

God Make Us Better Neighbors

by Joshua R. Welch

A few years ago, just a walk down the street on Courtland Avenue, our neighborhood made state and national news as a triple homicide took place. When the news came out, I remember feeling shocked that a crime of this magnitude could happen just blocks away where I try to preach God's two fundamental commands on a weekly basis — love God and love your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39). Some crimes, like this one, make front page news. Others are just front porch news. Yet, these crimes all affect us and our community. Whether it be major crimes or minor incidents, crimes (what the Bible calls “sin”) hurt us and both our relationship with God and each other (see 1 John 3:4).

We can deal with these problems on a strictly human level. We can call the cops to settle domestic disputes and catch burglars. We can set up video cameras to try and catch thieves and drug dealers. We can call an ambulance to try and revive the overdosed drug addict. We can send the alcoholic to rehab. We can evict the tenant or mortgagee who does not pay their rent or make their house payment. We can ask for government grants to pave roads and fix homes. All of these things can help us deal with common neighborhood problems. Yet, they are only Band-Aid approaches to what are truly spiritual issues.

God has a better approach for us. He wants us to change our hearts and to submit ourselves to Him. As our Creator, He knows what is best for us and can show us His will so we might live more peaceful and beneficial lives. This will is revealed through His Son, Jesus Christ who came to earth so we “*may have life, and have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10). The life of Jesus is revealed to us in the Scriptures so we might know “*all things that pertain to life and godliness*” (2 Peter 1:3).

If we will follow the example of Jesus, as revealed, God can equip us to become better neighbors. Notice a few Bible verses which lay down principles to help in this area. If we want to change our neighborhood, let's open our hearts to these inspired teachings.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR — “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” *There is no other commandment greater than this*” (Mark 12:31).

SEEK TO DO GOOD TO YOUR NEIGHBOR — “*Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor*” (1 Corinthians 10:24, NASB).

CARRY OTHER'S BURDENS — “*Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ*” (Galatians 6:2).

TREAT YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE TREATED — “*In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets*” (Matthew 7:12).

PLEASE YOUR NEIGHBOR — “*Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification*” (Romans 15:2).

BE HOSPITABLE TO NEW NEIGHBORS — “*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it*” (Hebrews 13:2).

DO NO HARM TO A NEIGHBOR — “*For this, ‘you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this..., ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor...love is the fulfillment of the law*” (Romans 13:9-10).

HELP YOUR HELPLESS NEIGHBORS — “*Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained from the world*” (James 1:27; see also Isaiah 1:17).

If our neighborhood, would just obey Jesus in these areas do you think it might just help? How are you doing? God make us better neighbors.

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