Reaching Our Neighbors for Christ

Matthew 22:37-40

May 30, 2021

Introduction:

* Invest in your social “ bank account” – social capital
  + Family relationships – spouse, children, parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins
  + Work relationships – coworkers, union, professional association
  + Recreation relationships – hobbies, similar interest (model trains, quilting)
  + Church relationships
  + Recreation relationships – hobbies, similar interest (model trains, quilting)
  + Neighborhood relationships
* As a consumer society we have become ***system*** dependent rather than ***relationally*** dependent.
  + Many expect schools, coaches, and sitters to raise our kids.
  + Many expect doctors to keep us healthy.
  + We expect social welfare systems to take care of the vulnerable.
* Cultural Factors that Have Contributed to Relational Bankruptcy
  + Suburbs have replaced integrated communities.
  + Car dependency has reduced our time for human interaction.
    - Every ten minutes of commuting results in 10 percent fewer social connections (Putnam).
    - Driving longer and longer distances to work, school, shopping, etc. robs us of much “free time.”
    - This has produced container lifestyles in which we move from one container to the next (Home, Work, School, Recreation, Shopping, Church).
  + Self-Sufficiency and Privacy
    - Single family homes vs. multifamily dwellings
    - Individualism as portrayed in the American Westerns
  + Alexis de Tocqueville, author of *Democracy in America*, praised the individualism of America while warning that this strength could also be a crippling weakness.
  + When was the last time you borrowed something from a neighbor or lent something to a neighbor?

Message:

1. Loving your neighbor begins with knowing them (Matthew 22:37-40).
   1. Just as you can’t love God without knowing Him, you can’t truly love your spouse, children, or neighbor without taking the time to get to know them!
   2. Neglect is a very painful thing.
   3. God wants to reveal His love to your neighbor through you!
   4. Illustration of Mike McGowan longing for an invitation to church from his coworker
   5. Key to Hudson Taylor’s success in China
2. Loving your neighbor grows out of “beholding” them – “Then Jesus beholding him loved him.” (Mark 10:17-25).
   1. Beholding – 1) to have (the power of) understanding, 2) to discern mentally, observe, perceive, discover, understand, 3) to turn the thoughts or direct the mind to think, to consider, contemplate, to look at, to weigh carefully, examine (Thayer’s lexicon)
   2. When we take the time to actually “see” others, God moves our hearts with compassion.
      1. Matthew 9:36 “But **when he saw** the multitudes, **he was moved with compassion on them,** because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”
      2. Matthew 14:14 “And Jesus went forth, and **saw a great multitude,** and **was moved with compassion** toward them, and he healed their sick.”
3. Loving your neighbor requires a new mindset.
   1. Matthew 6:19-21 “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break in and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust doth not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**”
   2. Philippians 2:4 “Look not every man on his own things, but **every man also on the things of others.**”
   3. Romans 13:8 “Owe no man any thing, but to **love one another**: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.”
   4. When we invest our time in others, we learn to treasure others.
   5. When we spend our time pursuing the lost, we develop a love for the lost.
   6. Remember, confidence comes from actions, so when it comes to reaching the lost, feel the fear, and do it anyway!
4. Application Questions:
   1. Can you name the neighbors who surround your home?

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* 1. When was the last time that you had a conversation of more than 5 minutes with your neighbor?
  2. What needs have you observed in those around you?
  3. What are some resources and skills that you could share with others?
  4. Take the time to “behold” your neighbors this week through prayer, thoughtful reflection, and simple interaction.