

(Be)friending

LOVING GOD BY LOVING NEIGHBORS

Devotional - 9/24/2024

When Erin and I first moved to Katy from Dallas, we settled into a little apartment at Willow Lake on Katy Fewellen and Gaston—this was before children. Erin was working in the Galleria, and I worked from home, adjusting to our new life.

Our upstairs neighbor? Well, they were mild-mannered whenever I saw them outside, but indoors... it was like they hosted "stomp-a-thons." I distinctly remember one time, I was deep into writing a paper for my systematic theology class, and it honestly felt like they'd invited a whole crowd over for a jumping party.

I tried drowning it out with headphones, but when your pictures are shaking on the wall, it's hard to focus. Productivity was out the window.

Ever been in a situation like that?

Or maybe it's a different kind of "noise"—the neighbor with a brand-new lawnmower roaring at 7 a.m., or the one showing off a fancy new sound system. Or maybe it's scrolling through Facebook, and there's that family with the dream vacation or the perfect house decor. Or maybe it's the neighbor who just got the new car, while you're wondering if you can even afford new tires on your old one.

We've all been there, haven't we? When it feels like everyone else has something better, something shinier, something newer. That creeping feeling of comparison... envy, even.

There's a certain kind of wisdom—earthly wisdom—that tells you to react: bang a broom on the ceiling, leave a passive-aggressive note, or vent to the apartment manager. It's the same kind of wisdom that whispers, "Why shouldn't you have what they have? Go get it. You deserve it."

But that's not the wisdom from above.

Our passage today talks about two kinds of wisdom: one that's earthly, unspiritual, and even demonic, and one that's pure, peace-loving, considerate, full of mercy, impartial, and sincere.

The wisdom from above (that's the one you want) puts the broom down. It doesn't just tolerate the noisy neighbor—it seeks to understand. It doesn't covet what others have; it celebrates their blessings. It recognizes that good fruit—kindness, patience, generosity—are of far greater worth than any material possession.

James 3:18 says that "Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."

If we are to truly love and befriend our neighbors, we must sow seeds of peace—even when they're hard to love, and even when it's noisy upstairs. Because who knows? Maybe, the harvest of righteousness we reap is of greater importance than getting what bothers us fixed.