

Being Salt & Light

Week 4 - Friends Next Door (5/4)

There are different ways that we interact with people in the course of our normal routines of life. We interact with people at work. We have contact with people through our children's activities. We live in neighborhoods with natural connections to the people next door or on the block. We participate in different ways with our community, on committees, fundraising for causes, in scouts, hiking groups, recreation, fishing, horseback riding, golfing, eating out, getting our hair cut, buying groceries, etc. There are all kinds of places that we have repeated contact with individuals. Everyone of these places of contact is an opportunity to spawn a friendship and have a sanctifying influence. No contact, no influence.

DISCUSSION:

What do you think about the statement: "People don't care what you know unless they know that you care?"

Really Good Neighbors

Last week in the sermon the image that was used was the line from "Field of Dreams" which says, "If you build it they will come." It was suggested that the "it" is a relationship with your neighbor, coworker, etc. Build "it" and maybe someday they will come on the journey with Christ. If that is the "it" then how do we build it? Consider the following exhortations given to Christians and how they might look in suburban America.

- ❖ **Going the Extra Mile (Matt 5:41)**
- ❖ **Lending (Lk 6:34f; Matt 5:42)**
- ❖ **Loving & Greeting (Matt 5:43-48)**
- ❖ **Not Judging (Matt 7:1-6)**
- ❖ **Cups of Cold Water (Matt 25:31-46)**
- ❖ **Taking Care of Needs (Lk 10:25-37)**
- ❖ **Share Meals (Rom 12:13)**
- ❖ **Rejoicing & Mourning (Rom 12:15)**

What does it take to develop these traits and activities?

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Practice Hospitality

Hospitality, hosting guests in your home and sharing meals was a practice with great theological significance to ancient Israelites and by extension this carried into the early church. Many of the great moments of religious significance are associated with eating and sharing food.

❖ **Abraham**

This father of faith is also the father of hospitality. The greek word for hospitality is derived from combining the words for love (*philos*) + stranger (*xenos*) to create *philoxenia*. Ancient Israel considered themselves “strangers” and nomads in a foreign land. This identity has its root in the call of Abraham in Gen 12 where God asks Abraham to leave his homeland and wander. As a wanderer, God become the provider of Abrahams needs. Later, when two visitors come, Abraham and Sara invite them to stay (Gen 18:1ff) and prepare a meal for them. These two visitors turn out to be angels who carry God’s message to Abraham and Sara. This story is probably the backdrop for the importance of practicing hospitality found in Heb 13:2.

❖ **God’s Kingdom**

Isaiah 25:6-8 – “On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.

Ps 23 – “...you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies....and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Matt 22:1-14 – “....the kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son...”

Rev 3:20 – “Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”

❖ **Jesus**

With Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) – “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today....All the people saw this and began to mutter, ‘He has gone to the guest of a sinner’”

With Levi (Mk 2:15) – While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and ‘sinners’ were eating with him and his disciples....

By Reputation (Lk 7:33f; Matt 11:18f) – “For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say “He has a demon.” The son of man came eating and drinking and you say, “Here is a glutton and drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and ‘sinners’”

❖ **Christian Practice**

Rom 12:13 – “Practice Hospitality”

1 Peter 4:9 – Offer Hospitality to one another without grumbling

1 Tim 3:2 – Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach...”