

"Neighborhood Initiative"

Dallas Willard [15:15]

Scribe's Comments - The session was transcribed from the recording in good-faith effort. The **bold** and underline offer the scribe's emphasis and the [brackets] give commentary and refer to other Willard teaching.



"The Neighborhood Initiative"

[See Willard, "Love Your Neighbor" Workshop 2012]

The Neighborhood Initiative is the only thing that can bring Christ to our neighborhoods now. The Neighborhood Initiative has been raised up by God to address the special conditions of our cities. Our cities have outgrown neighbors. It's hard now today to know who are neighbors are and how to approach them. The key to understanding the teachings of Jesus still remains - loving our neighbors as ourselves in the power of God.

If that were done, almost every problem we have in our cities would be solved. All we have to do is simply follow Jesus' words. Loving God with all our Heart, Mind, Soul & Strength come first. Without that you can't love your neighbor as yourself. You have to the resources, the insight to do that. That comes from our love of God and our devotion of every aspect of our being to His work that He is doing in our world.

God is present in our cities. He is there as the great God who created the world. Now He is inducting us into His work as we learn in His presence to love our neighbor as ourselves. When He says the Great Commandment, this is all you have to do. If you just do this, everything else will take care of its self.

One of the things we often miss is His mission in the world is incarnational. It is not just theological doctrine. It is a doctrine about how we live. If we are going to bring Christ to our world, our cities, our neighbors, we do it in our person. Relationships to others in which we manifest a love that is beyond human possibility and yet within human actuality because God makes it so.

The local congregation is the source of God's incarnational presence in the world. I'm afraid too often in our programs of reaching the world we overlook the fact that the fundamental way of reaching our world is to love our neighbor as ourselves in the power of God.

We have to include the rudimentary fact that we are able to love our neighbor as ourselves and in the power of God that takes care of everything. We see today too much of this is farmed out to government agencies. The

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widow and the orphan so often sighted in the Bible can not be helped adequately by official sources. They need people to help them.

Neighborhood Initiative is identifying and being with our neighbors. This is a ministry of love to our neighbors. It is a way of reaching our neighbors that is a shockingly reversal of the isolation and loneliness so common with our neighbors. So often the widow & the orphan in our neighborhood may have food to eat is starving in their souls. Neighborhood Initiative - practical help in identifying to help us deal with those in who we are in close contact. The impact on our world will be overwhelming because it changes everything in the way we think about ourselves and God.

Where is God if He is not in our neighbor? If He is in our neighbor, He comes into our lives.

Who is My Neighbor

[6:00]

A neighbor is someone with whom we are in close contact. We have to recognize and accept them as such. The claim on us that comes on us when we recognize our neighbor is so great that it is frightening to many people. We have to go back to the root of our lives in God Himself and believe God will provide as we do our best to provide for our neighbor and what they need.

Our first neighbors - in our homes. Then perhaps the ones we work with. Then the people who live nearby. In our world those are hard to reach. "A man's home is his castle" has taken on a force of a moat with alligators. The problem of breaking through to coming to know your neighbor has implications that are difficult to overcome in our time. It can be done with patience, prayer, watching, willingness to serve, to know and to be known.

Whose to lead this?

[8:15]

The churches must be the leaders and the pastors are the teachers. Churches alone must make neighbor love real in the power of God. We must intend to do that. We have quite a long history in a failure to do that has resulted you can often see in neighbors who attend the same church because they are not involved in life with one another.

John 13:34-35 - *"A new commandment I give to you, love one another (not new) as I have loved you (new)."*

The mark of His disciples is not ripping good worship services or fantastic programs for feeding the poor. His mark was that the people in fellowship

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love one another. That's what we need to cultivate. That's the matrix out of which a community of neighbor love grows. The pastors must stand and teach this. The pastors are to be the teachers of the nations. They are the ones who have the knowledge from God. A knowledge of what is right and wrong and what is good and bad has now fallen away from our culture. It will not be recovered unless the Pastors take their stand in their community as the teachers of their community.

Jesus has assigned that role to us. We are to make disciples and baptize them in the reality of the Trinitarian community of love and teach them to do everything He said. That is the solution to the human problem both for time and for eternity.

The Pastors Role

[11:00]

It takes a special effort on the part of the pastor to assume that role.

Romans 11:13, Paul, "I magnify my office." The Neighborhood Initiative depends on Pastors magnifying their office as teachers of the nations. Pastors in our society are the only ones who have the position to do this, the content - the precious teachings of the Bible, and the power to do this. That is unique to the pastors. No one else has them. That's why they have this great responsibilities.

Moral problems are rooted in character and character is rooted in the connection or disconnection with God. That's where everything falls apart.

We have the solution to the human problem. We have to stand and give the solution in the incarnation form that flows out and through our fellowships through the natural connections people have in their lives. If we do that we will see the wonderful results that have been seen in the past as the people of Christ have stood as His disciples in this world assuming the responsibility of love for their neighbors.

~ ~ ~ End of Session @ 15:15 ~ ~ ~

[Commentary — Dallas offers such a clear, simple focus of following and obeying Jesus in His command to love our neighbor out of our whole life love for God. He implores us to take the command seriously as the only means to reach out with the love of Christ in our cities. He is encouraging, optimistic, biblical and forceful in his charge. In the process of unveiling a compelling call to love like Jesus, he offers an engaging and affirming call on the lives of Pastors leading churches.]

For information & resources about Dallas Willard Ministries — dwillard.org.

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For a "Willard Teaching Toolbox" with dozens of teachings with A/V links & transcribed notes — JesusCollege.com