

Published based on [Love, Law, and Life on the Long Road Home](#)

# **Love, Law, and Life on the Long Road Home**

Life can throw us in the ditch sometimes. Whether it be circumstances beyond our control, our own foolishness, the cruelty of others, or a combination of things that knock us off the horse we are riding, we've all found ourselves in the proverbial ditch. At times, our wounds are minor and the ditch is shallow, and we manage to get out by ourselves. At other times, our injuries are life-threatening and without intervention, we are as good as dead.

Scripture teaches us that as believers we can bear each other's burdens. Then it says that by doing so we fulfill the law of Christ. It's a sort of hidden backlink. When we seek to bear another's burdens, we somehow mysteriously fulfill the law Christ has given us. Most of us know that even the sound of the word "law" in the Bible can conjure up thoughts of judgment and failure. The law itself leads us to know that we cannot fulfill it. Yet when Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament law, he laid down another law – one that is higher in origin and even more difficult to fulfill because it involves the denying of self and the giving of one's self to others. But the beautiful mysterious part of this law is that when we cease being caught up in promoting our own agenda and begin to seek to really care about others, in some mysterious way beyond our human understanding – the higher law is fulfilled and our own needs began to be beautifully met. This is somewhat of a paradox so stay with me; I'm not finished with this train of thought.

Jesus said this law could be summed up in these words: Love God with everything within you and love your neighbor as yourself.

In many Christian streams, this law of Christ is accepted in part and rejected in part. We want to tell God how we think He should have written this law. It should be: Love God with everything within you, and love your neighbor.

But God knew we must understand that it should read "Love your neighbor **as yourself**." But surely it must be wrong to love yourself! That sounds, well, selfish! But in loving ourselves in a godly way, we honor the design of God. We take care of our bodies because they are God's dwelling place. We take care of our emotional well-being for through it we can embrace God's heart. We take care of our spiritual well-being for in doing so we become holy in God's purposes. We take care of our mental health because God designed us to be thinking reasoning creative beings.

It is so easy to veer off the track ever so slightly here. How do we deny ourselves and yet love ourselves? If Christ said both of these, they cannot be contradictory.

I'm not sure I have that answer in completeness, but maybe I can give a small insight.

To deny ourselves means, in part, learning to recognize wrong motives in our hearts, learning how to discern when we attempt to manipulate others, when we try to control others. Don't look at your neighbor. We all do it. We try to exert influence over another human in order to promote our own personal agendas. Denying ourselves means that we are willingly deny selfish ambitions.

Denying ourselves means also denying the need within us to harm ourselves or be cruel or dishonoring to ourselves. Oftentimes, in an attempt to deny ourselves, we desire to deny our humanness. However, I believe God does not want us to deny our humanness. After all, that is how we were created – as human bodies filled with God's Spirit. That was His original design.

To love ourselves means, also I speak in part, to be accepting of our limitations, to be kind to ourselves in ways that honor the work of the love of God in our lives.

Balance is perhaps the most difficult part of life. To love ourselves in a way that honors God in us and to be able to deny ourselves in a way that denies the sinful nature within us and to do both at the same time – maybe that is what it looks like to be filled with the Spirit of God.

I remember when I first experienced God's Spirit in a new way. I felt love. I felt God's love for me and his love for others. I didn't feel condemnation for my shortcomings. I felt compelled by His love to be completely His. To give of myself. But when I embraced that giving of myself to God and to others, the backwash of it was waves of

loves that crashed over my own heart. Ah, the higher motivation, love.

I couldn't help but think of the words of this song recorded by The Hollies in 1969.

### ***He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother***

The road is long  
With many a winding turn  
That leads us to who knows where  
Who knows when  
But I'm strong  
Strong enough to carry him  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

So on we go  
His welfare is of my concern  
No burden is he to bear  
We'll get there  
For I know  
He would not encumber me  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

If I'm laden at all  
I'm laden with sadness  
That everyone's heart  
Isn't filled with the gladness  
Of love for one another

It's a long, long road  
From which there is no return  
While we're on the way to there  
Why not share  
And the load  
Doesn't weigh me down at all  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

He's my brother  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother...

Loving our neighbor as ourselves...when done in the balance of the truth of God's Word and led by His Spirit, compels us to carry our brothers and sisters on life's paths. It doesn't deplete us; it completes us. Learning how to love God, love our neighbors, and love ourselves is a life-long journey. Let's share the journey together as we model to the world what the Body of Christ should look like.

You can also find this article published on [Love, Law, and Life on the Long Road Home](#), and on the tag pages [burden-bearing](#), [burdens](#), [Galatians 6:2](#), [love](#).