

MARCH 2003 – *Loving Our Neighbor*

The tangible and visible evidence of our love for God is our love for our neighbor.<sup>1</sup> But, what does it really mean to love our neighbor?

Popular culture has reduced the meaning of the word *love* to a matter of emotion. But, the love to which Jesus calls us – *agape* in Greek – is something far different. “This *agape*...is not merely an emotional experience which comes to us unbidden and unsought; it is a deliberate principle of the mind and a deliberate conquest and achievement of the will...*agape* is the spirit which says ‘No matter what any man does to me I will never seek to do harm to him, I will never set out for revenge; I will always seek nothing but his highest good’...*agape* is unconquerable benevolence, invincible good will.”<sup>2</sup>

C.S. Lewis puts it very succinctly: “love is not affectionate feeling, but a steady wish for the loved person’s ultimate good as far as it can be obtained.”<sup>3</sup>

How, then, do we live out this *agape* love? Lewis says elsewhere “...it would be quite wrong to think that the way to become charitable [loving] is to sit trying to manufacture affectionate feelings...do not waste time bothering whether you “love” your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.”<sup>4</sup>

*Father, help us to love our neighbor not simply with words or tongue  
but with actions and truth, for Jesus' sake.*

*Amen.*

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<sup>1</sup> I John 4:19-21

<sup>2</sup> Barclay, William. *New Testament Words*. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia. 1974. pp. 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, C.S. *God in the Dock*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids. 1970. p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. Touchstone (Simon & Schuster, Inc.), New York. 1996. p. 116.