask forgiveness?

Matthew 5:23 “So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. Remember, as John put it in (1 John 3:21) “Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; 22 and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.”

Forgiveness is an attitude of holding no resentment. Reconciliation is having relationships restored. Reconciliation requires asking forgiveness as well as forgiving. Does not forgiveness require that we cease to stir up resentment? Should we meditate a bit on the sins of our side and our own ancestors, and ask forgiveness for the resentments they are still causing?

Do we not already know clearly enough the sins of our land? Has not the time come to do as Paul suggests;

Colossians 3:8 “But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices 10 and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. 11 In that renewal there is

no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! 12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. **13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord as forgiven you, so you also must forgive.** 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

1 Timothy 4:12 **"set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."**

If we do this, is there not the possibility of our Land being healed instead of being devoured by the locusts of resentment?

2 Chronicles 7:13 "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, **14 if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."**

Are there any of us who do not need to repent, or have not needed to repent for our own sins or the sins of our ancestors which continue to stir up resentments in our land?

1 John 1:5 "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; 7 but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9 If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all**

**unrighteousness.** 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

Can we be purified from all unrighteousness without being reconciled with our neighbour so that, as far as it is in our control, we live at peace with all people?

Can we have a happy future if we are filled with resentment towards others?

Can we be free from fear if we know people are resentful towards us or our community?

Can we leave behind problems and resentments and still love our neighbour of the next generation?

[Aside, would there be less unhappy marriages if the following is put into practice:

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, 2 and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.....25 Husbands, love (Agape) your wives, just as Christ loved (Agape) the church and gave himself up for her,.....28 In the same way, husbands should love (Agape) their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

Ephesians 4:25 25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. 26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not make room for the devil.

Would relationships not be better if spouses never slept back to back because they are not talking and always got squabbles fixed up before they went to sleep?]

## “LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF:”

### Love your neighbour of past generations.

Are we not still being affected in this country by the deeds of 300 and 400 years ago? .....a far longer time than the 3rd and 4th generations that are spoken of in the Old Testament. Are we not still being affected by resentments for the deeds of ancestors 10 generations ago?

Among the instructions given by Moses to the people of Israel, there are the descriptions in Leviticus 26 of what happens when people disobey the Lord their God and Worship other Gods.

Leviticus 26:36 *“And as for those of you who survive, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight, and they shall flee as one flees from the sword, and they shall fall though no one pursues. 37 They shall stumble over one another, as if to escape a sword, though no one pursues; and you shall have no power to stand against your enemies. 38 You shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall devour you. 39 **And those of you who survive shall languish in the land of your enemies because of their iniquities; also they shall languish because of the iniquities of their ancestors. 40 But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their ancestors, in that they committed treachery against me and, moreover, that they continued hostile to me— 41 so that I, in turn, continued hostile to them and brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, 42 then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; I will remember also my covenant with Isaac and also my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. 43 For the land shall be deserted by them, and enjoy its Sabbath years by lying desolate without them, while they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they dared to spurn my ordinances, and they abhorred my statutes.”***

Does not the law referred to previous quote include loving one’s neighbour as oneself?, as set out in the earlier part of:

Leviticus 19: 12 *“And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the*

*name of your God: I am the Lord.*"<sup>13</sup> **You shall not defraud your neighbour; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a labourer until morning.** *14 You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.* *15 You shall not render an unjust judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbour.* *16 You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbour: I am the Lord.* *17 You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself.* **18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord."**

Nehemiah remembered the above passage and this is how he prayed.

Nehemiah 1:5 "I said, "O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments; 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that **I now pray before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Both I and my family have sinned.** *7 We have offended you deeply, failing to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances that you commanded your servant Moses.* *8 Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; 9 but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place at which I have chosen to establish my name.'* *10 They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great power and your strong hand."*

Old Testament writers found the need to confess the sins of their fathers:

Psalms 79:8 "**Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors; let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low.** 9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and forgive our sins, for your name's sake."

The Amplified version amplifies the word “iniquities” to “iniquities and guilt of forefathers.”

Jeremiah 3:21 “A voice on the bare heights is heard, the plaintive weeping of Israel’s children, because they have perverted their way, they have forgotten the Lord their God: 22 Return, O faithless children, I will heal your faithlessness. “Here we come to you; for you are the Lord our God. 23 Truly the hills are a delusion, the orgies on the mountains. Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. 24 “But from our youth the shameful thing has devoured all for which our ancestors had laboured, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. 25 Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonour cover us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our ancestors, from our youth even to this day; and we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.” continuing in Jeremiah 4:1 If you return, O Israel, says the Lord, if you return to me, if you remove your abominations from my presence, and do not waver, 2 and if you swear, “As the Lord lives!” in truth, in justice, and in uprightness, then nations shall be blessed by him, and by him they shall boast.”

Jeremiah 14:17 *“You shall say to them this word: Let my eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease, for the virgin daughter—my people—is struck down with a crushing blow, with a very grievous wound. 18 If I go out into the field, look—those killed by the sword! And if I enter the city, look—those sick with famine! For both prophet and priest ply their trade throughout the land, and have no knowledge. 19 Have you completely rejected Judah? Does your heart loathe Zion? Why have you struck us down so that there is no healing for us? We look for peace, but find no good; for a time of healing, but there is terror instead. 20 **We acknowledge our wickedness, O Lord, the iniquity of our ancestors, for we have sinned against you. 21 Do not spurn us, for your name’s sake; do not dishonour your glorious throne; remember and do not break your covenant with us.**”*

Again Daniel felt the same need in Daniel 9:14 *“So the Lord kept watch over this calamity until he brought it upon us. Indeed, the Lord our God is right in all that he has done; for we have disobeyed his voice. 15 “And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and made your name renowned even to this day—we have*

*sinned, we have done wickedly.* 16 O Lord, in view of all your righteous acts, let your anger and wrath, **we pray**, turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain; **because of our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors, Jerusalem and your people have become a disgrace among all our neighbours.** 17 Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his supplication, and for your own sake, Lord, let your face shine upon your desolated sanctuary. 18 Incline your ear, O my God, and hear. Open your eyes and look at our desolation and the city that bears your name. **We do not present our supplication before you on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of your great mercies.** 19 **O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and act and do not delay! For your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people bear your name!”**

Matthew 7:3 “Why do you see the speck in your neighbour’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your neighbour, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour’s eye.”

Could the log in our own eye be the biased account of past events we have received? Have we received a rose coloured account of our sides history, as well as learning of all the atrocities of the other side?

Could the sins of our ancestors, be part of the log in our own eye?

Does not removing the log from our own eyes include learning of the sins of our side, and repenting of them, so that in the humility of repentance there can be the clarity of vision of how to pick the mote out of the others sides eye?

Is there not the possibility that as we apologise and ask forgiveness for our sins and those of our ancestors that in the tears that may flow the logs may be washed away?



## **“LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF:”**

**“Let us therefore no longer pass judgement on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another.”**

Romans 14:13

**“but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity..”**

1 Timothy 4:12

Are we, by our actions, in any way hindering any of those for whom Christ died from being drawn to him? Think of what Paul says;

Romans 15:1 “We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. **2 Each of us must please our neighbour for the good purpose of building up the neighbour. 3 For Christ did not please himself;** but, as it is written, “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” **4** For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.”

This call from Paul comes just after the chapter where the emphasis is in not causing ones brother to stumble, and to remember that we are, for all our differences, accountable to the Lord.

Romans 14:1 “*Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. 2 Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. 3 Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. 4 **Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. 5 Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. 6 Those who observe the day, observe it in honour of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honour of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honour of the Lord and give thanks to God. 7 **We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord,*****

*and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.* 9 *For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.* 10 *Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God.* 11 **For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God."** 12 **So then, each of us will be accountable to God.** 13 *Let us therefore no longer pass judgement on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another.* 14 *I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.* 15 **If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died.** 16 *So do not let your good be spoken of as evil.* 17 *For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* 18 *The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval.* 19 **Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up building.** 20 *Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat;* 21 **it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble.** 22 *The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve.* 23 *But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin."*

Has not this passage far wider implications than just the food context that Paul was talking about? Think of Paul's words in verse 21 "**it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble.**" other translations add the words "or is offended, or is made weak." Is it really going too far to read the passage as follows, added words in CAPITALS and omitted words in brackets (italics):-

15 If your brother or sister is being injured by what you DO (*eat*), you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you DO (*eat*) cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. 16 So do not let your good be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not DOING THIS OR THAT WHICH MAY HURT OTHERS (food and drink) but righteousness and peace and joy in the

Holy Spirit. 18 The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. 19 Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up building. 20 Do not, for the sake of DOING ANYTHING (*food*), destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you DO (*eat*); 21 **it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble OR BE OFFENDED OR MADE WEAK.**

Is not the message of Jesus scandalised around the world by the failure of those who profess his name to put into practice the implications of Loving one's Neighbour as ones self, and for failing to consider how not to cause those for whom Christ died to stumble? Are not we all called to be examples of loving our neighbours and our enemies?

Lacking Power?

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, ..11 He" (Christ Jesus) " came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But **to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,** 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God."

Jesus Said in John 6:37 "Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, **and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away;**"

Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Luke 11:11 "Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? 12 Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? 13 **If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"**

## **“LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF:”**

**It is not my brother or my sister but it is me, oh Lord standing  
in the need of forgiveness:**

- For when I and my group have done to others what I would not like them to do to me.
- For when I and my group have not done to others as I would like them to do to me.

(See Matt 7:12 Luke 6:31)

When did I last bless (speak well of) those who curse me?

(See Luke 6:28)

When did I last personally do good to those who hate me?

(See Luke 6:27&32-34)

When did I last seek reconciliation with those who have something against me?

(see Matt. 5:23-24)

When did I last repent for my sins and the sins of my ancestors?

When did I last go the second mile?

(See Matt 6:41)

**“Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’”**

Matthew 25:45