

How to Love Your Neighbour

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[0:00] Hello, my name is Dennis Sherman. It's great to be with you today and to be able to come and to share in this way. I am with Canadian Baptist Ministries, CBM, your mission, and you've been a part of a meaningful ministry overseas, particularly with our organization and your mission for many, many years. And for that, we are grateful.

My present role with Canadian Baptist Ministries is as your area Western rep, connecting churches and ministries to ministry, particularly overseas, with the more than 14 partners that we have in various countries in the world and various ministries.

I have served with my wife and four children in Indonesia for a period of time, and most of our time overseas has been in Bolivia. And many of you all know some of the stories and our experiences using church. We're very supportive in that for us as well when we were overseas.

As I mentioned, I presently am in the role of Western rep. I've done that before, back when we came home in 2004, but came back to Calgary because of a call my wife received for pastoring a church here in Calgary. So she's pastoring as well.

So that's who I am. Many of you know me, but for those who don't. Again, thank you for your involvement with CBM as a church, and particularly lately around the Waddells and their ministry in the Philippines.

[1:34] And you have sent funds for the vaccination program that we're partnering with UNICEF around. I'll share a little bit about that later. My goal today is to really share some stories about CBM and how we are working in the world, and how it relates to this whole theme that I've planned out this morning for how to love your neighbor.

Scripture is found in Matthew 22, verses 37 to 40. And I want to share from that and that commandment that Christ has put upon us.

And yeah, share some, I think, credible stories of how CBM is, through partnership and through churches like yourselves, loving those that are vulnerable, loving those souls that need to be loved and to be a part of ministry.

And I think it helps as well to see how we are to live out our faith and put it into practice and simply love our neighbor.

So Matthew 22, 37 to 40, Jesus replied, You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.

[2:52] This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important. Love your neighbor as yourself. I believe that these words bring hope to those that need to hear it in the world today.

For each of us that are loved by the Lord and those that need to be loved by the Lord, these verses ring true. Everything else falls into place when we fulfill this commandment.

Love has its basis in creation. You are made in the image of God. That is who you are. God loves us and goes to great lengths and has to save us.

This tells us that we have great value in God's sight. Everyone you know has great value in God's eyes as well. And he's made that clear through scripture.

This is based on these two great commandments, Matthew 22, 37 to 40. And as we've read those, we can be assured that God simply loves us.

[4:04] The Apostle Paul and James reflected this important truth. In Galatians 5, 14, For the whole law can be summed up in this one commandment.

Love your neighbor as yourself. And then James 2, 8. It is good when you obey the royal law as found in the scripture.

Again, love your neighbor as yourself. Showing kindness to the least, to the last, to the lost, the lonely, and the unloved extends God's grace in the various forms to a hurting world.

A hated world. A broken people. He brings into our lives this calling that we can make a difference. This is even more important in the pandemic that we find ourselves in and have been going through for the last number of months.

Where we are isolated and now slowly trying to return to this public life and this new way of doing things. There are challenges to this love.

[5:21] And today, I'd like to share some practical ways how to love your neighbor. What has worked for us at CBM? How do we live it up? Well, scripture shows us, as I shared, that, you know, John has showed us that Jesus has commanded us to love each other.

Paul has taught us in Romans and in 1 Thessalonians about, you know, how to love your neighbor. Peter instructs us in a real way, constructive way.

And then John stresses it even more in his writings. There are practical ways to love your neighbor. Just simply to receive each other. To edify one another.

To serve one another. Bear one another's burdens. And boy, that's about a lot of that lately. Yes, and forgiving each other. Submitting to each other.

Sorting each other. Considering one another. Hospitality. And the list goes on. We have five causes at CBM. Many of you know them. And it's a critical area.

[6:28] But in those areas, as we work through word and deed and sharing the gospel and bringing practical ways through social ministry and marrying those two together, the theology and the church and the local church and bringing practical things to those, particularly the poor.

That word and that action are very important. And that love that goes with it. So meeting the needs of poverty is one of them, of the five causes.

Justice. Very big in terms of people being treated unjustly in the world today. Kids at risk. And youth, particularly, and young girls.

And I'll share some stories about that as well. Building the church, God's church, his bride, is really important. Training people and training pastors and bringing people into a meaningful way to do ministry and be effective in that.

And then, of course, the crisis response that we've been involved in in some of the crisis like Lebanon explosion and some of the earthquakes in Haiti and those kinds of things.

[7:43] So let me share some practical ways and real practical approaches to loving your neighbor. Love others like you want to be loved.

It sounds simple, but in the spirit of this commandment, it's showing genuine concern for others. It's so important. Love the way you want to be loved.

Matthew 7, 12. Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

We generally think of ourselves. I mean, that's human. First, we know that what makes us feel loved, accepted, and encouraged. We know what encourages us and how we feel loved.

We wonder how we can express love to others, especially during the pandemic. We find our answers when we ask what would make us feel loved.

[8:50] And then we do it. Let me mention one that you as a church have been promoting and entering into. And I'm pleased that you are. And it does show the love of Christ working through you.

The Love Your Neighbor project that we've partnered with the United Way project that enters into a very meaningful way of showing your love makes people feel loved and not forgotten.

And many are forgotten around the vaccines and the lack of vaccines and the availability for them. Of course, the poor are the ones that are finding it very difficult because they don't have the funding.

If you've got money in many countries, you can get a vaccine and pay for it. And it is quite expensive. That life-saving vaccine that can help them through COVID.

CBM, as I mentioned, has partnered with UNICEF in a very important way in this project. And we know that there are many countries that do not have the ability and opportunity to get these vaccines.

[9:59] There is a national movement to bring people finding themselves in these vulnerable situations, but this national movement to make a difference and allow these vaccines to be given to the vulnerable.

And for a while, the Canadian government was supporting and giving and matching four to one every dollar that was raised. And we at CBM, through Canadian Food Grains Bank, are looking at trying to continue that in terms of some of the funding that is raised.

We set out a goal as an organization to provide two doses at \$25 per person, working with the government of Canada to match it and make that gift grow.

We set a goal of \$10,000. And I am pleased to tell you that because of the love people and the concern for others that can't get these vaccines, \$17,000, almost \$17,900 has been raised as of today.

You go to Canadian Baptist Love Their Neighbors. There is the website there. And it can take you directly to how you can support there as well and even more information.

[11:11] So our second one is love with empathy. Empathy is identifying with the feelings and hurts of others as if it was happening to us.

Romans 12, 15, be happy with those who are happy and weep with those who weep. Love sometimes means we weep with those who are sorrowful, sitting with them in their sorrow and not trying to fix it.

There are times we rejoice with those who are happy. Trying to see other person's point of view is how we love with empathy. How can we do this?

Listening. Listening to others. Paying attention to what is going on in their lives. Genuinely asking how they are doing. That will help us do things and make a difference with empathy.

To have empathy, one needs to build a relationship with those you are trying to encourage and engage with. Please get to know them. Please get to understand the situation that they find themselves in.

[12:22] Find out what the issues are. And with empathy, then respond. We had to do this as an organization many times and just sitting with our partners and hearing some stories and trying to understand with empathy what the situation really was and is before we can react.

Before we can react as a church and donors and those that want to help. But we simply can't march in with our ideas and the lack of understanding of what the needs really are.

Situation we found ourselves in in India was around schoolgirls particularly. And the need for safety for them. Working with our partner, we wanted to show empathy and we wanted to help them because what was happening was these girls were walking great distances to go to school.

And many of them wanted to be in school, wanted to be there and get an education and better their lives. As they walked great distances for many hours one way to school, taking their schooling and then having to walk that same distance back home.

It was very unsafe because the road, the very road that this particular situation, the very road that they had to walk on. There were truckers. There were men particularly looking for young girls to exploit and to abuse.

[13:51] But we wanted to do something. We felt maybe we need to build a new school. Maybe we need to rush in with some money and get a bus.

But we had to sit back and with empathy, listen, be patient and understand what the real issues are and how to respond. Working with a partner and with empathy, we realized that what was really needed was a place for those girls to stay during the week at that very school.

So a big campaign was to help build a dormitory and a building for those girls to be safe and not to be exploited. And the abuse didn't happen or the trafficking of women or young girls didn't happen. That's empathy. Our peace and reconciliation group still is involved very much in Rwanda and DR Congo. And surrounding countries because of the clashes between the different groups and different tribes and different cultures.

So for us at CBM and with our partners in the same way, we had to sit and continue to sit and listen and shower empathy on our partners and those in need and to understand lasting good ministry

But education around planting, education around what good farming techniques and so on are. A very effective way of showing our love to those that are in great need.

We have projects here in the West in Brownfield and High River and Moosom in Saskatchewan. But a new project that we've helped to foster with partnership is in Saskatchewan.

And it's a fairly new this year project that we've entered into to allow the urban church and the urban person to engage with a local farmer in helping to sponsor acres so the farmer can grow that product and then sell it and receive the funds for CBM.

There's a group of farmers that have come together in Saskatchewan and they are helping to feed the hungry in a very practical way. But they're praying.

[21:33] And particularly this year, they've had to pray hard. Many farmers have had to pray hard and trust the Lord. We all know about the drought. We all know about the lack of rain and the situation that many, many farmers have found themselves in.

Dan is one of those men who was praying and praying hard. Dan prayed but wasn't sure the Lord was listening to him. Dan is a farmer in Saskatchewan, main center of Saskatchewan.

As part of this grow project, for a few years, Dan has grown crops to help feed the hungry of the world and has had large yields and excellent crops.

As part of the grow project in Saskatchewan, Dan buys the seed, fertilizer, and even donates part of his land for planting. While the generosity of donors and urban churches and those getting involved helped contribute to offset some of the input costs.

Last year, Dan received or got about 60 bushels of wheat per acre. But this year, he only brought in about 11 bushels due to the drought.

[22:47] Dan confessed to me that he was distraught and really did not feel his efforts were worthy of it all. That he had let down his donors, let down the Lord, and most of all, let those down that he needed to help and feed.

However, despite the low yields this year, the price of wheat, as many of us know, and wheat durum went to an all-time high, bringing much higher return per bushel than last year.

The sale of the crop was multiplied four to one by Canadian Baptist, or sorry, Canadian government to address food hunger and issues around the world. Dan said, and I quote, I will never doubt the Lord again.

When we are faithful, he is faithful in returning the blessings richly. Thanks to those who sent funds, to those who helped take off the crops, and CFGB, Canadian Fruit Grains Bank, and the Grow Project in Saskatchewan.

Many people will be fed again this year. I will not stop praying. The Lord can do great things. I encourage you to visit the growhope.hopefulgifts campaign, and you can see the project there.

[24:13] And if the Lord leads you to be a part of that, I encourage you to. Our Abba Father knows how to answer our prayers.

We may not understand how he does answer them, but in times, in his time and his ways, he affirms that he knows how he needs to answer.

Our Abba Father knows how to answer our prayers. We may not understand how he does answer them in his time and in his way.

We affirm that he knows how to answer prayer. But don't stop praying. Well, number four, love by encouraging others.

Hebrews 3.13. You must warn each other every day while it is still today so that none of you will be deceived by sin or hardening against God.

[25:16] You know, during this pandemic, we all need some encouragement. We know that. The economy isn't great. Family problems, personal failures, fear, illness, loss, all leave us thirsty for encouragement.

Many of us have been there. Albert 16.24. Kind words are like honey sweet to the soul and healthy for the body. I encourage you to find that natural to you way to encourage people.

You know, it can be as simple as a phone call, a card, an email, a text. Love like you want to be loved. Love with empathy.

Love by praying. And love by encouraging. People need to be encouraged when things aren't going well, when things need to be taken care of, and sometimes we don't know which way to turn.

But encouraging through that is really important. If you encourage and want to encourage, share in this way.

[26:29] When you introduce somebody, a practical way, somebody's meeting somebody in a new way, add an encouraging word and praise about an ability or an accomplishment, about a ministry or what's going on in the church.

Encourage your pastor. Encourage your leadership. When someone is discouraged or hurt, be specific in a practical way to help. And ask the question, how can I help?

Many of you have asked the question, how can I help with the vaccines? How can I help in ministry overseas? But it goes here in Canada as well. And of course, as I said, encouraging notes, emails, and so on.

It can be very encouraging. I think the one that's really important is to let people know you're actually praying for them and pray for them when you say you're praying for them.

Hugely encouraging, as I've said. Encourage others and other believers with a reminder that Christ is coming back. And Christ has left his spirit here until he comes back.

[27:41] That's powerful and very encouraging. Another one that I've really appreciated is the power of presence. We've talked about listening.

We've talked about empathy. But that physical presence, I had an experience where I was going through a very, very rough time in ministry.

And an older gentleman with much wisdom, much empathy, had been praying for me, but invited me to come visit him. And I expected to sit with him and he would quiz me and he would, you know, share scripture and so on and so on.

And we were together for about almost two hours and I was surprised that he really didn't say anything.

We sat together and were just present. He didn't need to say anything. We didn't need to talk. When we did, towards the end, it was around encouragement.

[28:47] But he understood the importance and the power of presence. And then he moved weeks later and months later with that presence in a very practical way.

Very encouraging. Very important. Our fifth one is probably one of the harder ones that I want to share with you. And it's about loving when others hate.

We know that this isn't easy and challenging even for us, if we're honest. We live in a world that is hateful and it's becoming even more evident as we hear the news.

We live in a cynical, hateful world. All we have to do is look and listen around us. Hatred is everywhere, unfortunately. In some places, it's more prevalent than others.

the way people are being treated simply because of who they are, what tribe they belong to, or the color of their skin. This should deeply, deeply concern all of us.

[29:56] And we know the Lord is deeply concerned about it as well. But the Lord calls us to love everyone, our enemies, and those that are hard to love.

I believe there are people in the world that are hard to love. We have to be careful with social media. And I don't want to get into some of the do's and don'ts around that, but in even our speaking and the way we come across, our words, our actions, our hate speech, even when maybe disagreeing with someone, we have to be very careful.

And again, where the empathy and the listening and the deep love and concern for someone other than hate is so important.

How many people need to hear, I love you, or I care, or even just, I hear you, without judgment or without hate?

I can share many examples of this hate, as I've said, very concerning about what's happening in the First Nations. Many churches, many people are coming simply with love and concern for our First Nations.

[31:21] They need to be heard. They need to simply hear that we care and we love you. Hate in the Asian world today simply because of the pandemic.

And we all know the stories. We all know what's happening when someone who may be Asian was simply hated because of the connection of the pandemic.

No fault of their own. They didn't have anything to do with this pandemic, with their being exploited and unjustly targeted.

One of a great ministry that we've had and really appreciate is around the pandemic, Wuhan and Habi in China.

Joyce Locke is our missionary there in that area. We're not allowed and able to give a lot of information simply because of the restrictions of the government and some of the bans on communication.

[32:30] But it's fair to say that Joyce has been there in a time of crisis. Christian believers are under the scope and the leadership and pastors simply need to be loved and heard.

And there has been a ministry right there in Wuhan where a lot of people hate that part of the world and hate what has come out of there supposedly around the pandemic.

Joyce has been a part of helping particularly those people who are in need. you can only imagine how difficult it is in that area and because of isolation and because of simple things like basic living needs.

We as an organization have been able to meet some of those with Joyce because she's been on the ground. she has felt that hate. She has felt and received some of the hate because of what's going on.

But she's been able to meet the needs and help them. I talked about the First Nations helping Canadian churches encourage vital ministry.

[33:55] I encourage you if this is an area that you want to pray about and be concerned about to connect with churches like Kamloops and what they're doing even Altidore Baptist here in Calgary.

There are many churches that are engaging and knowing that they will not be received well simply because of what's happening around the First Nations.

No fault of their own. Nothing that they've done. In fact, it's the opposite. The needs are there and God calls us to that. Our last one, very quickly, is around love when opportunity arises.

That means react, engage. There are so many opportunities in the world today. All you have to do is look in your community and you know of those many ministries and those many needs.

God calls us with love to seize the opportunities, to take those opportunities. Let me just share very quickly that we as an organization are in key countries, 14 key countries.

[35:15] We are engaged in some others, but key countries with ministry, some of them long-term. If you don't know, India and Bolivia have been well over 100 years, closer to 150.

50. But our ministries aren't done in some of these countries, simply because there are many other opportunities, many other things that are called into play for us as we sit and listen and pray with our partners and hear of the needs and some of the capacities that need to be filled.

Many opportunities to share love are in the world, to show mercy. They will present themselves if you don't even know. All you have to do is be willing to see them.

Opportunities to feed the hungry, to build capacity around our partners, particularly with CBM, but with pastors and leaders of churches in Canada as well.

The very big opportunity I shared about Canadian food grains, community development, and feeding the hungry, training them in techniques of farming and self-sustaining, medical ministries are huge right now, particularly in India.

[36:30] I've talked about girls and the need to help them with the problem of being exploited. Women's programs that because they're simply women, they're marginalized and have problems.

Hope with education and literacy around that as well. and we don't want to lose sight about planting the church here in Canada and planting the church overseas.

We believe at CBM that we can learn a lot from each other and that has taken place over years.

Yes, different cultures, yes, even different languages, but there's opportunity to seize that learning and that mutuality together.

I know that your church is very good about local ministry and supporting local needs as well. You're doing it, you're responding.

I want you to hear from CBM that this isn't just simply about overseas mission. It's about the local church in the local setting engaging in local ministry and overseas ministry and seizing the opportunity that are near and far and being able to respond in a loving, kind way.

[37:59] Galatians 6.10, therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone, especially those in the family of faith.

Let me conclude. Question and statement for you to ponder and to consider. what is my Christianity doing for another person?

What is my Christianity doing for the people that God has placed in my path or in my neighborhood, in my family, or in another part of the world?

I've given you seven ways to love your neighbor. Love like you want to be loved. Love with empathy. Love by praying and praying fervently.

Love by encouraging one another. Love when others hate. Love with the words that love will bring opportunities that arise and God will make it clear to you.

[38:58] It's very true that our work is not done. Our ministries are not complete. Christ has called us to pursue the shalom of the kingdom.

We need to do that with love.