

How To Love Your Neighbor

Part 4: Together

1 Peter 2:9-10

Summary: If we really want to love our neighbors we have to do it together.

Main Ideas:

Together, we can be part of creating the future we want to see.

Jesus Followers exist to show the rest of the world they can enjoy the love of God.

If we really want to invite our neighbors to enjoy God... We have to do it together.

We gather together FOR our friend's neighbor.

To be a community that loves our neighbors we first have to commit to being a community.

Loving our neighbors requires a community committed to loving each others' neighbors.

When we commit to creating a loving community we are committing to love our neighbor... together.

Invitation:

Ask: What am I willing to do to create a community that loves my neighbor?

- Commit to showing up
- Commit to helping out.

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe a time you were new to a class/group/church. What did it feel like? What made it a positive or negative experience?
2. What challenges do you think people face when they are new to a church gathering, and how can we help them feel more welcome?
3. Reread 1 Peter 2:9-10. Why do you think Peter emphasized "y'all" in his message, referring to the community rather than individuals?
4. What would you be willing to do to help create a community that loves our friends' neighbors?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

WE: Questions: Don't worry the answer is yes...

- Do you want the world to be a better place?
- Do you want your kids/grandkids to have a bright future living in unity and peace with others?

Of course you do!

Good news... Together, we can be part of creating the future we want to see.

AND it's something we can truly enjoy doing...

See, we have a God who loves us, knows us, and enjoys us...

- and if we really want to create that future all we have to do is enjoy him enjoying us and invite others to join us

How great would it be if all of our neighbors discovered what it means to enjoy God?

- What if our neighbors, who always complain about each other or just ignore each other, began truly enjoying God?
- What if your whole school community, teachers/staff/administrators enjoyed God and knew he enjoyed them everyday?
- What if our offices weren't filled with gossiping, or only people only working for the weekend but were filled with people living lives where they were enjoying God?
- Imagine how much more unity and peace we would all experience.

Example: Me... getting frustrated with Kids... Liz rubbing my back... "Enjoy"

- Enjoying God even makes a difference for our families.

And if those around us were enjoying God enjoying them...

Not only would their lives be better, your life would be better, our community would be better, and all of our futures would be better.

Now, if you're new, if you're checking out this church thing, you picked the right day to be here...

On the surface what you see and experience tonight might seem like many other churches... but you're about to get a peak behind the scenes.

- See the real driving force to what we do... what makes us unique (not better) but different.
- And if you're here b/c someone invited you you're going to actually discover how much they like you

See we really believe we can be a part of making our neighbors' lives better...

- It's why we do this Crosscreek community thing
- To Invite our neighbors to discover, enjoy, and share the life Jesus offers together.

But who do we think we are... Just us few. Why do we think we can actually make a difference?

B/c it's what God specifically chose us to do... let me show you.

GOD: Around 62 AD the Apostle Peter... one of Jesus' closest friends and a main leader of the first group of JF's...

Wrote a letter explaining what it means to follow Jesus

- And in this letter he explains what the Church was created to be...
- If been here for a while, we've talked about this before... but it's too important to let us forget.

1 Peter 2:9b-10 [...for you are]

You are = Current Reality

This is what JFs are... A chosen people / royal priests/a holy nation/God's very own possession.

- Priesthood of all believers

Royal priests: Priests were from a specific tribe- Levites: set aside to be the go between for God and the people.

- Gave them special access to the temple/God
- Offered sacrifices, prayers on behalf of the rest of the people.
- To make God known to the people... so that Israel as a nation could make God known to the rest of the world.

And now JF's have that priestly role...

- To show others the goodness of God- Show = Advertise
- Goodness.. Other translations... the excellencies.
- The amazing things he does.
- What it means to enjoy being enjoyed by him.

JF's exist to show the rest of the world they can enjoy the love of God.

How? By sharing their story... life was dark but now there is a light that comes from the Spirit of God within us.

- Once we didn't know peace and forgiveness and now as a family we do.

And we read this and think "Ok... I am chosen by God to show his excellencies."

- So I'm going to be a good, loving neighbor and even share my story if asked

Those are all super important/good... but it misses the main point of what Peter is saying...

Every YOU in this passage is plural... Y'all.

- This is not just about you or me; it's about all of us, working together as one body.
- When Peter says, 'You are a chosen people,' he's talking to us as a community.

If we really want to invite our neighbors to enjoy God... We have to do it together.

This is why we believe CCC is unique... and particularly why we think our gatherings are unique...

- Why after 7 years we are still committed to making this happen...

We might look like many other churches, do a lot of the same things other churches do...

But the driving purpose behind being together is different...

- Not just for us to enjoy each other... though we do
- Not just to worship together... though we do
- Not just to be part of something bigger than ourselves... though we are
- Not just to understand how the scriptures apply to our own lives... though we make a point every week to discover more about that.

All those things do happen and it's great... But that's not the main point.

Everything we do, and especially when we gather together, is done to invite our neighbors to D/E/S the life Jesus offers together.

Gathering together once a week is not what it means to be a JF... going to church is not Xianity.

- The goal of following Jesus isn't to go to church and get more people to go to church
- The goal of following Jesus is to become more like Jesus, enjoy God, and invite others into that life.

We gather once a week to help us do that...

- To create a community and a place we can invite our neighbors into.

Everyone is someone God is purposely pursuing.

And he has purposely put individual people in each of our paths b/c he is pursuing them and wants to use his people to show them his love and enjoyment.

We don't believe this gathering is FOR us... it's for our neighbors AND it's for our friends' neighbors.

We gather together FOR our friend's neighbor.

I'm not here for me...

- I'm here to help create a safe community that you can bring your friend to... to D/E/S the life Jesus offers... together.

Again... this gathering isn't what it means to be a JF. This isn't the essence of Xianity.

- This is a tool.
- To help us accomplish our mission of showing others the goodness of God.

At CCC it's just one part of what we do as a community of JF's

- But it is our most public, overt, most regular, most physical way of advertising his goodness.

But in order for it to be effective we have to be committed to being together for each other's neighbor.

To be a community that loves our neighbors we first have to commit to being a community.

It doesn't happen, it doesn't work... if we aren't committed to it... if we aren't all supporting each other... together.

Imagine...

Erik's friend is going through a hard time.

- Erik's praying that God shows his friend how much he loves him

His friend finds out he's a JF and is interested in learning more.

- Erik invites him... says "I'll be there when you get there. In fact I'll be waiting outside/in the lobby."

Friend actually shows up... but his experience is awkward and confusing...

- No one set out signs to tell him where to go...
- There's no friendly greeting at the door

When he walks in, he's ignored b/c everyone is talking to people they already know.

His friend brought his young daughter with him...

- She starts to crawl around on the ground and gets covered in crumbs and hair
- B/c no one vacuumed before people showed up.

Once he brushes his daughter off... he asks where he should take her...

- But no one is available for the kids' environment
- No one to provide her with an age appropriate environment to discover Jesus for herself

There's no coffee/water... no chance to hold something to feel a little more comfortable in an awkward situation.

They finally walk into the main room and there are only 8 other people.

- They all turn and look or just ignore.
- As they sit down, it's obvious who the new one is.

Music starts and he feels awkward not singing but doesn't know songs

- Knows if he does try singing, everyone around him will know it's him b/c there's so few people.
- But he also knows the band can definitely see him not singing.

Teaching starts... but it's hard to pay attention b/c room is so quiet. No interaction. Every sniff and pen click is heard

- His daughter who has to stay with him now... gets bored and fidgety.

Now it finally comes time for communion...

- But he doesn't really know what its about
- And Isn't ready to participate but it will be completely obvious if he doesn't.

After the service there's no snacks or drinks...

- Most of the people just shoot out the door to get to dinner
- No one introduces themselves or talks to him.

The people who are still there are so busy putting everything away that they aren't able to meaningfully engage with his friend.

How disheartening for Erik...

- He' been praying for God to show his love to his friend
- His friend made the huge step to come to a gathering
- And when he gets here... Erik has no back up, no real community/family to help him love his friend.
- Erik's lost this chance b/c it's going to be very hard to convince his friend to give it another try.

Now what if this friend was actually your kid? Going through a rough time and desperate for someone to reach out/a community to encourage, longing for the peace, love, life only Jesus can give.

- And the chance for them to find what they were longing for is squandered b/c of a bad church experience?

Everyone is someone's kid.

Gathering together isn't just for us... it's for each other's neighbors

- It's for each others kids

We love our neighbors by being there for each other's neighbors.

But reverse the story...

Imagine Erik's friend pulling up, unsure but hopeful.

- Signs tell him where to go.
- A warm greeting puts him at ease.
- His child is welcomed by a kind teacher, and he feels at home.
- People introduce themselves and genuinely engage with him.
- He doesn't feel like the odd one out b/c they are other people in the room who might be new too.
- He hears how God loves him, knows him and the situation he's in... hears for the first time that God is for him not mad at him.
- Afterward people remember his name and interact with him.
- His daughter says... "Daddy can we come back next week? The class was fun and my teacher was really nice."

What if he came back and experienced the same thing... again and again?

What if his friend then invited his sister and brother in law and they experienced the same thing?

Erik's invitation becomes a turning point in his friend's life and it creates a ripple that affects lives all over.

- That is why we do what we do
- That is why we gather
- That is why I know we can be part of creating the future we all want.

Loving our neighbors requires a community committed to loving each others' neighbors.

How fun would it be to have these types of stories happening every week?

How exciting would it be to be a part of this kind of community?

YOU: We can create a community that helps us love our neighbors... but it doesn't happen by accident.

Prayer makes it happen...

- Pray the neighbors say yes to invitations
- Pray that people make the choice to show up.

You physically being here makes it happen.

- Might mean rethinking some of our schedules and priorities.
- B/c when we show up we're not just helping ourselves... we're creating a community that welcomes and loves our neighbors.

Donations makes it happen

- When we give, we aren't just keeping the lights on, we're investing in place where our neighbors can experience the love of God
- We are investing in the future of our neighbors/community
- Investing in others discovering the life Jesus offers

Volunteering makes it happen.

- Childrens, music, usher/greeter, small group leader, janitorial
- Each of these plays an important role in creating a community that loves our neighbors.
- It becomes an exciting privilege to be a part of changing someone's story.
- My experience... Music: See someone choose Jesus... I got to be a part of that!

This isn't about filling slots

- It's about shaping the future of our community.
- Your prayers, your presence, your service, your giving—these are all ways we bring God's love to someone who might need it most, today.

So this week... Ask: What am I willing to do to create a community that loves my neighbor?

- What would you be willing to do if it were your kids?
- B/c for some of us... it is our kids right now!

Commit to showing up

- Not just for you... But for your neighbor and for your friends' neighbors
- Thank you to those who are consistent

Commit to helping out.

Sign up to help: Hospitality / Kids / Set up / Clean up / Prayer team

- Thank you to those who are consistent

Cards in the back... take home and pray.

Training/Support.

WE: When we gather together we are creating a community for people to experience the goodness, love, enjoyment of God.

99 at xmas...

- #'s make me cringe at first too
- But we are looking for a # b/c each number represents a person.
- Each person has a story and each story matters to God... it's a story he's been orchestrating from the beginning so they can discover his love and enjoy him now and forever.
- Start w/ inviting people to gatherings now so they can invite others.

Who do you want to invite?

What are you going to do to make sure this is a place they can discover God's love for them?

Who does your friend want to invite?

What are you going to do to make this a place their friend will discover God's love?

Now is the perfect time for our neighbors to discover the life Jesus offers...

Let's commit to making this something about more than just ourselves...

When we commit to creating a loving community we are committing to love our neighbor... together.