

Transformation of Neighbourhoods (1) – Transformation Series #3

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Text: John 1:14

NOTES:

A. Introduction:

Pastor Mike invited us to think about our neighbourhoods, envision the names and faces of our neighbours, imagine the place transformed, where the fruit of the Spirit flourishes. Can we see ourselves someday baptizing some of those neighbours after they've come to faith?

B. How God sent Jesus – John 1:14

He came physically: "The Word became flesh and blood, / and moved into the neighbourhood" – John 1:14 MSG.

C. We are sent to our neighbours like God the Father sent Jesus.

1. God radically reoriented His existence to reach lost people.

- a. He became flesh—a person like us.
- b. He "dwelt among us." He moved into the neighbourhood, not as a pious, distant dignitary or athlete or celebrity but one of us.
- c. We are sent to do the same thing—radically reorient our lives to reach people.
 - i. This might mean adjusting our schedule to be outside when they are.
 - ii. This might mean getting a dog so we have a reason to be out and about, interacting with other dog-walkers.
 - iii. It means having the right priorities. E.g. Pastor Mike told of an experience where he and his sons went swimming in rapids. The strength of the current surprised him and in his floundering, his wedding ring slipped off. At the same time, he saw that his son was in trouble. He had to make the decision, do I keep searching for the expensive ring or save my son. (He saved his son, of course.) **Pastor Mike:** "How many times do we chase after rings while souls drift on by?"

2. Jesus came full of GRACE and truth.

- a. Grace: the pure and powerful demonstration of the love of God to the world.
- b. **Pastor Mike:** "How could you generously, purely, powerfully communicate God's love and intentions to your neighbourhood?"
 - i. Is there an obvious practical need?
 - ii. Could you open your house to let the neighbours in?
 - iii. **Pastor Mike** (who just moved to a new neighbourhood): "We're going to be the smilers and the wavers."
 - iv. What about Halloween? Once a year people of the neighbourhood come to your house. **Pastor Mike:** "Don't sit with your lights out, afraid of the devil. The devil's afraid of us on Halloween. The gates of hell won't prevail against the church. Rather, be generous and build a bridge."

3. Jesus came full of grace and TRUTH.

- a. Loving well and being nice can have an impact, but at the end of the day, people need to hear the gospel.
- b. Receiving love creates an openness and appetite for truth. Look for opportunities and be ready to share it – 1 Peter 3:15.
- c. We are called, invited, and sent to love and love so well that people ask "Why?" Our opportunity then is to bring a gospel answer.
- d. Overcome objections like:
 - i. "Our neighbours are jerks." – We were also jerks to God.
 - ii. "We've lived here a long time; it feels weird to start being friendly now." – Get over the awkwardness for the sake of an eternal human soul.

4. Practical stories (via short videos). Mike shared two video clips of stories by congregation members who have recently interacted with their neighbours (tiny url links take you to videos posted on the CLA Langley Facebook page):

- a. Pastor Steve Nicholson's story: <http://tinyurl.com/y85xny37>
- b. Pascal & Caroline Bergeron's story: <http://tinyurl.com/y7e577bs>

DISCUSSION:

1. How did God send Jesus (see John 1:14)? What are the parallels between how God sent Jesus and how He sends us to our neighbours?

2. What is GRACE? How did Jesus show grace? Can your group brainstorm ten ways you might bring grace to your neighbourhood / neighbours? How do you counter objections, like "My neighbours are jerks," and "It's weird to start being friendly when I've lived in my neighbourhood for many years."

3. How did Jesus bring TRUTH? What is truth in relation to our neighbours? How might our lives affect whether our neighbours are open or closed to what we say / the gospel?

4. If you can, watch the video stories together. Discuss Steve's experience. How can you relate? How did God show up in a miracle way? The Bergeron's responded to the needs of strangers—people on the street. How have you related to Langley's street people and the homeless strangers that are all around us?

PRAYER:

Dear Father, please fill our hearts with the love that God the Father and Jesus had for the world. We need love for our neighbours and the strangers around us, especially those in need. Help us to be people of grace. Please give us ideas of how to show grace. Help us to have the right priorities in the use of our time with an openness to being interrupted by the needs of others. Then we need wisdom and words to share truth. Please empower us in these things by Your Spirit. Amen.