Session 6: A United Neighborhood

Introduction

In small groups, share a time when you worked with other people to accomplish something significant.

Love in Action

Romans 12:9–21

The original Greek text states (literally), "Love must *not be hypocritical*" (v. 9) and "*Pursue* hospitality" (v. 13b). How is that different from how many neighbors in America show love and hospitality today?

Create an example/think of a person or situation from your neighborhood for the following phrases:

- "Rejoice with those who rejoice."
- "Mourn with those who mourn."
- "Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position."
- "Do not repay anyone evil for evil."
- "As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."
- "Heap burning coals on his head."

Application for Our Lives

The encouragement from Romans 12 means we will need to work through difficult situations with our neighbors. Read the following quote below, and then complete the activity.

> There is all the difference in the world between forgiving and excusing. Forgiveness says, "Yes, you have done this thing, but I accept your apology; I will never hold it against you and everything between us will be exactly as it was before." But excusing says, "I see that you couldn't help it or didn't mean it; you weren't really to blame." If one was not really to blame, then there is nothing to forgive.[1]

Create a list of the annoyances, hurt feelings, bad experiences, and/or harm you've experience from your neighbors. Then discuss: How should you best handle that? When is it a "little thing" that you just excuse? When it is a "bigger thing" when you need to have a conversation about being sorry and offering forgiveness? When it is a "really serious thing" when you should call law enforcement and/or shield your family?

Annoyances/Bad Experiences with Neighbors	*How Best to Respond*

You can take personal steps to develop better relationships with your neighbors, but the impact will be much greater when that initiative spreads. How can you influence other people in your neighborhood to spread this initiative to more people in your neighborhood?

Conclusion

Think back to the activity we did at the beginning, when you listed your neighbors and how much information you knew about them. Now dream about what your neighborhood would be like if every neighbor would be well-connected and loving to the rest of their neighbors. How would you feel living in that neighborhood, compared to the neighborhood you have now?

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[1] C.S. Lewis, "On Forgiveness," quoted in Jay Pathak & Dave Runyon, *The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 159.