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CHAPTER VIII

TEACHING NEIGHBOUR LOVE

Henry J. Schmidt

Ours is a generation of talkers and travellers. It has been suggested that an epitaph of modern man might read, "when all is said and done, much more will have been said than done." The church has been rightfully criticized for its failure to demonstrate the neighbour love which it so loudly proclaims. It is one thing to say, "I care," but it is quite another to involve oneself in caring relationships. It doesn't cost nearly as much to announce God's love to people as to be God's instrument in loving people personally.

The challenge of the church is to mirror God's love. God's love is committed to persons. It focuses on the welfare of the other person and "does not live unto itself." The tension in the church is to keep the perspective between receiving God's love graciously and sharing that love with a world unselfishly. A living church must continuously experience and appreciate God's love. It must continue to rejoice over the fact that it has been "chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world." But it can never forget why it has been chosen. "For the love of Christ leaves us no choice. . . his purpose in dying for all was that men, while still in life, should cease to live; unto themselves, and should live for him who for their sake died and was raised to life" (II Cor. 5:14-15). The question "am I my brother's keeper?" becomes an affirmation, I am responsible to God and to my brother. The question, "Who is my neighbour?" is quickly translated from the theoretical realm to practical reality where commitment to God can never be divorced from commitment to humanity. The Great Commission, "To love the

Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, . . . and your neighbour as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39), is vitally linked to the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).

In teaching neighbour love the Seminary is really focusing on the mission of the church. It is a reminder to the people of God of their high calling in the world. It calls his people to maturity, to a "giving love", to a dynamic relationship that reaches out to people.

The church's model for sharing neighbour love in a loveless world is Jesus Christ. Jesus came as an expression and clarification of God's love. He said, "He that has seen me has seen the father" (John 20:21). The role of the people of God under His spirit, is the work of continuing incarnation—of making God's love and life visible in everyday life. In the *Presence of the Kingdom* Jacques Ellul states that the three most potent metaphors Jesus used to describe the work of his followers in society are: "ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13); "you are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14); you are sent forth as sheep among wolves (Matt. 10:16).¹ I would add a fourth metaphor from Jesus final commission, "You shall be witnesses unto me. . ." (Acts 1:8). Salt, light, witness, sheep among wolves all relate to the mission of sharing neighbour love in society. Jesus also said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another" (John 13:34-35).

There are several questions which naturally arise from these texts which impact leadership models and Seminary training:

- 1) What is the nature and meaning of the neighbour love which the church shares in the world? 2) why is neighbour love so vital the the church's impact in society? and 3) what are the practical implications of neighbour love in evangelism?

I. THE NATURE OF NEIGHBOUR LOVE

God's commitment to the human race can hardly be disputed. Throughout the Bible God's love is revealed through the redemption of His people. When man chose to disobey God's clear command in the garden, God was the initiator in restoring the broken relationship (Gen. 3:1-15). Genesis 12:1-2 records that "the Lord said to Abraham go forth from your country... I will bless you and you shall be a blessing." God gave Abraham a gift—the promise of His blessing. But the promise was coupled with a summons to "be a blessing." Israel as a covenant people began to rest in the promise, but forgot their calling "to be a kingdom of priests" and a "light to the Gentiles" (Ex. 19:3-9). Israel forgot that God only called a special people for a special purpose—for missions.² Through the prophets God calls his people to renew their covenant, to turn from their idolatry, to worship and serve Yahweh alone. Throughout scripture God gave repeated verbal declarations of his unchanging love for his people (Is. 43:4; Jer. 31:3; Micah 1:2). Throughout the history of his people God reveals a healthy balance between love and discipline, mercy and judgment. The Egyptian bondage, the Exodus, the wilderness wanderings, the material provisions in the wilderness, the clear revelation in the 10 commandments, Israel's subservience to heathen countries and the deliverance through the judges, the Babylonian captivity and the restoration to the land all focus on God's relationship to his people.

With the birth of Jesus John reminds his readers that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The invitation is clear. "As many as received him to them he gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). In his instruction to his disciples Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). It is only in obedience to Christ that relationships are altered and character is molded. Paul likewise reminds the Corinthians that their new role in society is one of ambassadorship because "God was in Christ, reconciling

the world to himself, not counting men's trespasses against them and has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:19).

To teach neighbour love in a world that desperately wants love must begin with a commitment to God. The Christian world view is God-centered. It accepts God's revelation in creation, scripture, in the history of His people and in Jesus Christ. However, awareness of God's love through revelation apart from a restored relationship, short-circuits genuine neighbour love. The Ten Commandments begin with the words, "I am the Lord your God," and proceed to condemn idolatry and to affirm Yahweh as the one who alone is worthy of man's deepest love (Ex. 20:105). Jesus' summation of the Great Commission (Matt. 22:37-39) is a call to love God supremely. It is a summons to cut the cord of self-centered existence. It calls man to shift the center of gravity in life from self to God. To obey the Great Commandment is to admit the depth of sin's guilt and the grip of man's perennial problem of "self-o-holicism." To love God supremely is to face honestly one's own spiritual, psychological, sociological and ecological alienation. This in turn gives one a perspective on humanity. Paul reminds his readers that man's alienation has been dealt with in Jesus Christ, "for he is our peace . . ." (Eph. 2:11-15). When man is reconciled to God through repentance and faith in Christ, his life comes under new management and becomes an instrument of God's love in the world. "The fruit of the Spirit is love" (Gal. 5:22). John says, "Herein is love, not that we loved him but that he first loved us" (I Jn. 4:11). Jesus described the life of the believer in these terms, "He that believes on me as the scripture has said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of life producing water" (Jn. 7:37). The neighbour love we share with others is an outgrowth of our love relationship with God.

It is important to understand the nature of God's love which he manifested in Jesus since we are sent into the world to love others as he loved us. Ancient Greeks expressed their levels of love by three different words: 1) eros love, which is a getting love. It is ego centered, possessive, lustful. 2) phileo love, which is a give-and-take love. It is

more mature than eros because it accepts some responsibility to give. However, it is limited because each person wants the right to determine his level of give-and-take love; and 3) agape love which is a godly, unconditional, affirming love. Paul describes it in these words, "But God demonstrated his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Wilhard Becker defines agape love in these words:

The ability to love is the ability to look away from oneself to another person or thing... Genuine love always has in it something of the nature of God's love. It is selfless and constant. It does not want to have, but to give. It does not want to become happy but to make happy. Its greatest joy is in the development of the other, the loved one. It is not dependent on counter love nor bound to its ego.³

"Love never ends" (I Cor. 13:8). True love is eternal because it comes from the Eternal. This love can unfold itself most purely in our relationship to God. He is its origin, and here we can best receive it and let it take on form within us.

To know and experience God's unconditional love revamps ones self image. It brings a new freedom, affirmation and authenticity in expressing love in all relationships. Jesus never came to destroy personhood but to enhance it. His speciality is not carbon copies or stuffy molds. To Jesus every person is unique and important. However, creativity, uniqueness and personality have all been impacted by sin. This is why a response to God's love frees a person to be honest about his sin, his need of forgiveness, his strengths and weaknesses. Jesus said the commandment is "to love our neighbours as we love ourselves." A forgiven person who is at peace with God and with himself is free from the slavery of competing with others for acceptance, of being threatened by others who are more gifted, of needing to dominate every situation because of basic insecurity, of needing to "make it" in relationships. The love relationship with God drastically impacts self-image. It is liberating to know that in Christ we are loved for who we are; not for what we do. We are accepted because of his grace not

because of our earned merit badges. In an age when there are 30,000 religions offering self-improvement, God promises to re-shape our self-image through a reconciled relationship with himself.

It is impossible to share genuine neighbour love when one is at war with oneself. While it is true that God calls every person to self-denial and self-emptying, real faith does not destroy personhood or selfhood. Real Christian faith is always self-affirming, not self-mutilating. The true Christian who "loves others as he loves himself" does not try to get rid of self or kill his will, rather he willfully determines to do the will of the Father. When Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ," he was not describing some introspective psychological process by which he reduced his ego to a zero, rather he was saying in effect, "I determine to give up my own rights just as Jesus did; I decided not merely to accumulate the benefits Christ has provided, but to follow his model in sharing the world."⁴ To love God is to receive his forgiveness, to face oneself honestly and with self-acceptance as a new creation in Christ. It stretches our capacity to accept others where they are because God has accepted us in Christ and subsequently we can accept ourselves. It is God's love flowing through a transformed life that impacts the world.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF NEIGHBOUR LOVE

Life must manifest itself. Wherever life is present under normal conditions it must act. Moreover, all life of every kind expresses itself according to its nature. Physical life expresses itself physically; mental life mentally; and spiritual life spiritually. If the life and love of Christ is in a person, it expresses itself. "God is love" (I Jn. 1:8). Love lies at the heart of God's nature and is the normal expression of every outgoing of his being toward others. John says that it is irreconcilable to profess to love God but to hate mankind (I Jn. 4:20). Love is the spontaneous outgoing of one's whole life and being in behalf of others. The Bible gives at least three reasons why neighbour love is inseparably related to love for God.

A. Love Authenticates the Good News

In John 13:13-35 Jesus gives a new commandment to his disciples "to love one another as I have loved you," and then he adds, "by this shall all men know ye are my disciples." Francis Schaeffer suggests that love is to be "the mark of the Christian in every era."⁵ Love is the authenticating sign that makes Christianity a visible reality and a viable option in a loveless world. When Jesus gave the new commandment, he underscores at least two things: 1) there is to be special kind of demonstration of love among Christians within the church, and 2) there is to be a quality of love which finds its parallel in the life of Jesus Christ. The church is to be a loving church in a dying culture. Jesus gave the world the authority to judge whether you and I are born again Christians by our observable love toward other Christians. In other words, Jesus gives the world a piece of litmus paper, a reasonable thermometer; if there is not observable love, the world may conclude that we are not Christians. Jesus re-echoes this message in John 17:21 when he prays, "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they may also be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Jesus is stating that we cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus claims are true, that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians.

The greatest compliment given to the early church was, "look at how they love one another." A study of the Pauline epistles likewise reveals a heavy emphasis on building love relationships, maintaining unity, resolving internal tensions, bearing one another's burdens (I Cor. 1:10; 3:1; 3:8; Gal. 5:13-15; Eph. 4:1-10; Phil. 2:1-5; Col. 3:14; Philemon 3). Paul's burden was that God's people become a loving body so that the Gospel message could be demonstrated and understood in a pagan world. Paul was well aware of the fact that dissension and disunity are the "kiss of death" on the best evangelistic rhetoric. A message that is not undergirded by a corporate community manifesting changed attitudes and behavior has a hollow ring. This is not to suggest that the church will ever demonstrate love as perfectly

and selflessly as Jesus did, but it implies a willingness to admit error, to practice forgiveness and to implement reconciliation so that love is visible.

B. Love Reflects the Believer's Commitment to Obedience

Neighbour love not only authenticates the good news, but it reflects the believers commitment to Lordship. A modern day parallel to the lawyers question to Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?" might we be, "why should I love my neighbour when I don't feel like it?" Love is an emotion, but it is also a command. Is this a contradiction? No, the greatest commandment calls us to love God above all else. The new commandment Jesus gave his disciples was "to love one another as I have loved you." Love is not only a feeling, it is a choice. We choose to love or not to love.

Jesus closed the Sermon on the Mount with a penetrating statement: "Not everyone who calls me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father," (Matt. 7:21). Jesus complimented the religious Jews for their diligence in searching the scripture, but then chides them for their refusal to obey the obvious testimony of scripture and to come to Him for life (Jn. 5:39). The neighbour love Jesus proclaimed and modelled was never rooted solely in feelings. Agape love moves beyond feelings, the worthiness of the object, or human responsiveness. It springs from its selfless character and from deliberate choice. For example, Jesus' response to the insults, harsh treatment and abuse at the crucifixion was, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." It wasn't that there were no other options open to him. But his choice demonstrated the depth of his love for the human race. His counsel in life was never, "Feel you way into a new way of acting," but he called for obedience and in essence said, "Do what is right, follow God's Word, act your way into a new way of feeling."

Such neighbour love may appear weak and enemic, but it is a deliberate strategy. A willingness to love others as Christ has loved me, to love my neighbour as I love myself and to love my enemies is a commentary on Christ's Lordship in life. The commitment to love God supremely binds

one to a commitment to love persons regardless of their race, value system, status, vocation, or location. Neighbour love is important because it is a mark of personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord.

C. Love Extends God's Kingdom

Love is the most powerful force in the whole world. Napoleon once said, "There is only one way not to be won over by love and that is to flee from it." In commenting on mental disorders Karl Menninger has said that love is the key to the entire therapeutic program of the modern psychiatric hospital. In his book, *Why Am I Afraid to Love?*, John Powell states, "Our lives are shaped by those who love us and by those who refuse to love us."⁶ Even the late agnostic philosopher Bertrand Russell confesses in his autobiography that his life has been governed by three passions: 1) a hunger for his love; 2) a hunger for his knowledge, and 3) a pity for the suffering of mankind.

In an age when man, as a restless and searching creature, finds new cures, new commodities and new comforts, love is still the indispensable ingredient. Individuals can still best experience and understand God's love through honest modeling in the church. It was the honest caring love of Jesus that was the great attraction in his ministry. A frequent description of Jesus by the Gospel writers is, "he was moved with compassion" (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; Mark. 1:41; 6:34; Matt. 20:34; Luke 7:13). Paul says, "The love of Christ compels us" (II Cor. 5:14). In writing to the Thessalonians Paul commends them for becoming "a model for all believers in Macedonia and Achaia," so that no word was necessary to describe how they had turned from idols to the true God (I Thess. 1:7-10). Their impact was based on an active faith, a labor of love and a patient hope (I Thess. 1:3).

It is important to remember that whatever else man is searching for at any given point in history, the rediscovery of love is always the best treasure to be found. Most men and women are not looking for religion, nor do they perceive themselves to be sinners in need for forgiveness. But most people are looking for love. People may not be arrested by arguments, logic, doctrine or denominational distinctives,

but genuine love is irresistible. When God's love fills his people the light always shines the brightest because the gospel rings true.

III. THE PRACTICAL EXPRESSION OF NEIGHBOUR LOVE

"Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God is love (I Jan. 4:7, 8). Neighbour love must have a Divine Scourge. It is rooted in God, revealed most clearly in the life and death of Jesus, and expressed in man's reconciled relationship with the Father. Jesus is our model in sharing neighbour love. The question is how does his way of relating to people effect my sharing neighbour love in my world? If Jesus is the model for missions in society, what practical principles are transferable? This section will highlight five principles from Jesus' life which impact personal and corporate evangelism. These five principles are central in teaching neighbour love at the Seminary.

A. Jesus' Neighbour Love was a Lifestyle

In reporting Jesus' ministry Luke writes, "In the first part of my works, O Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught..." (Acts 1:1). Luke 4:18-19 records the customary visit of Jesus to the Nazareth synagogue on the sabbath, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Proclamation of good news in Jesus' life was directly linked with a demonstration of that good news. David Watson notes that "Jesus was sent by His father into the world not merely to conduct a preaching tour, but to show the reality of the living God in a way that powerfully met the needs of people." Jesus becomes a model in evangelism and sharing neighbour love by his consistent combination of being, doing and telling in his life. His total life was an interpretation of God's good news and his message impacted the total person.

Myron Augsburger defines evangelism as "letting people know and persuading them to accept the Gospel."⁸ Augsburger goes on to elaborate on the three strands of New Testament evangelism which characterized both Jesus' life and the ministry of the early church: 1) *koinonia*—the witness of fellowship. God's people are loving people. Love is the natural and normal expression of their life with God and one another. Jesus was a "friend of sinners" (Mark. 2:16). The early church expressed their love through a close knit fellowship where spiritual, material and social needs were shared; 2) *diakonia*—the witness of service. Jesus reached out to people through loving actions. He healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the hungry, cast out evil spirits (Mark 1:21-45). In Acts 3 Peter and John healed the man at the beautiful gate of the temple. Acts 6 records the selection of the first deacons because the Greek widows were being neglected; and 3) *kerygma*—the witness of proclamation. "Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God" (Mark 1:14). In the midst of the persecution, imprisonment and flogging, Acts 5 states that the apostles "went on steadily with their teaching in the temple and in private homes, proclaiming the good news of Jesus the Messiah" (Acts 5:42).

Being, doing and telling are inseparable expressions of love. Neighbour love must become a lifestyle in the 20th century church as it was with Jesus. Neighbour love cannot polarize preaching the gospel and social action. Jesus Christ was one hundred percent for both and his church cannot be committed to less. When the imprisoned John the Baptist asked for confirmation that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus never gave him another sermon. He said, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard; the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news preached to them" (Luke 7:19-22). Jesus' neighbour love was a ministry to the total person. His love touched them at their point of need, whether it was physical spiritual or emotional.

B. Jesus' Neighbour Love was Unconditional and Constant

God's love encircles the globe. In Luke 15 Jesus told the story of the forgiving father who welcomed his son home.

Though the prodigal had strayed in a far away country, he had never ceased to be the object of His fathers love. God's love has no limits. He is without respect of persons. He hurts when people hurt. Jesus demonstrated how constant God's love really is both through his life and in his death. God does not back off when man sins—He calls us to repentance—to admit who we are and where we are. Because he loves unconditionally he calls to new starts. This does not mean that love does not call for a response. Genuine love must be received to be experienced since love involves relationships. However, the selfless quality of that love is never affected by the response. When the rich young ruler failed to answer Christ's challenge to discipleship, Jesus did not love him any less. However, the rich young ruler left Christ's presence that day without making the personal application of God's love in his life. Jesus' story of the good Samaritan and his encounter with the Samaritan woman are not "rigged stories." They are live illustrations that his love knew no racial, social, cultural or religious limits. The question which was posed to a pastor by his neighbour friend is worth pondering, "Will you (pastor) still love me and be my friend even if I don't accept your Jesus?" Neighbour love must continue in spite of response.

To love constantly and unconditionally requires something more than human resources can supply. Human love always has its limits. It draws little circles which include some and exclude others. It becomes so conditional. At times human love says, "I will love you if . . . if you are good, if you eat your dinner, if you don't make a mess, if you work hard, if you never take advantage of me, if you call for help when it suits me? At other times, human love says I love you because . . . because you're a winner, because your grandparents are proud of you, because you make good grades in school, because you agree with my point of view. But to share neighbour love as Jesus did is to move beyond the conditional "ifs" and "because" to the unconditional "anyhows." It is to say in effect, do what you want to and I will love you anyway, put me on a cross, hit me, refuse to listen to me, crucify me, I'll love you anyway. That quality of love in relationships can only come because "God's love that has been shed abroad in our hearts" (Rom 5:5). God's

love moves one beyond mere reaction in like kind. It continues to reach even when communication is cut off.

Jesus was both global and personal in his demonstration of love. Whether it is bearing witness to those outside of Christ, or assimilating new believers into the local church fellowship, neighbour love must be more expansive and inclusive. Neighbour love cannot lock some individuals, races, cultures, peoples in and leave others out in the cold. Assimilation of new believers is one of the biggest problems facing the evangelical church today and is its own commentary on our conditional love. Augsburger writes, "New believers must have a sense of being wanted, not as an expression of sugar-coated, condescending love, but in a true awareness that they are among brethren, redeemed sinners with whom they have this essential characteristic in common."⁹

C. Jesus' Neighbour Love was Creative

Love is the basic expression of life and the bridge in human relationships. When man did his worst, God did his best. God paid a debt that he didn't owe because man owed a debt that he could never pay. Paul says, "While we were dead in our trespasses and sins," God built a bridge to the human race through the death of His son. In his relationship with people Jesus demonstrates vulnerability, visibility and creativity. He "pitched his tent along side of us." He became fully human. Hebrews reminds us that "he learned obedience as a man" (Heb. 5:9). In his relationship with people he was not stereo-typed. He was not a "one-liner." His approach to different people reflected an awareness of people's individuality, needs, context and background. With the woman at the well he discussed her need for "living water" (John 4:10-14). To the rich young ruler Jesus said, "Sell what you have, give to the poor and come follow me, then you will have treasure in heaven" (Luke 18:22). After dismissing her accusers Jesus turned to the woman caught in adultery and said, "Neither do I condemn you, go your way and sin no more" (John 8:11). To the religious, morally upright, politically acute Pharisee Nicodemus, Jesus said, "You must be born again" (John 3:3). In calling Nathaniel

as a disciple Jesus commanded him saying, "Here is an Israelite worthy of the name, there is nothing false in him" (Jn. 1:47). The encounters illustrate Jesus' ability to be flexible and creative in his relationships with people.

One of the saddest commentaries on much current evangelism is that it is tied to sterile methodology and plastic relationships. The fact that an unconverted person is cynical enough to ask, "What is going on? You are the eighth person who has talked to me with the same grin, the same lines, and in the same style" is its own commentary on our lack of creativity. We must learn to "scratch where people itch." Ralph Neighbour suggests that everyone has a "hole in their heart" and evangelism is sensitively sharing Christ as an answer to that existing need. This implies that like Jesus we must learn to be "a friend of sinners." There is a desperate need today for ordinary Christians to articulate a Christian world-view in non-religious language.

An anthropologist once said, "People differ widely but not wildly." Divorces have common needs and an evangelistic cell group can be found to discuss them. Parents of retarded children have needs that can be met by a fellowship formed especially for that purpose. Teenagers who ride motorcycles could be reached by a Christian mechanic who would be willing to open his garage one night a week for a course in repairs and Bible study. Immigrants or foreign students need to learn English. The growing number of high rise apartment dwellers, who are increasingly detached from any church, also have spiritual needs. The opportunities are limitless but God needs sensitive, dedicated and creative people to share His message.

It has been suggested that the gospel is like an electric current. It flows best when there is live contact. The message has not changed but our approach to people in a pluralistic society demands every ounce of commitment, sensitivity and creativity God can give us.

D. Jesus' Neighbour Love Looked Beyond the Issue to the Person

Urie Bender laments that fact one of the results of secularization is depersonalization. He writes,

Men and women are social security numbers: digits, stick figures, face in hazy outline. They are a political mass to be manipulated. They are a market to be exploited; bodies to be clothed, stomachs to be fed. They are a housing development to be managed. They are an employee group to be used. They are a classroom to be taught. They are an audience to be preached to. But seldom are the individuals—persons with individual characteristics, special needs, private hopes and aspirations. Our world has taken the person out of persons.¹⁰

True neighbour love has the capacity to look beyond the issue to the person. This is not easy because while Christians stand against sin in society, they also stand with Christ for people. It is too easy to let people's sins, habits, value systems, life-styles limit our love and relationships. We fear contamination. We fear judgment from the church crowd. We don't know how to handle people's sins, so we give up and write them off. We seldom see past the issue to ask what makes people live the way they do?

When God looked down on the human race and saw what was going on He had every right to say, "I'm through—I give up." But grace and mercy meant that He looked beyond the issue to the person. Jesus demonstrated this same capacity. From the Gospel accounts it is evident that Jesus did not see people first of all as tax collectors, uncouth fishermen, prostitutes, or Pharisees. But he saw them as persons, as sheep without a shepherd—as persons who need love and forgiveness in their lives. The Pharisees on the other hand saw only the issues. They cared little for the person. They knew the law well and stood ready to stone the adulterous woman. Is it surprising that the people were not attracted to the Pharisees? But they flocked to Jesus. Why? He cared about the person. To love and accept people where they are does not condone their life-style or place a stamp of approval upon their sin. It is love that gives people the capacity to change. Like Jesus, we must not leave people in their sins, but we must interpret and model a better alternative—God's way of forgiveness and reconciliation.

E. Jesus' Neighbour Love was More Dialogue Than Monologue

Human nature finds it easier to talk than to listen. Paul Tournier talks about "the dialogue of the deaf" where no one really listens. One of the great tragedies of the modern age is that man can hear so well electronically, but he is so deaf to the needs and suffering of people all around. Our innate tendency as Christians is to rush in with the gospel message before we have determined the point or area at which the "good news" would get a fair hearing.

A study of Jesus' thirty-eight personal encounters recorded in the Gospels reveals that He was a master at dialogue rather than monologue. It is fascinating to notice how Jesus used questions and counter-questions in conversation. Jesus let people articulate their own needs without doing it for them (i.e. the woman at the well in John 4, "Go call thy husband," or blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10:51, Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Master," the blind man answered, "That I might receive my sight" or the lawyer in Matthew 22, "Who is my neighbour," and Jesus responded with the story of the good Samaritan. Os Guiness suggests that the problem today is not only that the church is not giving answers, but it is not asking disturbing questions. He suggests that a pre-requisite for sharing neighbour love is a willingness to listen to people to determine their presuppositions about life, to expose the barrenness of their assumptions, and to introduce them to Jesus Christ. This can never be done on totally neutral ground because every person has some assumptions. However, it can be done on the common ground of man's search for reality, meaning and hope, which is a natural pursuit.

This implies that methodology must become second nature to us. We share neighbour love as people to people. It must be deeply human and ring true. We address issues such as the problem of evil, the nature of man, the problem of alienation and loneliness, the nature of truth, or man's "will to meaning", or death from a Christian world view. But it always means that we must earn the right to be

heard. It means being a real friend and developing a relationship where we listen before we talk. After listening lovingly, sensitively and discerningly the message can be directed to specific needs or areas of struggle.

CONCLUSION

Dr. E.M. Blaiklock of the University of Aukland in New Zealand says that of all the centuries the 20th century is most like the first both in terms of paganism and opportunity for sharing the Gospel. The impact of the 20th century church is directly related to the demonstration of God's love in day to day relationships. To obey the Great Commandment means total reorientation. The shift is from self-centeredness to Christ centeredness. The focus moves from being turned inward to living for others. The neighbour love we share in society comes from a Divine source. It authenticates our message, reflects our obedience and extends God's kingdom. People who have experienced God have become contagious people and congregations. Neighbour love becomes a lifestyle. It is the normal and natural expression of God's love in us where we live, worship, work or play. The church that shares true neighbour love lives with a sense of mission. It is never out of date or out of work. It lives in the constant realization that redemption and "living unto itself" are incompatible. To love God with heart, soul and mind is to become a "friend of sinners." It means we become deeply involved in being "good news" where people hurt, weep, bleed and die. The Seminary is committed to teaching and modelling this kind of neighbour love in training of leaders.

NOTES

- 1 Jacques Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), pp. 9-11.
- 2 Findley Edge, *The Greening of the Church*, (Waco: Word Books, 1971), pp. 32-47.
- 3 Wilhard Becker, *Love in Action*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), pp. 18-19.
- 4 Howard A. Snyder, *The Community of the King*, (Downer's Grove, Intervarsity Press, 1970), pp. 133-153.
- 5 Francis Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Downer's Grove, Intervarsity Press, 1970), pp. 133-153.
- 6 John Powell, *Why Am I Afraid to Love*, (Niles, Illinois: Argus Communications Co., 1972), p. 71,
- 7 David Watson, *I Believe in Evangelism*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1976), p. 27.
- 8 Myron Augsburger, *Invitation to Discipleship*, (Scottsdale, Herald Press, 1964), pp. 9-12, 33-42.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 64.
- 10 Urie Bender, *The Witness*, (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1965), p. 34.