

Bridging the Two Great Commandments

Elder Gary E. Stevenson—Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—April 2024

1 Our ability to follow Jesus Christ depends upon our strength and power to live the first and second commandments with balance and equal devotion.

2 In the twilight of Jesus Christ's ministry, during what we now call Holy Week, a Pharisee who was a lawyer asked the Savior a question he knew was nearly impossible to answer: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" The lawyer, "tempting him" and seeking a legalistic answer, with seemingly deceitful intent, received a genuine, sacred, divine response.

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment." Harkening to our bridge analogy, the first tower!

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This is the second tower!

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The remaining elements of the bridge!

3 The first, to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind.

In this answer, Jesus Christ condenses the essence of the law embodied in the sacred teachings of the Old Testament. To love the Lord centers first on your heart—your very nature. The Lord asks that you love with all your soul—your entire consecrated being—and finally, to love with all your mind—your intelligence and intellect. Love for God is not limited or finite. It is infinite and eternal.

For me, the application of the first great commandment can sometimes feel abstract, even daunting. Gratefully, as I consider further words of Jesus, this commandment becomes much more graspable: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." This I can do. I can love Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, which then leads to prayer, scripture study, and temple worship. We love the Father and the Son through the payment of tithes, keeping the Sabbath day holy, living a virtuous and chaste life, and being obedient.

A Harmony with Deity

"Living the commandments brings us into harmony with Deity; we become one in purpose with the Father and the Son. When we are one with God, we walk with spiritual light. Our diligence in keeping the commandments allows the Holy Ghost to dwell within us. We are given the gift of personal revelation. This is a spiritual light that protects us and serves as a beacon, guiding us in righteous ways. It dispels the darkness of the adversary. So powerful is this light that it can reach us even when we are drawn into a black hole of sin so deep and so dark that we believe no spiritual light could ever penetrate."

Robert D. Hales 'If Thou Wilt Enter Into Life, Keep the Commandments' (April 1996)

[<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1996/04/if-thou-wilt-enter-into-life-keep-the-commandments>]

B Commandments supersede Love

"If a person understands the teachings of Jesus, he or she cannot reasonably conclude that our loving Heavenly Father or His divine Son believes that Their love supersedes Their commandments."

Dallin H. Oaks 'Love and Law' (October 2009)

[<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2009/10/love-and-law>]

C Who is your neighbor?

Could Jesus Christ mean "a person in your possible reach" when He used the word "neighbor" in the commandment 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'? If yes, could its practical application changed in time due to globalization and technological progress?

This is a great question and was answered by Jesus himself when someone 2,000 years ago asked him the same question. Here is the text:

"Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" The man answered, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself."

"Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!" The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Then Jesus went on to explain what he meant by his neighbor. "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road." "Two holy men from the man's city passed by the injured man, but did nothing to help him." "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'"

"Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked."

"The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy."

"Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

Jesus made it clear in this parable that the word "neighbor" meant someone from a distant town who was not generally liked by the Jewish population. Its implications for our time of globalization and technological progress is that virtually everyone on the planet is your neighbor.

Bob Blacka [<https://www.quora.com/When-Christ-said-Love-your-neighbor-as-yourself-did-he-mean-your-neighbor-in-the-million-dollar-house-next-to-you-or-in-this-todays-globalized-world-the-neighbor-starving-in-Africa-whom-you-could-quickly-fly->

4 To love your neighbor includes Christlike deeds of kindness and service. Can you let go of grudges, forgive enemies, welcome and minister to your neighbors, and assist the elderly? You will each be inspired as you build your tower of love for neighbor.

President Russell M. Nelson taught: “Giving help to others—making a conscientious effort to care about others as much as or *more* than we care about ourselves—is our joy. Especially ... when it is not convenient and when it takes us out of our comfort zone. *Living* that second great commandment is the *key* to becoming a true disciple of Jesus Christ.”

5 Jesus further taught, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” This is very instructive. There is an important interdependency between loving the Lord and loving one another. For the Golden Gate Bridge to perform its designed function, both towers are equally strong and with equal power to bear the weight of the suspension cables, the roadway, and the traffic crossing the bridge. Without this engineering symmetry, the bridge could be compromised, even leading to collapse. For any suspension bridge to do what it was built to do, its towers must function together in complete harmony. Likewise, our ability to follow Jesus Christ depends upon our strength and power to live the first and second commandments with balance and equal devotion to both.

The increasing contention in the world suggests, however, that we at times fail to see or remember this. Some are so focused on keeping the commandments that they show little tolerance of those they see as less righteous. Some find it difficult to love those who are choosing to live their lives outside of the covenant or even away from any religious participation.

Alternatively, there are those who emphasize the importance of loving others without acknowledgment that we are all accountable to God. Some refuse entirely the notion that there is such a thing as absolute truth or right and wrong and believe that the only thing required of us is complete tolerance and acceptance of the choices of others. Either of these imbalances could cause your spiritual bridge to tip or even fall.

6 So the question for each of us is, How do we build our own bridge of faith and devotion—erecting tall bridge towers of both loving God and loving our neighbors? Well, we just start. Our initial efforts might look like a plan on the back of a napkin or an early-stage blueprint of the bridge we hope to construct. It might consist of a few realistic goals to understand the Lord's gospel more or to vow to judge others less. No one is too young or too old to begin.

D You have neighbors on the other side

Who You Can Do Ordinances For

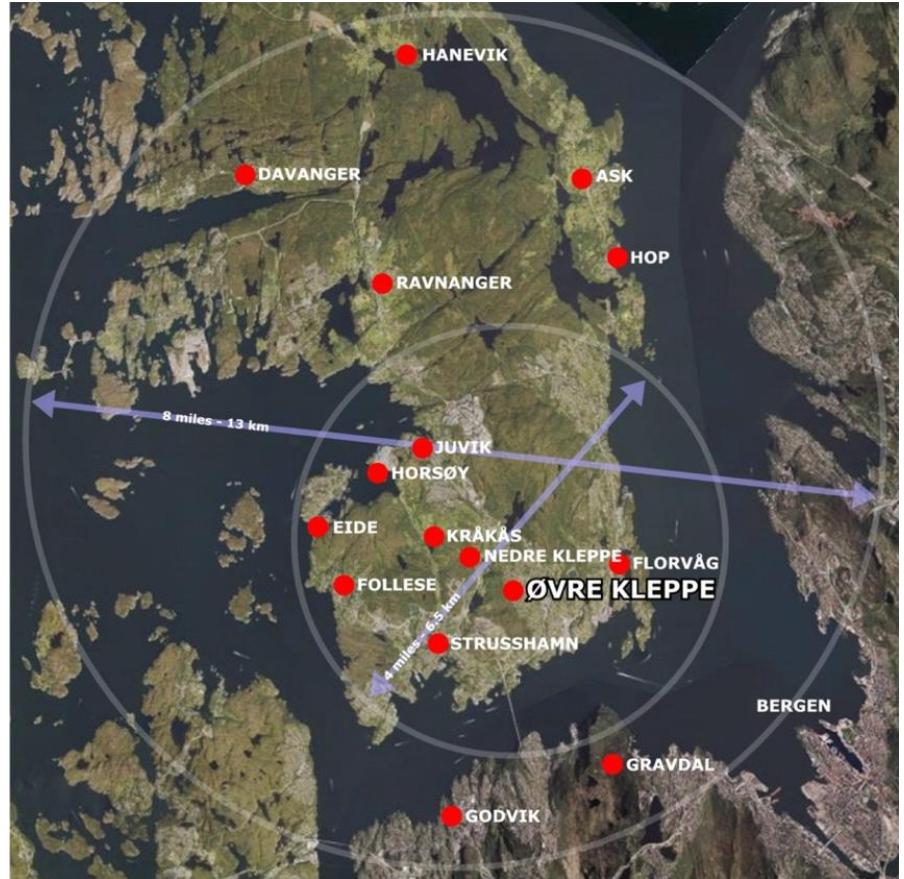
You are responsible to submit names of the following individuals:

1. Immediate family members
2. Direct-line ancestors (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and so on, and their families).

You may also submit the names of the following individuals:

1. Biological, adoptive, and foster family lines connected to your family.
2. Collateral family lines (uncles, aunts, cousins, and their families).
3. Descendants of your ancestors.
4. Your own descendants.
5. Possible ancestors, meaning individuals who have a probable family relationship that cannot be verified because the records are inadequate, such as those who have the same last name and resided in the same small geographic area as your known ancestors.

E From 1820 – 1870 78% of marriages on Askøy was with a spouse living less than 8 miles away.



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