

How To love Your Neighbor

Part 5: Invite Them

1 Peter 3:15-18

Summary:

Inviting our neighbors to discover, enjoy, and share the life Jesus offers is central to loving our neighbors... and it's not as hard as it sounds.

Main Ideas:

Often Jesus is someone we try to follow but rarely talk about.

Loving our neighbor means inviting them to enjoy the true source of love... Jesus

If you've experienced life with Jesus you can invite others to the life Jesus offers.

We should invite our neighbors to enjoy life with us before we invite them to enjoy God with us.

A perfect relationship of enjoying God is a FREE GIFT.

SIN separates us from God, each other, and ourselves.

GOD wants to destroy evil but not destroy the evil-doers... his children.

JESUS died and rose again to free us from the power of sin and death and give us new life now and forever.

We receive the life Jesus offers by choosing to TRUST he is who he said he is and can do what he said he can do.

We CAN invite our neighbors to D/E/S the life Jesus offers... together.

Invitation:

Practice explaining what WE believe.

Write down why YOU believe.

Pray for opportunities to invite your neighbor...

- Into your life
- Into your church community.
- Into the new life Jesus offers.

Discussion Questions:

1. If you are a Jesus-Follower, why do you follow him and what do you enjoy about him? If you don't consider yourself a Jesus Follower, how do you think following him would impact your life?
2. What would it look like for you to "worship Jesus as Lord of your life," as Peter said?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Who in your life might God be pursuing, and how can you be part of their journey to discover Jesus?
4. How can you prepare yourself to explain the hope you have as a follower of Jesus?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

WE: Think about one of your favorite Books/Shows?

- What do you like about it?

Have you ever recommended them to a friend/ family member/ co-worker?

- Maybe even took them with you or lent them the book... right?

Now, if you're a JF... I'm guessing Jesus is pretty important to you.

- Hopefully, made a bigger difference in your life than a show?
- So why do you follow Jesus? What difference has he made for you? What do you enjoy about him?

Have you ever recommended Jesus to someone who has never experienced him?

- Invited them to enjoy God with you?

Often Jesus is someone we try to follow but rarely talk about.

What's that about?

- Maybe don't want to look like one of "those" Xians?
 - Street preachers / preachy-judgy relatives / stereotypes in shows/movies?
- Maybe don't know what we would say?
 - What if they ask us questions we don't have answers for? What if we get it wrong?

But with Jesus, you've experienced something that people can't find anywhere else...

- A God that enjoys you and wants you to enjoy him
- Peace, purpose, joy, confidence, belonging, forgiveness, and most of all love.

And if we truly want to love our neighbor we'll want them to find the same thing...

Loving our neighbor means inviting them to enjoy the true source of love... Jesus

I know for many of us this sounds scary. Awkward. Uncomfortable. Embarrassing.

It really doesn't have to be. I'll show you.

Someone who understood how awkward talking about Jesus could be was the Apostle Peter...

GOD: Peter. One of Jesus' inner circle.

- When Jesus was on trial Peter was asked about his following of Jesus and he was so scared he denied even knowing Jesus... 3 times.
- The next day his teacher/friend was executed.
- But 50 days later Peter teaches a sermon that convinces 1000's of people to follow Jesus...
- And for the rest of his life Peter told people about Jesus and what it means to enjoy following him.

What changed? What made Peter go from Jesus denier to Jesus preacher?

- 3 Days after Jesus' execution Peter saw Jesus alive again alive.
- He talked to Jesus and ate breakfast with him on the beach.
- He experienced the real Jesus.

- If you've experienced life with Jesus you can invite others to the life Jesus offers.

So in his sharing, Peter made it all the way to Rome

- While there in about 62 AD... dictated a letter that was transcribed by a guy named Silvanus.
- Written to Jesus followers in modern day Turkey.
- To encourage them b/c they were being harassed and even persecuted by their neighbors.

In this letter he talks about what it looks like to invite others to D/E/S the life Jesus offers.

1st he says don't worry when you suffer for following Jesus and don't be afraid of people's threats... something we really don't know much about...

But we still feel weird and worry we might make things awkward... So Peter says... Don't worry...

V.15a [...Lord of your life.]

What does that really mean? To worship Jesus as Lord of your life?

- We all get a lot of religious ideas I'm sure.
- But if we boil it down it's this...

Worshiping Jesus is enjoying him for who and what he is, and having that enjoyment infuse every part of who we are.

- If we really enjoy God it infuses everything in our life.
- It changes how we talk, what we do, what we think, what we care about, how we react to people/situations

And Peter says, if you do that... if your enjoyment of Jesus is a way of life for you... people will notice.

And when they do, be ready...

V. 15b-16a [...respectful way.]

A life that is infused with the enjoyment of God will invite others in.

We aren't talking about just going and preaching on the corner or ambushing people you just met...

- Do you know Jesus?

I once heard a sad story about someone who really wanted their co-worker to know Jesus so they kept inviting them to church and the coworker finally said...

- "Look, you've invited me to church 100 times but you've never invited me to your house."

We should invite our neighbors to enjoy life with us before we invite them to enjoy God with us.

So we love and enjoy our neighbor not as a project but b/c we love and enjoy God and love and enjoy what he does... people.

And Peter says, when you are living this way people will see a difference...

- So be ready to explain why you follow Jesus.
- What difference has Jesus made in you?

Might be thinking... "Oh man that sounds like something I do NOT want to do."

- I don't know all the facts, I don't know the arguments.
- I don't want to look like one of "those" Xians.

Peter isn't saying be ready to argue/debate.

- Or be ready to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt the existence of God.
- Or be ready to defeat every argument.

He says... explain YOUR hope as a believer.

- It's your story.
- You can't get your story wrong.
- You don't have to try to convince people your story's true... it's your story.
- Who is going to argue with your story?

In fact, if you argue you're actually doing it wrong... Peter says share your story in a gentle and respectful way.

Everyone's WHY they believe is different and unique...

But the WHAT is the same message that's been changing lives for 2000 yrs.

Peter spells it out a few sentences down... **V. 18**

5 main points [5 Fingers]

God loves/Enjoys you. Wants you to know that love and enjoy him enjoying you. It's a relationship he simply wants to give everyone.

- **A perfect relationship of enjoying God is a FREE GIFT.** We can't earn it or deserve it.
- It's like the relationship of a good parent to a loved kid.

But that relationship has been broken. We've separated ourselves from God's love.

- We keep breaking the Law of Love = SIN

Look at world. We are stuck. No one wants war/pain/and suffering but we keep creating it!

- It's almost like we can't help it... As the human race and as individuals.
- And the truth is we can't

We can't do anything to change it... B/c we've been kidnapped by and enslaved to sin/death...

We want to do good but can't help ourselves. We keep hurting each other and ourselves.

- **SIN separates us from God, each other, and ourselves.**
- The world is permeated by this evil.
- And no matter how hard we try to find solutions we just keep ending up more and more broken and separated.

But to end evil God would have to end evil doers... you and me.

GOD wants to destroy evil but not destroy the evil-doers... his children.

We are basically slaves who commit evil b/c we are enslaved to an evil master.

But if a slave is only doing what his master has commanded him... you don't kill the slave... you kill the master and free the slave.

That's what God did. In his great love for us, he came to rescue us.

- He entered into our mess as Jesus.
- 100% man/God.

He showed us who God really is... by loving, accepting, inviting, and serving

Then took humanity's sin/evil on himself and put it to death with him by allowing himself to be executed on a Roman Cross.

But the third day after his death... he rose again

Breaking our chains and freeing us from the power of sin and death.

- Offering us a new life of becoming who we were always meant to be
- And enjoying him and enjoying his love of us forever.
- JESUS died and rose again to free us from the power of sin and death and give us new life now and forever.

And we experience that life not by earning it by being good

- Having our good outweigh our bad
- Knowing a bunch of theology / bible verses
- Saying we believe in God.

We receive the life Jesus offers by choosing to TRUST he is who he said he is and can do what he said he can do.

By choosing to trust that Jesus is who he said he is... the King of the universe

And trusting that he can do what he said he can do... free us from this sin and give us new life now and forever.

That has been the message of Xianity for 2000 yrs. That is the Good News of Jesus.

- That is WHAT we live out together
- That is WHAT we celebrate and invite others to celebrate with us.

That is WHAT WE believe... but WHY do YOU believe it and what difference has it made in your life?

- That's YOUR story.

Everyone's WHY is different...

A major part of my why is that I believe this universe/reality had to come from somewhere.

- A man in the 1st century, who every credible historian says existed, named Jesus of Nazareth claimed he was the one who made it all.

- The eye witness accounts said he was full of love, wisdom, and mercy... not crazy / con-man
- The accounts say he claimed he would die and rise again and then eye-witnesses saw him do it.
- And b/c of what they saw they spread the message you just heard across the known world even upon pain of death.

For others it might be what you've experienced... God doing something in your life that you just can't deny

For you maybe you saw Jesus change a loved one's life and now it has changed yours.

Others might have philosophical or theological or scientific reasons for believing.

Often a combination of all of this.

YOU: But... Everyone is someone God is purposely pursuing.

He has put people in our path b/c he is pursuing them.

He has chosen that right now is the right time and you are the right person to invite them to discover the life he offers.

God has given you YOUR story for a reason... To enjoy him and invite others to enjoy him.

So if you are a JF... are you ready to explain your hope as a believer?

Here's my invitation... **Practice explaining what WE believe...**

- Practice those 5 points
- Go to training
- Meet with Dad/ME

Write down WHY you believe. What is it that makes you personally believe the big WHAT?

Pray for opportunities to invite your neighbor...

- **Into your life**
- **Into your church community.**
- **Into the new life Jesus offers.**

Don't have to know all the facts/arguments

- It's ok to say... I don't know. But I do know it's changed my life.

Now, maybe you're sitting here/listening and realize you haven't really heard the WHAT of Jesus put that way before...

And for some reason, it resonates/makes sense

- You know why? God has been purposely pursuing you.
- Now is the perfect time to trust Jesus and begin a new life with him.

Just have tell him...

- Thank you for loving me and pursuing me.
- I'm done running and hiding from you.
- Thank you for dying and rising again to free me from sin and death.
- I choose to trust you with my life now and forever. Make me yours.

If you've prayed that... you now have your own story to tell!

WE: Everyone is someone God is pursuing.

And he has specifically chosen each of us to invite others to D/E/S the life he offers... together.

Who has God put in your path?

- Let's look for them
- Let's pursue them with the love of Jesus
- Let's pray for them and that they would discover and enjoy God's love
- Let's create a community into which we can invite them to experience God's love in a community
- And let's love them enough to invite them into our life, our community, and into the new life Jesus offers.

We can start a ripple that will truly change lives, families, and our community.

We CAN invite our neighbors to D/E/S the life Jesus offers... together.