



Today's Lesson
A Gift of SELF

Power Point notes available at:
www.unityofbakersfield.org

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"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

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How does one begin to love one's neighbor as self?

Simple: You make them your friend.

Our friendship

is...



...awesome!!

giftsbysocial

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As Emerson once remarked, *"The only way to get a friend is to be one."*

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Learning how to be a friend starts with being a friend to yourself.

How do you see yourself? How do you see others? What is it that attracts you to certain people and not to others? What makes the difference between having casual acquaintances or "I'll die for you friends?"

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The development of friendships is just as much a process of being as developing our sense of self. For what we see in others, for what we are attracted to in others, is what we have or do not have in ourselves!

The development starts with understanding the premise behind Jesus's statement to love your neighbor as yourself as:

Spiritual **E**mpowering **L**ove = **F**riends

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What does loving your neighbor as yourself look like? Maybe something like the message found in this story of a man you rides the "L" train in Chicago:

Every day the train passed by one particular apartment building. From where the man sat, he could see into an open window of one of the apartments. There, every day, lying in bed was an elderly woman. She was always alone; and as far as he could tell, no one was ever with her. She seemed to be quite sick.

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This man decided he would find out who this woman was, send her a get well card, and tell her in a few words that someone cares. He found out the woman's name and sent her a card. Over the next couple of weeks he noticed the woman moving around more. Then one day as he was passing by, he noticed the woman was not in the bed. But in the window was a sign illuminated by a table lamp.

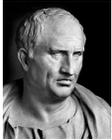
The sign that could be seen from the "L" said, "God bless you!"

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Other comments on loving one's neighbor as self:

Aristotle, "*Friendship is composed of a single soul inhabiting two bodies.*"



Cicero, "*A friend is, as it were, a second self.*"

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The connection of two or more coming together in friendship brings strength to the relationships and fosters good will and love. From this energy we can't help but want to be there for them and them for us.

The words of Aristotle and Cicero bring to mind the idea of our friends being like our soulmates:

"Friendship is composed of a single soul inhabiting two bodies." and "*A friend is, as it were, a second self.*"

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Numerous books and articles have been written over the years on what a soulmate is. For me a soulmate is not just one person or a one time event. I believe that a true soul mate is someone who challenges you, supports you, uplifts you, stands with you, takes you to task when you're wrong, helps you question your actions. In short, they are the neighbor you must love as self.

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Here are some thoughts on how our friends and the relationships we create honor that basic premise of loving your neighbor as yourself, for they come in all shapes and sizes.

Some relationships may keep you from growing and moving along your chosen spiritual path. This soulmate will challenge your very core of belief as they try to impeded your journey. They will claim you spend more time and attention on your spiritual quest than you do on them. They are your neighbor – love them as self.

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Relationships offer us an opportunity to always choose doing it right. This starts by seeing the divine in your neighbor. When this is done you allow yourself to stay centered on your souls journey through spiritual understanding, awareness, and practice. When love is allowed to be a conduit, its energy vitalizes every aspect of your being. And when the relationship ends you may feel upset and lonely. However, the love shared with this soulmate lives on as you continue to love yourself and the lessons they shared with you. They are your neighbor – love them as self.

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A good neighbor will allow you time to just be alone to get to know yourself. This soulmate will not interfere with your process of getting to know yourself, so you can get rid of any misconceptions and old belief patterns that keep from spiritually growing and evolving. They will allow you to become your own best friend. Through this good neighbor approach you embrace being alone as a time of enjoyment instead of hiding and running away from it. The soulmates that help you cultivate this activity are your neighbors – love them as self.

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As we move through life and travel our spiritual paths to enlightenment, teachers, mentors, and spiritual guides have come and gone. These were soulmates, our neighbors who taught us, showed us, guided us to something greater within ourselves. By being there for us they were able to help us avoid pitfalls, choose right action, and attain the power to overcome adversity in all its forms. Through all life's trials and tribulations these soulmates remind us they are our neighbors – and we are to love them as self.

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Someone once remarked, “The sign of loving one's neighbor as self, is when you can go and sit in their presence without feeling you have to bring something, do something, or say something. Nothing needs to be done but accepting the beauty of the moment.”

This is the ultimate expression of giving and being a gift of self.

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