

September 2008

A community of neighbors, for neighbors

Loving, Instructing, Mending, and Sending

"On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ... "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

"...Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Luke 10:25-29; 36-37 NIV

Jesus' conversation with a man who was known as an expert in the revelation of God to the nation of Israel reveals our heavenly Father's heart for people and his eternal purpose to love them through people. People being used by God to love other people –this is the unique calling and purpose of Jesus' Church. We, who are known as New Life Foursquare Church, are called by our Master to love because He first loved us. (1Jn4:19) Jesus answer to the expert's question; "And who is my neighbor?" was to share a story of a man "being" a neighbor to a person in desperate need. He then asks the expert, "Which of the three (in the story) was a neighbor?" Jesus' point is that neighbors are people that love others. This truth is the basis of our unique calling: "being a community of neighbors for neighbors." Neighbors are people that love people by being Jesus to them.

Jerry Cook says it this way, "The church is people, equipped to serve, meeting needs everywhere in Jesus' name." (*Love, Acceptance, and Forgiveness*; pg 45) Everything we do as a community and why we do, what we do, should be influenced by our calling to be neighbors as Jesus defines neighbor. I think Jesus'

conversation also reveals that it doesn't take "experts" to be used by God –it takes a heart that knows God's love. I love this truth, because if God only used experts, many, many of us would be disqualified. But the truth is that God uses everyday, ordinary people who know the love of God and in turn, love people. This truth is expressed in 1 Corinthians this way, "*Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes, or powerful, or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God deliberately chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose those who are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important, so that no one can ever boast in the presence of God.*" 1 Cor 1:26-29

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Like the "neighbor" in Jesus' story, the New Life Community is about mending the broken and beaten-up people of our world back to wholeness through the power of God working through us; people who are also on a journey toward wholeness. Isn't it amazing that God has chosen to use broken people to mend broken people? I am glad He does.

Pastor Dave