

March 16, 2008

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR

(Heart for the World)

Opening Prayer, Confession of Faith & Worship

Big Idea:

Most of us would say we love God. But, do we also love our neighbor? Before we answer yes to this question, it is important to understand Jesus' definition of a neighbor, exactly who He demands we love, and what that love looks like.

Summary:

What matters most? Jesus says it is loving God and loving our neighbor. He helps us understand what loving God looks like by telling us that "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me." What about loving our neighbors? When Jesus demands that we love our "neighbor" it is clear that He is speaking about more than just those who live on your block. After all, if "your neighbor" is defined as "your friends", then just about all of us would pass the test with flying colors. However, according to the definition Jesus gives in the story of the "Good Samaritan", your neighbor may be someone you don't even know. He may be someone who is unfriendly and unlovely and unable to repay you for your kindness. He may be someone who requires your time, money, and effort. The parable of the "Good Samaritan" makes it obvious that your neighbor is really anyone whose need you see and are able to meet. God demonstrated His love for people by sending them His only Son. Does God love people? Look to the cross and you will clearly see the answer is an emphatic and undeniable YES! Similarly, God calls us to die to self, lay down our rights, and love people. Like Christ, we are called to demonstrate our love for others in real ways. Love is not just a thought or a good intention. Rather, love is only love when it is put into action. So, do you love your neighbor? Do you love people? How about your enemies? There is nothing in the universe that matters more to God than people and as followers of Christ we must have this same passion and active love for people – all people.

Discussion Questions: (read the Scripture & discuss)

Luke 10:25-35

Why did the priest and Levite pass by? How and why do we pass by people today? Why is it significant that the person who finally helped was a Samaritan? How does this help us understand God's definition of "neighbor"?

Matthew 5:43-48

Jesus goes a step further in this passage with his demand to love others. What is the result of not loving all people including our enemies? How can we love our enemies?

1 John 4:7-21

What is love? What does a lack of real love for people indicate about our hearts and our spiritual condition? Pray for God to change our hearts and to give us hearts for others – hearts for the world.

Taking Action: Think of a person you know who is in need. What tends to keep you from being compassionate to this person and showing them love? Put your faith into action and be a Good Samaritan to this person. Share the results with your LifeGroup next week.

Ministry Time

LifeGroups