



“The Neighbor”
Romans 13 / Galatians 5 / James 2
Small Group Plan

In our efforts to love our neighbors, read and reflect on this thoughtful piece written by then president of World Vision, Stan Mooneyham.

I've heard a lot about soul-winning, but not very much about soul-caring ... We can always care. We can't always win ...

It is usually possible, I think, to know when one is loved, when one's soul is being cared for rather than coveted. Soul-caring is always personal ... It seems to me that “winning” is a self-directed concept. Caring is an other-directed concept. To win, you have to come in ahead of someone else ... and I want to be more than a display for some spiritual big game hunter.

When the focus is on being a winner, the soul being won tends to become secondary, almost an afterthought.

“Winning” just may not be the best word ... If we want to “win” without moving close to the lost one, without touching him, without sharing something of his life and hope and hurt, without venturing into his lostness, without trying to make him a friend before making him a convert ... we're going in the wrong direction.

— From **Souls Are For More Than Winning**

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- What is your first response to the above quote?
- What happens to evangelism when “soul-caring” does **NOT** precede “soul-winning”?
- What happens when “soul-caring” **DOES** precede “soul-winning”?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR —

Romans 13:8-10

⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to **love** one another, for whoever **loves** others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “**LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**” ¹⁰ **Love** does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, **love** is the fulfillment of the law.

- Paul uses the term “debt” to describe our need to love. This is a legal term meaning “obligated” or “morally responsible.”
- In what sense are we “morally responsible” to love people?
- What does moral responsibility feel like?
- How can “love” provide the guidance we need to “do not harm to a neighbor” (v. 10)?
- How is love “the fulfillment of the law” (v. 10)?

— SERVE YOUR NEIGHBOR —

Galatians 5:13-15

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, **serve** one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “**LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**” ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

- Paul uses the term “serve” to describe the activity of loving our neighbors. The root of this term is found in “slavery”, but it also carries the ideas of “sharing” “flexibility” and “kindness.”
- What have we been given that we can “share” with our neighbors?
- How do our neighbors need our “kindness”?
- When will “flexibility” become a helpful part of loving our neighbors?

— SHOW MERCY TO YOUR NEIGHBOR —

James 2:5-13

⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? ⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, **“LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,”** you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. ¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without **mercy** will be shown to anyone who has not been **merciful**. **Mercy** triumphs over judgment.

- If justice means we get what we deserve, what does “mercy” mean?
- Describe the mercy of God?
- How have you experienced God’s mercy?
- How does mercy triumph over judgment (v. 13)?
- How can we show mercy to our neighbors?
- How is it possible to love someone your don’t agree with or even like?

USE IT / APPY IT ...

- Pictures your neighbors ... Picture the ones who are not like you ... How could you love them?
- Has God ever given you an opportunity that you were not looking for ... an opportunity to serve, to listen, to offer help? Describe it. How did it feel?
- Loving our neighbors is God’s Command (Luke 10:27-28). How do some soften the command, making it a suggestion they can ignore?
- In the dictionary the term “hospitality” appears next to “hospital” and “hospice.” What does it really mean to be hospitable people?
- Ask God to help you to love, serve and show mercy to your neighbors.