

**BIBLE**

**PARALLEL**

**LINES**

### **Parallel Lines Pt.7: The Neighbor**

Exodus 20:16 *“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor!”*

You’re going to talk about the neighbor again? It’s a neighbor for crying out loud, not God or family! I’ll confuse you even more by adding Leviticus 19:9-10 *“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God.”* Who are the poor and the foreigner? They are your neighbors!

Through religious history is the plight of the neighbor. God is very clear in the Bible that we must honor the neighbor. A few weeks ago, we talked about the neighbor being your lowest priority compared to family or God. Yet, God does not give just one verse on the neighbor. It comes up all over the place. We may have certain feelings (or lack there of) towards our neighbors. However, God is using the neighbor as a measuring stick to check the size of our heart. If God loves all people, then why don’t we? Muslims love Muslims as Jews love Jews. I dare say Baptists prefer Baptists over Lutherans. Catholics love their own more than Mormons. It’s how humans roll.

Deuteronomy 24 lays out some simple rules for divorce. Jesus in Matthew 5:31-32 drops a bomb on it *“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.* What does this have to do with the neighbor? Who do we cheat with? It’s someone who lives near us but not with us. In reality, God knows that how we treat those around us will affect how we treat those we live with. I suspect that we’re either devoted to everyone or nobody.

Matthew 19:8-9 *“Jesus replied, ‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. 9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.’”*

It’s not about harping on divorce or adultery. No, it’s about who we care for. Throughout the Bible Jesus tells us to care for the least. Care for children, the blind, poor, and the neighbor. The story of the woman at the well reflects on neighbors. These people were in Samaria. A place neighboring Jerusalem. A place where God fearing people were segregated from Jewish religion. They were the neighbors! It was custom for religious Jews to avoid Samaria. Jesus went straight through it. Jesus also tells a story of a hurt man on the side of the road in Luke 10. A Samaritan helped the man. The Jewish priest and Levite walked on past. We are to help our neighbors. Jesus’ point was really to show the heart of those in power. Those who were supposed to be like God but weren’t.

Leviticus 19:13 *“Do not defraud or rob your neighbor.”*

Matthew 5:43-44 *“‘You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”*

God is serious about your conduct towards neighbors. Don't rob them. Jesus goes even deeper. We say "*why do we have to love them? They are not family.*" Yet, Jesus says love your enemy and pray for your adversary. I bet you love neighbors more than enemies. Leviticus 19:18 says love your neighbor as yourself. Other verses say to judge your neighbor fairly and don't hold a grudge. The point in the first study of the neighbor was who do you love the least. In this study the Bible says "*does your character love everyone like God does.*"

Proverbs 3:28 says "*Do not say to your neighbor, 'Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you'— when you already have it with you.*" Jesus says in Matthew 5:40 "*And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.*" Let's add the last two commandments from Exodus 20:16-17 "*You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. 17 'You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.'*" The parallel lines are all over the Bible. It's in the stories, proverbs, commands, and in parables. You can't avoid the neighbor. Equally, you can't avoid what God expects from you. Mark 12:21 "*The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. 'There is no commandment greater than these.'*" There is no commandment greater! If you say that you are a Christian and love God then God says you must love everyone like he does. Yes, even your neighbor.