

## Putting Christ First with Our Friends & Neighbors

Dear Friends:

A core ingredient in our Christian lives is our relationship with other people (with our *neighbors*, to use the Bible's word). According to Jesus, this relationship is one of the two loves God commands: love of God, and love of neighbor.

But what practically goes without saying is that loving our neighbor is very complicated! Here's the problem. *Our typical orientation as sinners is to put ourselves first.* Instead of loving our neighbors, we *use* them for our own selfish purposes. That's obvious. It would be better to reject selfishness and put our neighbors ahead of ourselves.

However, the challenge doesn't end there. For if we say, "From now on I'm going to put my neighbor first in my life," we get a whole new set of problems. Loss of our freedom tops the list! If I put my neighbor first, I pretty well have to do whatever he wants and whatever he says. But what if he wants something bad? What if he tells me to do something that goes against God's will?

The answer is to put *Christ* first in all our relationships. Say no to both selfishness (putting ourselves first) and "slavishness" (putting others first). Instead say *yes* to Christian freedom and love, by always putting Christ first in all things - even in our relationships with other people.

Sincerely in Christ,

Pastor Carl L.M. Rasmussen