

Another way of stating this is to say that no human being can fully attain his or her own best interests in isolation, unless that isolation is unavoidable.

There is a need in human beings to give of themselves to others, to share with others, to love other human beings. If this need remains unmet, human beings cannot achieve the highest level of well-being. To the extent a human being comes to love only himself, becomes completely self-centered, chokes off all tendencies toward caring for other human beings; to that extent he contributes to his own spiritual, moral, and even physical ill-health. And, in a paradoxical way, no man can achieve his own best interests unless he also seeks the best interests of other human beings. This is the truth in the maxim, "No man is an island." For example, in the matter of personal salvation a man may seek anxiously for his own salvation without immediate concern for the salvation of others, but even a concern for one's own eternal welfare is not the highest level of well-being he can achieve, for once having received salvation for himself, he can concern himself with the need of others for this same salvation. Thus in a curious way we arrive at a principle: seeking salvation for oneself is not selfishness, but seeking salvation for oneself only is! That is, seeking salvation for oneself is a proper manifestation of love for oneself; and as such is simply seeking a high level of well-being for oneself. However, if one achieves that level of well-being and closes off the development of a concern for the eternal welfare of others, then a love for oneself turns into selfishness.

Here, then, is an important maxim: love for oneself may become selfishness!

On the other hand, a proper love of oneself, which does not exclude, but includes love for one's neighbor, eliminates (or at least greatly decreases) selfishness. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Who, then, is my neighbor? Any person with whom I have contact, who has a need of which I become aware, whose need I can help to alleviate, and for whose welfare I am responsible.

The Samaritan became a neighbor to such a person, drew near in love to one who was near in space; and Jesus commended this illustration to the lawyer who stood before Him, saying, "Go and do the same."

(iii) Practical application of the thrust of this Commandment

To apply the teaching of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, let us ask and attempt to answer four questions: