

The 40 Day Neighboring Experiment

"Loving My Neighbor Who Is Hard to Love"

Mathew 5:43-48 – January 17, 2016

New Years Sermon Series

THE 40 DAY NEIGHBORING EXPERIMENT		
A 6-Week Sermon Series on Loving Your Neighbor		
Date	Message Title	Bible Text
Jan 3	Loving Your Neighbor By Knowing Him	Luke 10:25-37
Jan 10	Loving Your Neighbor By Respecting Her	Leviticus 19:9-18
Jan 17	Loving Your Neighbor Who is Hard to Love	Matthew 5:43-48
Jan 24	Loving Your Neighbor By Loving Yourself	Mark 10:28-31
Jan 31	Loving Your Neighbor By Sharing Your Faith	1 Peter 3:15
Feb 7	Testimony Sunday	Open mic

The 40 Day Neighboring Experiment

For the first 40 days of 2016, I will pray the following prayer:
(1) Lord, how do You want me to love my neighbor today?
(2) Lord, please give me the courage and power to act on what You are showing me.

Learning from Jesus About How to Love My Neighbor from Luke 10:25-37

1. Loving my neighbor starts with loving God (vv.25-29)
2. Loving my neighbor involves caring enough to stop and get involved (vv.30-33)
3. Loving my neighbor means respecting my neighbor with the Golden Rule (vv.30-37)
4. Loving my neighbor means loving people who are **Difficult for me to love** (vv.33,37)
 - Charles Ryrie: "The Samaritans were descendants of colonists whom the Assyrian kings planted in Palestine after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC. They were despised by the Jews because of their mixed Gentile blood and their different worship, which centered at Mount Gerizim."

- Wayne Grudem: "Culturally, it would have been unthinkable for a Samaritan to help a Jew. The Samaritans were a racially mixed group of partly Jewish and partly Gentile ancestry, who were disdained by both Jews and non-Jews. The Samaritans had their own version of the Pentateuch, their own temple on Mount Gerizim, and their own rendering of Israelite history. Josephus recounts fighting between Jews and Samaritans during Claudius' reign being so intense that Roman soldiers were called in."
- All the listeners (to Jesus' story) would have (rightly) assumed that the hurt man in the story was a Jew.
- The Samaritan had to overcome his animosity toward Jews in order to stop and help the hurt Jew.
- The lawyer (and all of Jesus' listeners) would have to overcome their prejudices in order to swallow the fact that Jesus made the Samaritan the hero of this story. The Samaritan, not the two religious Jews, was the only one who stopped and helped the hurt man.
- The lawyer could not handle this, such that when Jesus asked who was truly neighborly, the lawyer could not say "the Samaritan," but instead said, "The one who showed him mercy" (v.37).
- Jesus' point is obvious: Loving my neighbor means overcoming my prejudices and my anger and loving people who are difficult for me to love.
- Side note: In calling for Jews to love Samaritans, Jesus was not compromising truth and was not saying that all truth is relevant. In John 4:22, Jesus makes it clear that the Samaritan syncretistic beliefs were false.

How to Love People Who Are Difficult to Love (Matthew 5:43-48)

1. **Join God's family (vv.45-48)**
 - v.48 is the most important verse
 - Interpret v.48 in light of v.20. There is only one way to achieve v.48.
 - Rick Warren: "Christlikeness is not produced through imitation but through inhabitation."
 - How to be inhabited by God and become His son or daughter

- **John 1:12** – Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.
- **Romans 10:9** – If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
- Example of how to receive Christ

God, I want to be your son/daughter. I am sorry for my sins, and I thank You, Jesus, for what You did to pay for the penalty of my sins on the cross. I believe that You rose from the dead. And now I receive You into my life, I receive Your free gift of the forgiveness of my sins and Your free gift of eternal life. Please make me into the person You want me to be.

- Skit Guys Video: "Our Mess, God's Masterpiece" [2:31]
- How do sons and daughters of the King act?
 - (1) Like their Father, they **ble**ss nice and mean people (v.45)
 - (2) Like their Father, they are **differe**nt from the rest of the world (vv.46-47)
 - (3) Like their Father, they **love** their enemies (v.44)

Romans 5:10 (NLT) – For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of His Son while we were still His enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of His Son.

2. Practice three heart changing behaviors (vv.44,47)

- Pray** for them (v.44)
 - Adopt a Terrorist for Prayer: www.ATFP.org
- Greet** them (v.47)
- Love** them by faith (v.44)
 - The Quakers: "An enemy is one whose story we have not heard."
 - Henri Nowen: "God, help me see others not as my enemies or as ungodly but rather as thirsty people. And give me the courage and compassion to offer Your Living Water, which alone quenches deep thirst."

3. **Forgive** them (6:12,14)

- Sample prayer: Lord, because You have forgiven me and because You command me to forgive, I forgive so-n-so for doing such-n-such.

Examples of Those Who Have Loved Difficult People

- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Francis Collins
- Donald Miller
- Craig Detweiler
- Ministry to telephone marketers

Jim's Application Challenges

- Everyday Pray: "Lord, how do You want me to love my neighbor today?"
- Week #1: Get to know the names of the 5 (literal) neighbors who live next door and across the street.
- Week #2: Take 1 action step with 1 (literal) neighbor.
- Week #3: Pray every day (for one week) for the most difficult person in your life and go out of your way to greet and love that person.

