

“Won’t You Be My Neighbor?”

Do you remember back in the day when there was a show on television called “Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood?” He would walk into his house with that red sweater on and “outdoor” shoes. Then, after an introduction he would begin to sing and change his shoes. *“It’s a beautiful day in the neighborhood, a beautiful day for a neighbor. Would you been mine? Could you be mine? Won’t you be my neighbor?”* So what exactly is a neighbor? One definition that has been formed is that a neighbor is the person nearest to you that has a need. That means that a neighbor is not necessarily someone that you even know. It doesn’t have to be the person that lives in the house next door. This “neighbor” doesn’t have to be in your clique or even go to your church.

Many times we have “neighbors” pass right in front of us and we just pass them by. Could our neighbor be that girl at school who drops her book and all her papers scatter across the hall, yet we walk on by? Or maybe it’s the person who can’t get out of the Sonic driveway and we pass by instead of letting them out. Why? Why do we laugh when the guys are making fun of that one boy? Two of our friends are gossiping about another member of our group, but we just stand there in silence. These people are all our neighbors because we were close to them and they had a need at this particular time in their lives.

So many people look down upon the religious leaders who didn’t stop and lend a helping hand to the fallen man in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, but we do the same thing every day. Our lives are so busy and so comfortable that we do not want to go out of our way to help people, especially those we don’t know or have insecurities about. What makes this Samaritan so good? Why did he stop and help when others wouldn’t? How can we be more like the Good Samaritan and live out our truth every day and not just when it fits into our schedules?

TRUTHFUL LIFE: “TALK THE TALK”

LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

Once again, in this story an “expert” of the law tried to catch Jesus in a trap. He asked Jesus how he could inherit eternal life. Jesus began His answer by stating that you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Wow, that’s a lot to love, but God deserves all of us! First, we are to love God with all our heart. No, this doesn’t mean the organ that pumps blood through your body, but the center of your emotions. All those feelings and dreams that you have should be shaped around your love for God. Second, we are to love God with all of our soul. This is our being or the thing that makes us unique. Our soul makes up who we are and what we stand for. Next, we are to love God with all of our mind. Our thoughts and ideas should be consistent with a love for God. If you are thinking unclean and immoral thoughts, then you are not loving God with all your mind. Lastly, Jesus said we are to love God with all

our strength. This is our physical being and our will. We are to love God mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

Not only are we to love the Lord, but we are secondly supposed to love our neighbors. We've already discussed who are neighbors are and so we are to love them as we love ourselves. We are Christ's hands and feet on this earth and so we are to show His love to others by our deeds and words. In today's evil society, people are searching for individuals who truly care about them and want to love them for who they are. We need to be more concerned with loving others than loving the things of this world.

LOVE YOURSELF

The last thing that Jesus said was that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. That means if we do not have a proper love for ourselves then we will never love others the way we should. God made each one of us a special, unique, one of a kind, individual. We should realize His love for us and let that carry over into our love for ourselves. We need to be happy with our bodies, personalities, and abilities. God has given each one of us a particular purpose in this world. In order for us to be able to love others in the way God expects, we must have a true love for ourselves.

“WALK THE WALK”

After the expert had answered Jesus' question, Jesus told him that his answer was correct and that now all he had to do was to put into action that which he had said. It seems as if the man was a little leery about being able to do that so to justify himself he asked Jesus who his neighbor was exactly. That is when Jesus decided to use a story to illustrate His point concerning the love we are to have for our neighbors.

THREE PEOPLE, ONE PATH

BACKGROUND

The first thing to notice is that this man that was robbed was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. This means that more than likely this man was coming back from the temple in Jerusalem and that he was probably a Jew.

THE PRIEST AND THE LEVITE

Once again these men were coming from Jerusalem and it seems only logical to predict that they had just finished at the temple. These men were at the height of the religious lines of that day working in the temple and being a Jew. A priest had to be from the tribe of Levi, but also had to be from the lineage of Aaron. Priests served in the temple and even offered the sacrifices. He had probably just finished his priestly duties at the temple as he was making his way down the road. The Levite also had to be of the tribe of Levi. They, too, served in the

temple, but mainly were set apart to help the priests. He had also probably just come from the temple in Jerusalem and was making his way home. These men who were supposed to be religious and “close to God” passed by on the other side of the road when they saw the man. Maybe these men didn’t want to touch something unclean and thus make themselves unclean. Or maybe they were “done with church” and were finished with that part of their lives for the day. What about us? Do we go to church as a chore and then leave the message that we heard there in the building or do we let it influence our lives and use it to help others? Or, are we so afraid of “getting our hands dirty” and becoming “unclean” that we refuse to reach out to those less desirable people? These two men who should have been setting the example were the ones who totally contradicted the first and most important commandment.

THE SAMARITAN

Next to travel down the road was a Samaritan. No one would have expected this man to be traveling down the same road as the Jews, much less to assist a man who was in need. This man went above and beyond the call of duty. This man helped his “neighbor” despite the racial tensions. Whether he knew all of the religious laws and commandments did not matter as he put the most important commandment into practice. He “walked the walk” of a believer. This Samaritan had compassion on the robbed man. He not only bandaged his wounds, but allowed the man to travel on his donkey and even paid for his stay at a local hotel. This Samaritan man saw a neighbor in need and had mercy on him. Love is shown by actions, not by words. The Samaritan showed what true love is and gave proper meaning to living the truth.

Today we have so many opportunities to reach out and assist hurting people, but we refuse to fit those times into our schedules. We have to realize that our neighbors are all around us and they are searching for truth in this world full of lies. People are off-road in life, begging and pleading for help, but do we pass them by? We need to take the messages that we learn in church, Sunday School, and youth and use them once we leave those “holy huddles.”

“WOULD YOU BE MINE? COULD YOU BE MINE? WON’T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?”

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