

Love Others as Yourself

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DENVER: I wanna thank those that organize this and every other conference—put on by volunteers; facilities are rented by them, at their expense, so that we can come and participate. I don't know how much work or preparation went into this, but 17 days is not inconsequential in terms of the effort that has been required by everyone that has worked on this. Part of what we believe is to sacrifice, as part of the religion and that—and that putting on a conference requires that, and it requires a lot of hands to make it work.

Is—is that better? Okay, I lowered my voice when I said, “Is that better?” [Audience laughter.] I would rather be out in the hallway screaming like we heard a little— better go— Okay, can you hear me?

Okay, now that we've got that all figured out, since my wife and I are one, the first part of this talk is gonna be given by her—assuming that she'll actually get up and do this. All—all of the best marriages are fiery, and the idea that you—you somehow failed because you had an argument—what was it? Day four of the marriage? We have this running joke—we keep score. What am I? 12,727 argument wins—and she has four, or was it five? [Audience laughter.] Which—which is a reflection of her charity and generosity. And oh, you just said get the—get the sheep hook out.

She's gonna talk.

STEPHANIE: Okay, now you have to re-do all this nasty whatever.

Okay, I've detected a theme. Jennifer, thank you; Tyler, thank you; and some of the others that I've heard—like a genuine legitimate theme, and I think I'll stick with it, okay? And the good news is, as far as I can tell, there will only be one repeat set of scriptures from my talk to Jennifer's talk. So—

I've noticed that there are Ten Commandments—ten (oh, someone needs to give me some water, by the way), not 15, not a hundred, and not a thousand, but ten. And that doesn't seem like a **lot** to save the entirety of mankind, right? I mean, when I was leaving lists for babysitters, I left more than ten commandments. [Audience laughter.] It takes more than a list of ten things to take care of our dogs when we leave town. So, I find it interesting that there are only ten. But I'm gonna focus on two—the first two.

So, in Mark chapter five, verses 44 and 43 [45] (and you have to excuse me; I have had a terrible cold, and so forgive whatever comes out):

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first

*commandment...? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is: Listen, and hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. 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. This is the first commandment. And the second is like [unto] this: You shall love your neighbor **as yourself**. There is no other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto Him, Well, Master, you have said the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but him. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor **as himself**, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. (Mark 5:44-45 RE, emphasis added)*

So, the question is, What is this thing about loving yourself, k? I'm not sure, but let's take a look at it. So, I'm wondering if God gives *love your neighbor as yourself* as the second great commandment because he thinks we're all ego-maniacal narcissists, and the only possible way we're able to love **other people** is if we love them as much as we love **ourselves**? Yep—no, I don't think so, because there are plenty of examples of people who are literally selfless people and who give up their lives and everything they have for other people. So, that can't be it.

So let's start with Romans 65:

Therefore, owe no man anything but to love one another, for he that loves another has fulfilled the law for this: You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not covet; and if there is any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying — namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself (love works no ill to his neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law), and that, knowing the time — that now [it] is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. (Romans 1:65 RE)

Did you all catch that? If there is any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in the command to **love your neighbor as yourself**. If you love God and your neighbor, the other eight commandments take care of themselves—because people who love each other work no ill to their neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law, and our salvation is nearer than when we believed. So, it is—quite literally—time to wake up.

Galatians 1:19:

I wish they were even cut off who trouble you; for, brethren, you have been called unto liberty. Only use not liberty for an opportunity to the flesh, but by love serve one another; for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another. (Galatians 1:19 RE)

So, here are a few interesting commentaries on that “bite and devour” thing. In the Weymouth New Testament, it says, *But if you are perpetually snarling and snapping at one*

another, beware lest you are destroyed by one another (Galatians 5:15 WNT). The Contemporary English Version says, But if you keep attacking each other like wild animals, you had better watch out or you will destroy yourselves (Galatians 5:15 CEV). Okay? God's Word Translation says, But if you criticize and attack each other, be careful that you don't destroy each other (Galatians 5:15 GWT).

So, how do these words apply to you? And me? Because they do—that's why they're part of the scriptures. I just described **us**; that is us. So, let's ask it again: What's up with loving our neighbors as ourselves?

So, Luke 8:7 says: *And he answering said, 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.... But he [the man asking the question], willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? (Luke 8:7 RE)*

Well, we're not gonna do that, are we? We're not gonna try and justify who our neighbor is. Okay? So, who are our neighbors, and what does it mean to love them?

In this context, I can tell you what love doesn't mean. It is not necessarily an intense feeling of deep affection; it is not necessarily a great interest and pleasure in something; and it is not necessarily to feel a deep romantic or sexual attachment to something.

Enos two—Enos two & three says:

Now it came to pass that when I had heard these words, I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them. And while I was [thus] struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind again, saying, I will visit thy brethren according to their diligence in keeping my commandments. I have given unto them this land, and it is a holy land; and I curse it not, save it be for the cause of iniquity. Wherefore, I will visit thy brethren according as I have said, and their transgressions will I bring down with sorrow upon their own heads. And after I, Enos, had heard these words, my faith began to be unshaken in the Lord. And I prayed unto him with many long struggling for my brethren the Lamanites.

*And it came to pass that after I had prayed and labored with all diligence, the Lord said unto me, I will grant unto thee according to thy desires because of thy faith. And now behold, this was the desire which I desired of him: that if it should ~~be~~ so [be] that my people the Nephites should fall into transgression, and by any means be destroyed, and the Lamanites should not be destroyed, that the Lord God would preserve a record of my people [that] the Nephites, even if it so be by the power of his holy arm, that it might be brought forth some future day unto the Lamanites, that perhaps **they** might be brought unto salvation. For at the present, our strugglings were vain in restoring them to the true faith. And they swore in their wrath that if it were possible, they*

would destroy our records, and us, and also ~~our~~ [all the] traditions of our fathers.
(Enos 1:2-3 RE, emphasis added)

In Helaman 4:2, it says:

And it came to pass that in this year Nephi did cry unto the Lord, saying, O Lord, do not suffer that this people shall be destroyed by the sword, but O Lord, rather let there be a famine in the land to stir them up in remembrance of the Lord their God, and perhaps they will repent and turn unto thee. And so it was done according to the words of Nephi, and there was a great famine upon the land, among all the people of Nephi. And thus in the seventy and fourth year the famine did continue, and the work of destruction did cease by the sword, but became sore by famine. And this work of destruction did also continue in the seventy and fifth year. For the earth was smitten, that it was dry and did not yield forth grain in the season of grain; and the whole earth was smitten, even among the Lamanites as well as among the Nephites, so that they were smitten that they did perish by thousands in the more wicked parts of the land.
(Helaman 4:2 RE)

And then we move on to Nephi—and just as a side note, I'm pretty sure Nephi did not love his brothers, k? I just don't think he did. They were abusive; they were violent; and they were fratricidal, okay? But this is what he does—Nephi 2:4:

*And it came to pass that when I, Nephi, had spoken these words unto my brethren, they were angry with me. [Yes, so what's new? They were always angry with him.] ... But it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord, saying, O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren? ... And it came to pass that when I said these words, behold, the bands were loosed from off my hands and feet, and I stood before my brethren and I spake unto them again. ... And it came to pass that **I did frankly forgive them** all that they had done, and I did exhort them that they would pray unto the Lord their God for forgiveness. ... And after they had done praying unto the Lord, we did again [a] travel on our journey towards the tent of our father. (1 Nephi 2:4 RE, emphasis added)*

Genesis 11:4-9—again, another story of fratricide, k? Pretty sure Joseph didn't love his brothers, and his brothers certainly didn't love him—because 4-9, *And a cert...*

Genesis 11:4-9:

And a certain man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, What do you seek? And he said, I seek my ~~brothers~~ [brethren]; tell me, I pray you, where they feed their flocks? And the man said, They are departed from here, for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren and found them.... [And when he comes, they see him, and they conspire against to slay him] And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer comes. [They don't even call him by name, okay? And they have so much contempt for Joseph that they just call

him “the dreamer.”] *Come now therefore and let us slay him and cast him into ~~the~~ [some] pit, and we will say some evil beast has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands and said, [Let’s] not kill him. And Reuben said...Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit... [That’s great—we’ll just cast him in this pit...Verse 7:] And it came to pass when Joseph had come unto his brethren...they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him, ...they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty, [and] there was no water.... And they sat down to eat... [And lo and behold, they see] a company of Ishmaelites ~~coming~~ [came] from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said... [Hey] What profit [it is] if we slay... and conceal his blood? Come...let us sell him to the Ishmaelites...let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh. [Well, that’s nice. We don’t hate him enough to kill him, but we just sell him to this band of Ishmaelites.] And his brethren were content. [So, they sell him for 20 pieces of silver. Reuben went back to the pit; Joseph wasn’t in it.] ...he rent his clothes. And he returned [to] his brethren and said, The child is not; and I, where shall I go? And they took Joseph’s coat, ...killed...the [goat], ...dipped the coat in...blood. And they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father and [they] said, [Oh, oh, oh, it’s so terrible!] (Genesis 11:4-9 RE)*

Okay, so you know the story. Lots of stuff happens, and then this—Genesis 11:39-40:

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him, and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me! And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph. Does my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence [because, yeah, what happened to you?]. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph, your brother whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that you sold me here, for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years has the famine been in the land, and yet there are five years in which there shall neither be plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve ~~your~~ [you a] posterity ~~and~~ [in] the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me here, but God. And he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and [a] lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land[s] of Egypt. [And more happens and more happens] ...And he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept. And Benjamin wept upon his neck. ~~And~~ [Moreover], he kissed all his brethren and [he] wept upon them. And after that, his brethren talked with him. (Genesis 11:39-40 RE)

The foregoing scriptures illustrate that forgiveness, intercession, and relationships do **not** have to be based on love, as we culturally define it here.

So let's get back to who our neighbors are. We're gonna start with the most intimate relationships and work out from there. At the top should be my relationship with the gods, which is not always my focus, but ideally, it should be; and then we go partner/spouse, family/children, extended family (aunts, uncles, in-laws), friends/co-workers/religious community/work community/neighborhood—blah, blah, blah—until we get down to our enemies. The makeup of these relationships might look different for everyone. Some of us may have all of them, and some of us may have only a few. But we all have intimate and significant associations or relationships, and we all have enemies.

So, how do we do it? How do we love them? (So, as a side note, I would like to make a distinction here—**service is not love**. It can be **motivated** by love, but there's a difference, because serving is actually quite easy—dropping off my gently-used clothes, tithing, dollar bills, blankets, granola, water bottles, taking my old “but I'm getting a new washer/dryer” to someone in need, plant a garden, make a casserole, take a salad or a dessert—don't get me wrong; these are great. We should engage in these. These are really nice things to do. However, they can be done at an arm's length—no conversation, no association, no relationship, no love, no risk. Relationships are where the real work takes place. Relationships are difficult **and** effortless. They are risky, and they are safe. They are uncomfortable, and they are comfortable. They are rich and rewarding; and they ebb, and they flow. They are **the** vehicle wherein we move through and into love, charity, sanctification, and ultimately, salvation. To be a part of the family of God up there requires us to create a family of God down here.)

So, moving back into “How we justify who our neighbors are, and why we think we don't need to love them,” I've got some hypothetical scenarios—completely made-up (except I have heard variations on themes):

- Example one: My best friend doesn't go to church anymore. She believes some strange things that I'm having a hard time understanding. Our religious beliefs were a pretty significant part of our relationship, and I don't believe we have much in common anymore. She is willing to talk to me about some of this stuff, [inaudible] (excuse me) and I do listen, but because I know she's wrong about her new beliefs, I think I should just stop being friends with her. I'm really torn. I'm worried about how this will affect what kind of person she is, and I don't want her wacky ideas influencing my family.
- Example two: My daughter has confided in me about some frustration and hurt she's been dealing with because of the way her husband (my son-in-law) is treating her. I am resentful and holding a grudge. I treat him fine in public—and I do love him—but I can't help thinking negative things about him because of what I know. When I express my frustration to my friend, she commiserates with me and agrees that I am justified in resenting him.
- Example three: My sister borrowed a significant amount of money from me a few years back with a promise that she'll pay it back. I don't ask her for it because I don't really need it, and I'm okay with my financial circumstances, and I really do wanna be charitable. The problem is: every time I see her buying something or spending money, I judge her, based on her promise to pay me back. When I talk to my

husband about it, he says I should ask her to start a payment plan and get it back. We could use it for a vacation or something. And she did say she would pay it back.

- Example four: My mother-in-law is not very nice. She's critical and unkind. I feel really insecure when I'm around her, and it's exhausting. For the sake of my relationship with my husband, I let her come over; and we ~~associate with as much as reason~~ associate with her as much ~~as reason~~ as is reasonable, but I stew and grumble about it for days before and after. My sister thinks I should just explain to my husband how difficult this is for me and suggest that he can see his mom without me.

When I read an article or hear a news story about some tremendous act of forgiveness on the part of someone who has given absolution to another person for some grievous offense, I think, So what? The dad who forgives the drunk driver who killed his entire family; the woman who forgives the man who raped her; the elderly man who doesn't hold a grudge against the businessman who conned him and stole all his money—so what? We treat these instances as though they are great acts of emotional heroism. We heap praise and adulation upon the people who are so magnanimous that they forgave the horrible bastard who grieved or assaulted or offended them. It's ridiculous! We **lie** to ourselves when and if we think we are **ever** justified in resentment, grudges, judgments, or accusations. We are not, **ever**.

The Lord's standard is pretty clear, and there's not much wiggle room. You want Heavenly Father to forgive **you**? You forgive each other. That sounds like a really good way of **loving yourself**. Forgiveness is a **requirement**—it is a condition—and the Lord has this to say about it. Third Nephi 5:34, *And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.... For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if [you] forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses* (3 Nephi 5:34 RE).

Colossians 1:13:

Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, hearts of mercies, kindness, humility of mind, meekness, long-suffering, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do you; and above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness... Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (Colossians 1:13 RE)

This sounds like loving yourself. Teaching[s] and Commandments section 157:58:

I have given you a former commandment that I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. And again, I have taught that if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your

trespasses... If men intend no offense, I take no offense, but if they are taught and should have obeyed, then I reprove and correct, and forgive and forget. (T&C 157:58)

God is the **only** one who judges correctly. He is the only one who can decide whether an offense was intended or not, and then **He** reproveth, corrects, **forgives**, and **forgets**. We are rarely worthy to judge, and we are only able to reprove and correct people we have a relationship with—and we are **always** expected to forgive and forget.

So, the real question comes down to this: Do we believe these words? It's pretty much that simple. Relationships with spouses, children, co-workers, parents, siblings, friends, enemies require vulnerability, work, and a deliberate effort to see the good and **be** the good. Relationship [inaudible] (excuse me)—relationships are emotionally fulfilling. People who have community live longer and healthier lives. Working on those relationships and having them be positive and uplifting for **your** benefit sounds like **loving yourself**.

[Inaudible] (Excuse me.)

I have a simple formula that works for me, and I'll share it with you. I figure that every single interaction I have with another human being will achieve one of three things:

- The experience will either build our relationship with a positive interaction,
- It will leave it unchanged or status quo, or
- It will tear down the relationship with a negative interaction.

Grocery store clerks, gas station attendants, students, teachers, husbands, children—doesn't matter. The good news about this formula for me is that I get to choose, **every single time** with **every single person**. It's **never** out of my control. There is no love for others **or yourself** if your time's spent focusing on flaws, criticizing, imputing intent, or taking offense for no good reason.

Here's what the Lord says about judgment, flaws, criticism, ascribing motive, offense, and intent—and it's time we start taking Him seriously. So, He moves on from the Ten Commandments to the Sermon on the Mount.

In Matthew 3:40, He says:

Now these are the words which Jesus taught his disciples that they should say unto the people: Judge not unrighteously, that you be not judged, but judge righteous judgment; for with what judgment you [shall] judge, you shall be judged, and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. (Matthew 3:40 RE)

(It's like a person with a cold's worst nightmare. [Audience laughter.]

The difference $\#$ here that I see between the no judging and the righteous judgment is likely related to Final Judgment, as opposed to all those in-between judgments that we can do if we **think** we have the Lord on our side, in terms of righteous judgment.

And then moving from Matthew into Third Nephi—Third Nephi chapter six, verse six:

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull ~~that~~ [the] mote out of thine eye, and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam [out] of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again, and rend you. (3 Nephi 6:6 RE)

And so I say to that: What the heck does that have to do with anything? So, on the assumption that it is actually related to what came before that, I spent a reasonable amount of time contemplating it, and this is my version of pearls and swine and dogs and whatever. It's a strange ending to this particular thought; so, what if it means that **we** are the dogs and swine, and judging is a holy and precious act—one that we don't have anywhere near the godliness to engage in, at least without seriously pursuing God's help—and we will get out of the attempt (and **all** we will get out of the attempt) at that kind of judging is trampling and rending. So, that's my take; and so, let's not do it. Okay? Let's just not do it.

In the foregoing scriptures, we are being told to worry about ourselves **first** (and **that** should take a long, long, long time). And then, if we need to, we can worry about other people after that. So, in theory, if we're as critical towards ourselves as we are others, we should be doing a lot of repenting, improving, growing in love and charity and empathy—as we make ourselves better; because it's just about beams and motes, people. That's it—just don't do it.

When it comes to our interpersonal life, knowing how to make yourself better takes a lot of courage and introspection; you have to be willing to be clear on what's wrong with **you**. It's a lot easier to think about what's wrong with other people. So asking questions like:

- How did I make **that** better or worse?
- What did I do or say to make them react that way?
- What did I say or do to cause their defensiveness? or
- Why did I do or say what I did or said, and how and what could I have done differently?

are absolutely necessary in order to become more Christ-like. However, if focusing on other people is your jam, then do it charitably; impute the highest motive and best motive to other people; assume their best intentions; engage in empathy and perspective-taking. **These** are godly acts. They make **your** life better. They wash away the bitterness, anger, hurt, and unhappiness **you** feel when you're focused on the negative. This sounds like loving yourself.

Ephesians twelve and sixteen:

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you that you walk worthy of the vocation with which you are called, [and] with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering,

bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, in one body ~~in~~ [and] one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling — one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Can you be angry and sin not? Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the Devil. Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands for the things which are good, that he may have to give to him that needs. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to [the] use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy spirit of God whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, [and] wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. Be therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ [has also] loved us and has given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. (Ephesians 1:12,16 RE)

So, it still comes down to one simple question: Do I believe the words of God?

And then He raises the standard again—Third Nephi 5:24 through 26, 30, and 31.

[24:] Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, and it is also written before you, that thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment of God. But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council, and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hellfire.

[25:] Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, go thy way unto thy brother and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart and I will receive you. Agree with thine adversary quickly while thou art in the way with him, lest at any time he shall get thee and thou shalt be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence until thou hast paid the uttermost senine. And while ye are in prison, can ye pay even one senine? Verily, verily I say unto you, nay.

...And behold, it is written, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you that ye shall not resist evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall ~~compare~~ [compel] thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and to him that would borrow of thee, turn thou not away.

And behold, it is written also that thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but behold, I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, [and] do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and...the good. Therefore, those things which were of old time, which were under the law, in me are all fulfilled. Old things are done away and all things have become new... (3 Nephi 5:24-26;30-31 RE)

These admonitions are designed to make **your life better**. Much like the other eight commandments, the first two are so that we can (and will) live loving, Christ-like lives, being obedient to God's instructions, which we **really** need to take seriously.

Having said all that, I don't believe we can actually **do** any of this. Down here, the natural man takes over, and we're pretty much **incapable** of living the standard—at least on our own. **We need God**—we need God to change us. Inter-personally speaking, most of us aren't capable (or even willing) to do the hard work of evaluating ourselves, of checking our own “beams,” of considering our own motives, of loving ourselves enough to become godly. We need to be willing to let God change us, mold us, and make us into something **He can use** to further **His** kingdom.

I had an experience several years ago that really opened my eyes and helped me see clearly some things that were seriously wrong with me. Some of you have heard this story, and I'm gonna tell it again because it illustrates why I feel so passionately about this subject:

Years ago, we took the family down to “Circus Circus” in Las Vegas for a softball tournament. And the team was in the arcade, Denver was in the hotel room, the girls were swimming, and it was my job to just be the “mother” down at Circus Circus. But there were so many parents there, I didn't have to be in the arcade; so, I was reading—and I remember the book I was reading; it was called *The Element* by Sir ~~Ken Wade~~ Ken Robinson. And I was sitting outside on a marble platform, outside of Circus Circus. And I was watching **loads** of people just walking by—back and forth, back and forth; and I was having a **heyday** judging these people. Ever been to “Circus Circus”? Okay, I—I mean, I can't even—I had thoughts going in my mind, things like, “Oh my gosh, I would hide my children from that person.” I would literally put them behind my legs and—and hide them from people.

And I was just (in my mind, obviously—I wasn't talking to anybody; no one was there)—but I was on a rant, put my book down, people-watching. And as clear as (I don't know)—it was in my mind; it wasn't an audible voice—but as clear as day, I hear, “How dare you. These are My people! And at the moment, I love them more than you.” No, that wasn't it—but the fact was, I was suitably chastised for what I was doing. And I thought, “Oh, I mean...and I”—it didn't take me, I mean I didn't need anything more than that. It was instant. It was like, “Oh my gosh, that is 100% true.”

So, as I thought about it (over the next few months and whatever), I came to two conclusions:

- One, I am literally, figuratively, theoretically (and every other adverb word)—I am no better than any one. Period. End of story. That's it.
- Conversely, nobody is better than me. K? So there is no—like Jennifer said—there are no “subs” this, or I am **not** “subbed” to anyone, people are not “sub” to me.

And so, as I contemplated this and have tried to incorporate this into my life over the past several years, I see it everywhere. I see it in books I read. I see it in the scriptures I read. I am looking for it because I am truly, truly trying to change me. This was one of those moments in my life where God literally transformed me. He woke me up, and He completely altered the way I see my neighbor.

And I've had several more of those experiences, but it's probably because I'm looking for 'em. So start looking for 'em. So, in addition to “start looking for 'em,” start asking the question, “What lack I yet?” And then **listen** to the answer. Start seeing people the way God sees them and then engaging with them in a way that reflects that. Start asking God to take the scales from **your** eyes, so that you are no longer deceived into thinking whatever is untrue for you. Start wanting to change you, and start taking the things God says seriously.

Now, you might think I'm being too absolute or too literal, and that's fine. You might even be right. However, ask yourself this: Was Jesus absolute and literal when He ended verse 31 with this: *Therefore, I would that ye should be perfect, even as I or your Father who is in Heaven is perfect.* (3 Nephi 5:31 RE)