

Devotion from Karen Ho given in a prayer meeting on Wednesday, May 3, 2017

Love God, love your neighbor

Luke 10:25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"²⁷ 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.'"²⁸ "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

One day I told my son we were having a couple of friends who are my former colleagues to come over for dinner. Enthusiastically I told him my plan, which was to ask them the 'Million Dollar' question after dinner. Right away he objected and said, "Why can't you just let them have a good time, enjoy the dinner, talk about things they like. If the topic comes up, then talk about it. Otherwise, they will think the only purpose you invite them for dinner is to tell them the gospel. It may turn them off. "

I was a little surprised at what he said. Then I defended by saying I didn't do that every time, but he quickly reminded me I already did it once at my retirement party, and since it's my retirement party so it was fine.

So, I agreed and changed my plan. The subject of eternal life didn't come up at the dinner table, but they did expect me to say grace before dinner.

Later, I read an article on Desiring God's website. The passage Luke 10: 25-29 came up. And that got me to think for a few days. Jesus affirmed the lawyer's answer was correct. One is to love God and his neighbors. What does it look like when one loves God but not his neighbors? What does it look like when one loves his neighbors but not God? I further found out that 'neighbor' means people who are in our proximity. Like we live in a house, our neighbors are people who live on our street and across our street. When we are at the office, neighbors are people we interact with. On an airplane, neighbors are people flying in the plane with us. In a grocery store, neighbors are people who are shopping there at the time we are there including the cashiers.

After meditating on this subject for a few days, I discovered when we love God but not our neighbors, we become legalistic to them. We may be very devoted to our God, but people will just see us as religious people, wanting to do good, caring for ourselves only. Even when we do things for our neighbors, they would not feel the love that is genuine, i.e. the kind with no string attached.

When we love our neighbors, but have no love for God, we are just rendering social services. God will not be glorified and His name will not be made known. People will not come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. We will just be a nice guy.



Just a few days ago, I started to read a book written by a converted lesbian who is now a pastor's wife. A pastor became friend with her. He invited her to his house for a meal. He prayed and admitted his sin and gave thanks for the meal. She was touched because he loved her like a neighbor and she was not a project to him. According to her word: "He omitted the two important steps in the rulebook of how Christians should deal with a heathen like me: 1) they did not share the gospel with me, and 2) they did not invite me to church." Because of this two omissions she felt safe to engage in this friendship and she finally found Jesus through the studying of the Bible with the pastor.

With this in mind, I re-examined myself. I found I fall into the first scenario. I love God more than my neighbors. I have not spent time to get to know my neighbors and find out their needs. I just want to give them the gospel without knowing what their real needs are. I do not have a real love for them. In their eyes, they probably see me as a person wanting to do good according to the Bible and unable to see the God I serve being a compassionate and loving God.

So now my prayer is to learn how to love my neighbors. I know it will be difficult because I do not like calling people on the phone just to chat. And, I do not like to ask people questions to find out what is going on their life. However, since this is the two commandments God gives us, I just have to trust Him to help me.