## Lesson 2 — Love, the Law and Our Neighbours

**1.** In Lesson 1 we studied Jesus’ teaching about the greatest commandments. We saw how the religious leader asked Jesus to clarify what is meant by ‘neighbour’. Jesus responded with the parable of *The Good Samaritan* (see Luke 10.25–37), in which he gave us a practical illustration what it means to love our neighbours.

The greatest commandments are:

Love the Lord ․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․․ with all your ․․․․․․․․․․ , and all your ․․․․․․․․․․ and all your ․․․․․․․․․․; and love your ․․․․․․․․․․․․․․ as ․․․․․․․․․․․․․․ (Luke 10.27).

Both Jesus and Paul note that when you fulfil this law of love you effectively fulfil all the law. Read Matthew 22.37–40 and Galatians 5.14 now.

Choose the correct statement below, remembering these words of Jesus and Paul:

․․․․ The New Testament is based on love while the Old Testament was based on law. Therefore the Old Testament can’t help us to know how to love our neighbours.  
․․․․ Knowing the Old Testament law will help us to understand in practical terms what it means to love our neighbour.

**2.** Read Deuteronomy 22.8 in your Bible.

What does this law command you to do?

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Australia is a hot country and a high proportion of private houses have a swimming pool. The law requires that pools are protected by childproof fences to prevent infants and toddlers drowning. Since the law was introduced the rate of child drownings has been halved.

Last week when Shane was skimming the leaves from his pool he left the gate open. While he was working at the shallow end of the pool he heard a splash behind him and turned to see his neighbours’ two year old struggling in the water. He dived in and lifted her out before she came to any harm.

Questions:

How is the law to fence pools similar to the commandment from Deuteronomy 22.8?

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In what ways are we loving our neighbour when we obey this commandment?

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What other applications could this commandment have in Australia?

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**3.** Another Old Testament commandment gives instructions for the care of widows, orphans and foreigners. Read the relevant passage below and answer the questions that follow:

17 You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow’s garment in pledge. 18 Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.  
19 When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings. 20 When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.  
21 When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. 22 Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.  
– Deuteronomy 24.17–22 (see also the commandments in Leviticus 19.33–34 and Deuteronomy 14.28)

This commandment is intended to benefit three groups of people. Who are these three groups?

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Why does the Old Testament give special consideration to these three groups?

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What are the practical steps outlined in this commandment for taking care of these groups of people?

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What other categories of vulnerable people are there in Australia?

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**4.** In Australia, as in many countries, the care of widows and orphans has been taken over by the government. The cost of their benefits is carried by taxpayers. As private individuals we seldom have to concern ourselves with caring for the most vulnerable people in our society. In fact these needy neighbours are often kept so well out of sight that we easily forget that they even exist.

Consider carefully the proposition in the following question and then answer the questions below it.

***Since the needs of the vulnerable people in our society (= widows/orphans/refugees) are covered by government benefits, can we conclude that we are loving our neighbours by simply by paying our taxes and taking a “She’ll be right Mate” attitude?***

What arguments can you suggest in favour of this proposition?

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And what arguments can you offer against this proposition?

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Is this the sort of love for our neighbour that Jesus was advocating?