

The Heart of a Disciple: Loving Our Neighbor

During our 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting we have been looking at the three great love commandments in the Bible: love God, love one another, and love our neighbors. We've looked at loving God and loving one another. Though it probably isn't true for all of us, the final area in which we are called to love might be the most challenging for us – loving our neighbors. Challenging or not, loving our neighbors is also an essential part of walking as Jesus' disciple.

Opening Discussion: How many of your literal neighbors have you had a meaningful conversation with in the past month?

Read Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-31

1. In what sense is the second command like the first?

Sam said:

What does it mean to "love your neighbor as yourself?" We could talk for hours and hours about this phrase, but for this morning let's keep it simple: **to love your neighbor means you strive to do what is best for them in both word and deed, whether or not it is deserved, even if it requires sacrifice.**

2. What is your reaction to this definition?
3. In Luke's Gospel, when this topic of the greatest command comes up (Luke 10:25-37) the lawyer who is talking to Jesus ultimately asks, "Who is my neighbor?" What is Jesus' answer and what does this tell us about what it might look like for us to obey this command?
4. In what way is loving one's neighbor a great summation of the Law and the Prophets (see Romans 13:8-10)?

Sam said:

I think Christians often feel as if they've got a pretty good grasp on the first half -- loving God with our whole being and our whole life. While it always a work in progress, we have a lot of pretty obvious activities to help us take on this task: corporate worship, individual Bible study, time in prayer, small groups, things like our Rooted discipleship experience, seminars, workshops, conferences...all of these things and more are often oriented toward developing our love and relationship with God. Which is terrific, and I would never tell anyone to stop doing that. But when it comes to loving our neighbor as ourselves...do you think we're as on top of that one as we ought to be? Do you think you, personally, have a habit of looking out for, caring for, and seeking to establish relationships with the people God has placed all around you? Especially the people who may not yet know him, who may be far from him?

5. Do you have the habit of looking out for, and caring for, and seeking to establish relationships with the people God as place around you? Explain.

6. What makes it hard for you to look out for, care for, and seek to establish those relationship?

7. What is one specific way that you could grow in your obedience to this command this week?

8. Sam talked about the BLESS model (see next page) as one tangible way to engage this command to love our neighbors. How might this tool help you begin or deepen your expression of the command to love your neighbor?

Practicing the Rhythms of Rooted this Week



Daily Devotion: Continue to use the devotionals from the 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, which will focus this week on loving our neighbors.



Prayer: Who are 2 or 3 neighbors (literal, classmates, work associates, etc.) for whom you can begin praying? Write their name down and begin to pray for them.

5 Simple Ways to B.L.E.S.S.

Begin with Prayer

- Pray for the people in your life and the places that you are in.
- Who do you live, work and play with that is far from God?
- Pray that God would create spiritual curiosity in them.
- List 2 or 3 people for whom you will begin praying:

1.

2.

3.

Listen

- “God how do you want me to bless the world today? Help me to listen to and discover the needs of others and where you are at work.”
- In your interactions, take up the posture of a learner – be a listener who learns about people’s hopes, pains, challenges and dreams.
- Practice being present.

Eat

- Eating is one of the fastest ways to move a relationship from acquaintance to friendship.
- Who can you eat with (or have coffee with) that is far from God? A co-worker over lunch? A neighbor?

Serve

- Who can you serve this week?
- Have you taken time to pray for, listen to and eat with people? Doing this helps you discover the ways that you can serve them.
- Who do you know who has a practical need? Ask them how you can help?

Story

- Share how God has blessed you and made a difference in your life.
- Share “bite size” stories. Don’t feel like you have to share your whole life story at once.