

Imagine Great Relationships...With Others
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Lynn Haven UMC

Introduction

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:25-37 NIV)

Go and do likewise. Sounds pretty simple right? But how do we actually make "loving our neighbors as ourselves" a reality? This week we will talk about how we can begin the work of building great relationships with others.

Digging Deeper

When I love my neighbor I...

REDEEM the past.

We must give and receive forgiveness.

- We are all most likely familiar with the old saying "let bygones be bygones". But do we truthfully pitch the hurts from our pasts into the recycle bin of our memory banks or are we just kidding ourselves? Some might believe forgiveness is possible, but would require a major gesture of repentance from the offender before any thought of reconciliation can occur. Others may feel like it depends on the seriousness of the offense. And while these limits may exist in our minds, thankfully, forgiveness comes easily for God, who holds no record of wrongs. If we want to have good relationships with others, we have to start by looking at people with His eyes. And a glorious byproduct of this newfound sight will be that others will begin to see Him when they look at how we behave. Are you (or someone you love) harboring bitter feelings toward someone for a past transgression(s)? Have you found that the inability to let go of those

feelings has become an impediment to your (or their) spiritual growth? A deeper relationship with Christ will guide you on the path to overcoming the need to hang on to past hurts and experience the freedom found in forgiving and truly loving others.

SERVE all in the present.

“Biblical love means putting the needs of others above my own self-interest.” –J.D. Walt on 1 John 2:9-11

- Have you ever noticed the heroes emerging in the aftermath of major tragedies? These servants, the people who place their lives at risk to save others, begin to assess the damage and do whatever they can to save lives. No matter the circumstance, whether it be a natural disaster or a terrorist attack, you will always find these people at work with no thought of their own safety. Nor will you ever see them behaving as if they are being inconvenienced. The Bible tells us we should think of others as better than ourselves. While that doesn't mean we are not worthy, it does beg the question, “Do I think of myself too much?” C.S. Lewis once said, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.” Have you ever been inspired by someone else's selflessness? Did it affect you in terms of how you now react to situations where you find others in need?

PREPARE for the future.

Today's actions pave the way for future reality.

- How we behave toward each other now can impact relationships we have with people potentially for the rest of our lives. To quote the movie *Gladiator*, “Brothers, what we do in life echoes in eternity.” Yes, one day we will all be held accountable for the choices we make in this life. Do you approach situations with this reality framing your decision making process? How do you think it would change your actions if you did?
- Do you believe good begets good? Or do you think perhaps if you are focused on doing good things for the glory of God alone you will perceive the outcome as good regardless of what it may be?

Conclusion

The truth is, other people are sometimes difficult to love. We must frame our thoughts in such a way that the still small voice in our head is constantly speaking of how God loved us first and calls us to love each other in turn. When we are finally able to see others as God sees them we can begin the eternally rewarding process of not only serving them, but loving them as we love ourselves. This call that has been placed upon us may not always be easy, but it will always be worth it.