

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Growth group leaders notes

Love thy neighbour. These are words we are very familiar with. Indeed I can't think of anyone in our country, Christian or not, who would not affirm these words. But of course affirming such words, and then actually living them out, are very different matters.

At present, Christians are often portrayed as intolerant and therefore unloving because we seek to trust the Bible's teaching on any number of culturally contentious issues. As we seek to reach our neighbours and friends especially in view of SpringFest coming up, the importance of expressing genuine love is going to be paramount.

Let's be honest, Christians just haven't always been very good at loving their neighbours for a variety of reasons. But there's great joy to be had, and great truth to be honoured as we do. So please benefit from reading through just a few of the passages that touch on this important theme. And be praying that we reflect God's love as we seek to be truthful, gracious and practical for the benefit of others.

Study notes

What do you think of the following?

In seeking to win the argument, I lost the person. Better to fail to win, than fail to love.

- Can you think of an example from your own life where you may not have persuaded them of your argument, but won their respect through your love?
- Can you think of an example where the opposite occurred?

Most of our engagement with those who don't belong to any church family is just the normal neighbourly stuff of life. How are we challenged to love in the following passages?

Mark 12:28-34

- Jesus "smuggles" two commandments into the single commandment question. Why do you think he does that?
- What do you think it means to love your neighbour as yourself? What would that look like?

1 John 4:7-13

- Loving others is about the greatest challenge of all. Why is the gospel so vital if love is ever going to be genuinely expressed?

Our world doesn't and won't know the love of God unless they hear it and see it modelled by those who do. What especially encourages and challenges you from the following passages:

- Romans 12:14-21
- Colossians 4:2-6

How might you answer the following in view of what we've just read:

I'm encouraged to love practically by.....

I'm encouraged to love in my attitudes by.....

I'm encouraged to love in my speaking by....

I'm encouraged to take intentional opportunities to love like....

Pray:

All these expressions of love are driven by the gospel, seeking opportunity to honour the God of the Gospel. Therefore let's be praying we can be a church that takes opportunity to be doing both in word and deed before our neighbours.

- Pray for particular 'neighbours' in your life that you wish to be loving more deliberately.
- Pray for gracious gospel speech to accompany generous lives during SpringFest that more neighbours would come to know the love of God in Christ.
- Pray we'd take the very next opportunity we have, to love our neighbour.