

# **Neighbor-Love: A Revolutionary Idea that Could Save Our World**

## **Andrew DeCort, PhD**

### **ABSTRACT**

Neighbor-love was a revolutionary idea in ancient culture. It changed the way people saw one another across race, ethnicity, gender, class, politics, and religion. It restructured community around compassion, hospitality, generosity, and justice. And it redefined what it means to have an authentic relationship with the Creator of the universe. Jesus called neighbor-love the greatest commandment, the heart of what it means to be truly human and live forever. Neighbor-love then became central to Jesus's counter-cultural, world-changing movement.

And yet neighbor-love has been tragically neglected or taken for granted in many churches and Christian culture. Where did the idea of neighbor-love come from? What does it actually mean and require in practice? And how can we become ambassadors of neighbor-love in the twenty-first century?

*Neighbor-Love: A Revolutionary Idea that Could Save Our World* is the first video course devoted entirely to the ethics of neighbor-love. Combining scholarly depth, popular accessibility, and practical application, this course will immerse you in the history, meaning, and practice of neighbor-love. It makes a passionate case for why we should champion neighbor-love today as the center of our lives, churches, and cultures.

As religion disappoints, hate grows, walls rise, violence explodes, and the largest refugee crisis in history continues, where can we find hope and a practical pathway into a flourishing future? Neighbor-love is the passionate wager of Christian ethics.

I believe this course will expand your mind, inspire your imagination, enrich your relationships, and refocus your purpose for being alive. I invite you to join me.

### **LECTURES**

**Lecture 1: The Crisis and Hope of Humanity** unpacks why the ethics of neighbor-love is so important, how it revolutionized ancient culture, and how it provides compelling answers to our deepest questions and needs today.

**Lecture 2: Origins of Neighbor-Love: The Hebrew Bible** traces the origins of neighbor-love in Hebrew society and scripture and discusses their revolutionary breakthroughs and troubling problems, serving as a mirror for us today.

**Lecture 3: Jesus: The Revolution of Neighbor-Love** examines the brilliant teachings of Jesus on neighbor-love and shows how Jesus reinterpreted and even revolutionized the

traditional vision of neighbor-love, launching a new movement that would change the world.

**Lecture 4: The Revolution Continues: Neighbor-Love in the New Testament** studies the remaining discussions of neighbor-love in the New Testament and explores how they laid the foundation for early Christianity's counter-cultural movement, subverting the values of the Roman Empire.

**Lecture 5: 20 Centuries: The Red Thread of Neighbor-Love** surveys nine of the most profound thinkers and critics of neighbor-love from the second century to the beginning of the twentieth century. Here we'll explore the development, corruption, and critique of neighbor-love in Christian ethics, providing crucial lessons for us today.

**Lecture 6: Modern Masters of Neighbor-Love** dives more deeply into five of the most inspiring 20<sup>th</sup> century preachers and practitioners of neighbor-love: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., Oscar Romero, Mother Teresa, and Jean Vanier. These modern masters can serve as paradigms for our future.

**Lecture 7: Neighbor-Love Now: A Humble/Dangerous/Hopeful New Beginning for Humanity** introduces three exemplars of neighbor-love today (Coach Wayne Gordon, Gary Haugen, and Eden Gelan); summarizes our findings from the previous six lectures; unpacks answers to fifteen questions about the ethics of neighbor-love today; and concludes the course with a final commission for ambassadors of neighbor-love in our world.

## BIO

Andrew DeCort holds a PhD in Ethics from the University of Chicago. He is the author of *Bonhoeffer's New Beginning: Ethics after Devastation* and director of the Institute for Christianity and the Common Good ([iccgood.org](http://iccgood.org)). Andrew has taught courses in theology and ethics at Wheaton College, the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology, and the University of Bonn. His teaching has been recognized for excellence by the University of Chicago Center for Teaching. Andrew and his wife Lily live and work in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Subscribe to Andrew's weekly newsletter at [andrew-decort.com](http://andrew-decort.com).

## STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

Here are fifty-endorsements of my work as a teacher and mentor.

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nO16mNHwh7AF2U510LWKXHbtoR7-HRy0Yri\\_bekcZyg4/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nO16mNHwh7AF2U510LWKXHbtoR7-HRy0Yri_bekcZyg4/edit)

Below are some excerpts from my students' evaluations of my past teaching at Wheaton College.

*“[Andrew’s] lectures were incredible. He’s the best teacher I’ve ever had, and that’s not hyperbolic.” ~ David Robinson, finance consultant*

*“Life changing! The best class I’ve taken at Wheaton, hands down.” ~ Maria Krump, Facebook, formerly FBI*

*“Never in my life have I been so confused, frustrated, excited, entranced, stoked about a class – I learned things in this class that will (hopefully) be kneaded into my life for many years to come. I learned to learn here.” Jenna Herskind, medical student*

*“[Andrew’s course] was the most formative liberal arts class for me and better prepared me to think historically, philosophically, and theologically than my separate history, philosophy, and theology classes.” ~ Lauren Gross, nurse*

*“There are no ways in which [Andrew’s course] did not challenge me... I wish this program was required for every Wheaton student.” ~ Anonymous Wheaton student*

*“Thank you...for the most life-changing experience I have ever had!” ~ Stephen Rosenthal, business entrepreneur*

*“Andrew’s DeCort’s teaching has radically shaped the way I think. His theories around loving our neighbor and seeing others as Christ would see them have impacted my life for God’s Kingdom and how I listen and serve others. Andrew is a brilliant educator and I continually cherish the time I spent as his pupil. He is easily the best teacher I have ever had.” ~ Stephania Quintero, student*

*“Made me rethink my goal in life... Do it again!” ~ Anonymous Wheaton student*

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **Neighbor-Love: A Revolutionary Idea that Could Save Our World**

#### **Lecture 1: The Crisis and Hope of Humanity**

1. Section 1: The Idea We Need Today
2. Section 2: Bonhoeffer’s Question
3. Section 3: The Ethics of Neighbor-Love
4. Section 4: The Crisis of Humanity: Ancient Mythology
5. Section 5: The Crisis of Humanity: Classical Philosophy
6. Section 6: The Crisis of Humanity: Classical Culture
7. Section 7: Contemporary Crises of Humanity
8. Section 8: Eyob: The Crisis of Indifference and Dead Dogma
9. Section 9: An Idea that Could Save the World

#### **Lecture 2: Origins of Neighbor-Love: The Hebrew Bible**

1. Section 1: Progress and Problems
2. Section 2: The Creation of Humanity in Genesis 1
3. Section 3: Original Human Community and the Violence of the Fall
4. Section 4: Abraham and the Blessing for All People
5. Section 5: The Curse of Ethnocentrism
6. Section 6: The Hebrew Command of Neighbor-Love
7. Section 7: The Moral Neighborhood in Ancient Israel
8. Section 8: Israel's Treatment of Non-Israelite Neighbors or "Aliens"
9. Section 9: Israel's Enemies
10. Section 10: Boaz's Enemy-Love
11. Section 11: The Future of Non-Israelite Neighbors
12. Section 12: Conclusion: A Mirror for Us Today

### **Lecture 3: Jesus: The Revolution of Neighbor-Love**

1. Section 1: Jesus's Breakthrough
2. Section 2: The Sermon on the Mount
3. Section 3: Creative Nonviolence
4. Section 4: Love Your Enemies
5. Section 5: The Reason of Love
6. Section 6: The Golden Rule
7. Section 7: What God Really Wants
8. Section 8: Matthew 19 and the Question of What Is Truly Valuable in Life
9. Section 9: Matthew 22 and the Command of Neighbor-Love
10. Section 10: Globalizing Neighbor-Love
11. Section 11: Mark 12 and the Greatest Commandment
12. Section 12: Luke 6 and the Extravagant Generosity of God
13. Section 13: The Parable of the Good Samaritan and Luke 10
14. Section 14: Insights from the Enemy
15. Section 15: John's Ethics of Love: The Superpower Washes Feet
16. Section 16: The Death of Jesus and Divine Love
17. Section 17: Conclusion: Jesus's Answer to the Crisis of Humanity

### **Lecture 4: The Revolution Continues: Neighbor-Love in the New Testament**

1. Section 1: The Early Christian Counter-Culture of Love
2. Section 2: Paul: From Terrorist to Apostle of Love
3. Section 3: Romans 12 and Paul's Ethics of Enemy-Love
4. Section 4: Romans 13 and Neighbor-Love
5. Section 5: Romans 13 and the Politics of Love
6. Section 6: Love and the End of History
7. Section 7: The Brilliant Irony of Romans 15
8. Section 8: Galatians: A Reunited Humanity
9. Section 9: Galatians: Freedom, Love, and Service
10. Section 10: James and True Religion
11. Section 11: James and the Law that Gives Freedom
12. Section 12: Conclusion

### **Lecture 5: 20 Centuries: The Red Thread of Neighbor-Love**

1. Section 1: The Moral Belief that Changed the World
2. Section 2: The Didache: Neighbor-Love as the Way of Life
3. Section 3: The Epistle to Diognetus and Early Christian Cosmopolitanism
4. Section 4: Augustine's Love and Pursuit of Happiness
5. Section 5: Augustine's Universal Love against the Death Penalty
6. Section 6: Aquinas: Neighbor-Love, Crusades, and Capital Punishment
7. Section 7: Martin Bucer's Universe of Love
8. Section 8: Martin Luther's Radical Contradiction
9. Section 9: Nietzsche, the Will to Power, and the Lie of Neighbor-Love
10. Section 10: Freud, Sex, and the Madness of Loving Your Neighbor
11. Section 11: Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*
12. Section 12: Conclusion: The Globalization of Neighbor-Love

### **Lecture 6: Modern Masters of Neighbor-Love: Bonhoeffer, King, Romero, Teresa, Vanier**

1. Section 1: Five Paradigms of a Plausible Future
2. Section 2: The Life and Love of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)
3. Section 3: Bonhoeffer's Christological Vision
4. Section 4: Bonhoeffer's Community Service
5. Section 5: The Life and Love of Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)
6. Section 6: King's Neighbor-Love
7. Section 7: King's Enemy-Love
8. Section 8: The Life and love of Oscar Romero (1917-1980)
9. Section 9: The Prophetic Preaching of Oscar Romero
10. Section 10: The Life and Love of Mother Teresa (1910-1997)
11. Section 11: Mother Teresa's Way of Love
12. Section 12: The Life and Love of Jean Vanier (b. 1928)
13. Section 13: Vanier's Wisdom of Tenderness
14. Section 14: Conclusion: Stars in the Darkness

### **Lecture 7: Neighbor-Love Now: A Humble/Dangerous/Hopeful New Beginning for Humanity**

1. Section 1: Exemplars, Insights, Questions, and Commission
2. Section 2: Exemplary Church: Coach Wayne Gordon and Lawndale Christian Community Church
3. Section 3: Exemplary NGO: Gary Haugen and the International Justice Mission
4. Section 4: Exemplary Business: Eden Gelan and Chiban Leather
5. Section 5: Neighbor-Love DNA: Who Is My Neighbor?
6. Section 6: Neighbor-Love DNA: What Does It Mean to Love?
7. Section 7: Neighbor-Love DNA: As Ourselves?
8. Section 8: A Summary: "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself"
9. Section 9: Fifteen Questions for Neighbor-Love

- a. Question 1: Who are the neighbors you are most tempted to hate, and how can you grow in love for them today?
  - b. Question 2: What about under-privileged neighbors in the New Testament like women and slaves?
  - c. Question 3: Why have Christians failed so badly at neighbor-love throughout history and today?
  - d. Question 4: What about evolution? Doesn't natural selection prove that the ethics of neighbor-love is unnatural and ungrounded?
  - e. Question 5: Does neighbor-love contradict and cancel justice?
  - f. Question: 6: How do the love of God and neighbor relate?
  - g. Question 7: If I love myself badly, am I allowed to love my neighbors like that?
  - h. Question 8: What is the place of self-love and self-care in neighbor-love?
  - i. Question 9: How should we love when the needs are overwhelming?
  - j. Question 10: Is it right to prioritize some neighbors over others?
  - k. Question 11: Are patriotism and/or nationalism compatible with Christian neighbor-love?
  - l. Question 12: What are some spiritual practices that can help us love our neighbors as ourselves?
  - m. Question 13: Is there a vision therapy for seeing neighbors with love?
  - n. Question 14: Should we still preach the Christian message or simply neighbor-love?
  - o. Question 15: Is there hope for neighbor-love to save our world?
10. Section 10: Christ's Final Commission



