

How to Treat Your Neighbor

TEXT: Proverbs 3:27–30

THESIS: Practice the “Golden Rule” with your neighbor by setting the example for him.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Many of you may be familiar with the second great commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39).
 - A. This is a command, not an option.
 - B. And so, if the commandment is not obeyed, God is displeased and we stand guilty of having broken the law of God.
2. But, to love our neighbor arouses the question: Who is our neighbor?
 - A. Well, Christ answers the question Himself in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37).
 1. In this parable, he shows a man who was robbed and left for dead.
 2. And, a priest and Levite, being the righteous ones, saw him, looked at the situation and what had happened, and then left the man who was robbed in the street, all alone, defenseless.
 3. Then a Samaritan came and had compassion on him and so he took him, cared for him and made sure everything was provided for him.
 4. Jesus then turned to the lawyer, who asked the question and said, “ Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise” (Lk. 10:36-37)
 - B. Jesus showed us that our neighbor is everyone in the world, no matter his status, condition, or circumstances.
 1. Every man is to be esteemed highly and helped no matter who he is.
 2. For, no man is to be injured or wronged.
 3. Every man is to be esteemed better than oneself (Phil. 2:3).
3. Now, to love our neighbor is a very practical command because when we love God, we naturally will love our neighbor.
 - A. In 1 Jn. 4:20-21, Jesus said, “ If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.”
 - B. In Jn. 13:34-35, Jesus tells us, “ A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”
 1. And so, in Jesus’ view, how we treat our neighbors is second only in importance to our love relationship with God.
4. Now in Prov. 3:27-30, the word neighbor really means anyone from our casual acquaintances to our very best friends.
 - A. The word is used even for our enemies.
 - B. But, how should we treat others, our neighbors?

DISCUSSION:

I HELP OUR NEIGHBOR WHEN THEY HAVE A NEED

- A. Did you ever stop to figure out how God meets needs?
 - 1. Well, God does not send chariots from heaven with money and clothes and food.
 - 2. He meets the needs people have through other people.
- B. Solomon states in Prov. 3:27 to, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it."
 - 1. Now, this could be speaking of a debt owed.
 - a. Certainly, we do not refuse to pay what is due when we have the ability to pay it.
 - b. We do not defraud our neighbor because he trusts us.
 - 2. But, this also shows that if we have the means and opportunity to aid a neighbor in need, we are to be quick to provide it.
 - a. This could be our showing generosity to the poor or it could simply be that we owe them something else.
 - b. So, Solomon is pointing out a relationship, in which we owe a debt of some kind and he said, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due."
 - 1. As Paul said in Rom. 13:8, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."
 - 2. You know, John reminds us, in 1 Jn. 3:17, that, "whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels (heart) of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"
 - 3. Surely, we can see from Solomon that this "good" goes much deeper than financial debt.
 - a. I mean, realistically, by virtue of some relationships, you owe the other person something besides money.
 - b. It's like in a marriage, you owe good to each other.
 - 1. Children owe their parents obedience and honor.
 - 2. Parents owe children time, love, and discipline.
 - (a). The list goes on.
 - 4. Thus, as James states, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jam. 4:17).
 - a. Are you paying your debts to others out of the time, resources and talents God has equipped you with?
 - b. You see, it is in our power.
 - 1. Or as Solomon later wrote, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10).
 - 5. So, God is stating to work good or to cause good here.
 - a. For, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men ,

- especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).
- b. And so, if we withhold, we are restraining, denying and hindering good.
 1. And in that sense, we defraud our neighbor, that is, when we take ourselves away or keep away from our neighbor, avoiding our neighbor on purpose, we are misleading them.
 2. We are not doing them any good and it was from one who trusted you.
 - C. Now, in Prov. 3:28, Solomon goes on and tells us to, “ Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee. ”
 1. What do we do about the needs of people who are not very close to us, even people we don’t know at all?
 - a. Should we be like the Levite or Priest in the parable of the Good Samaritan?
 - b. No.
 1. Once we know of a need and realize we have resources that can help, we become obligated.
 2. But, there’s a flip side to the coin.
 - a. Perhaps someone asks for help that you know, maybe someone in the church.
 - b. And, in our individualistic mindset, that we are fed by our culture, we are made to think that those who have little, or need a handout, or need help, that they should have worked harder, and that there is no reason for us to bail them out.
 1. So, we either avoid them altogether or flat out refuse them of the good they need.
 2. That’s sad.
 - (a). It’s sad of our culture and sad if Christian do likewise.
 3. Solomon points out: Do Not Delay Good (vs. 28).
 - a. When it is in your power to do it today, don’t make an excuse to do it later.
 1. Because, it won’t get done.
 2. Because, too often, delay is a cover for selfishness and really a secret hope that the matter will be forgotten altogether.
 - b. And furthermore, we may not have another opportunity to help them.
 1. And so, Solomon warns to, “ Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1).
 2. Procrastination in doing good is a great evil
 - (a). We are not to ignore or refuse the need when we have the resources to meet the need.
 - (b). Instead, we are to step up immediately and minister a blessing.
 - D. How should we treat others, our neighbors?

II GUARDING AGAINST MISTREATING YOUR NEIGHBOR

- A. We live in a day of troubled relationships.
 - 1. There will be times that relationships will be strained.
 - 2. It happens in every marriage, in every friendship, in every partnership and it certainly happens between the world of neighbors.
- B. And so, Solomon gives us some good advice in vs. 29 to state, “Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.”
 - 1. Don’t make unnecessary trouble with your neighbor.
 - a. These underlying faults and incompatibility with neighbours, is not spreading good.
 - b. These kinds of actions are condemned by implication because devising evil against a friend is at any time vicious.
 - 1. And to do so, as Solomon points out, when one is close to you, seeking security in you, is altogether unsuspecting of you, and then we plot evil or bad things against them, it is an act of the greatest treachery, and an outrage on all law, both human and Divine.
 - 2. It implies deceiving and this was the very sin by which ‘the devil beguiled Eve through his subtlety (Gen. 3:13) .
 - 2. So, avoid harmful intentions and actions against other people.
 - a. Because, a neighbor expects you to be neighborly, and rightly so.
 - 1. I mean, you think about back in the days, when everyone used to wave and give a smile.
 - 2. Now, it seems that they would rather step on your neck or look at you in a hateful way, than to be neighborly.
 - (a). And it’s worse, when we as Christians, do it right back to them.
 - (b). That should never be the case.
 - b. Solomon points out in Prov. 6:16-18 that, “A heart that devises evil is an abomination to the Lord.”
 - 1. Therefore, we must think well of our neighbors, so that he and God might think well of you.
 - 3. And, I’ll tell you this, the most important part of this verse is the period.
 - a. There are some people in life we just are not naturally drawn to.
 - b. There are some we may not like.
 - c. There are some who have wounded and injured us.
 - 1. But, that does not matter.
 - 2. There is never a reason to plan harm against someone else.
 - (a). Period!
 - (b). It is not man who states, “Vengeance belongs to me,” but God who says, “Vengeance is Mine. I will repay” (Heb. 10:30).
- C. Solomon goes on about neighbors in vs. 30 to state, “Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.”
 - 1. There is a time and a place to confront someone.
 - a. And truly, if left unchecked, strife or a lack of harmony, can easily escalate (Prov. 17:14; 18:6).
 - b. Strife can also easily ruin one's reputation (Prov. 25:8-10).

2. And so, we learn that when you need to confront someone and don't, things will only get worse.
 - a. I mean, I have seen it get so bad, that it looks like a band-aid over a geyser.
 - b. Now again, we are not to be contentious or cause controversy in our manner of life.
 1. But to solve things that brings no harm.
- D. Now, if Solomon here is talking about how to treat our neighbor and Jesus in Matt. 22:39 states that we should love our neighbor as ourselves, we must ask ourselves, what is love?
 1. According to Paul in 1 Cor. 13:
 - a. Love endures a long time because it is patient.
 - b. It is kind and not jealous.
 - c. Love does not brag; does not boast.
 - d. It is not vane, arrogant, prideful nor is it rude, indecent or unmannerly.
 - e. Love is not selfish or self-seeking.
 - f. It is not touchy, angry or resentful and does not harbor and plan evil thoughts.
 - g. Love does not laugh when something is wrong or is sinful . . . it rejoices in the truth.
 - h. It bears all things and exercises faith in everything and is ready to believe the best in everyone.
 - i. Love keeps up hope in everything, under all circumstances because love endures without weakening.
 2. Thus, Solomon shows us that we should not be confronting, challenging and faultfinding about everything that offends us.
 - a. Stop thinking in terms of, "Well I'll show you" and stop being quarrelsome when there is no foundation for it.
- E. Now, if you must appeal to judicial authority, you can still avoid all enmity or hostility, and do nothing in a spirit of revenge.
 1. But again, if he has done thee no harm, why contend with him?
 2. Remember to leave the vengeance to God, and seek to overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:18-21).

CONCLUSION

1. We must learn, if we haven't already, to get along with our neighbors.
 - A. Don't go and pick a fight with him.
 - B. Instead, try to get along with people.
 1. Solomon goes so far that in vs. 31 he states, if one does evil to you, do not return the favor.
 2. Thus, there are two great hindrances today toward neighbors:
 - a. Selfishness (vv. 27, 28).
 - b. Aggression (vv. 29, 30).
2. We need the wisdom of God if we are going to treat people right.

- A. Because your neighbor:
 - 1. Is the person in your marriage?
 - 2. It's the parent or child at home.
 - 3. It's the person you know in this church.
 - 4. It's the ticket agent in the airport.
 - 5. It's the person who has wronged you.
- B. And, there is no need to look for a fight.
 - 1. Paul tells us that, " If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18).
- 3. So, are you willing to take an honest look at how you are treating your neighbors?
 - A. Or, will you be as the psalmist, who said, " When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me" (Psa. 73:16).
- 4. The truth is painful, but only to those who are not living right with God.