

(Be)friending

LOVING GOD BY LOVING NEIGHBORS

Devotional - 10/22/2024

Can you believe it? We're almost at the end of our "Befriending" series—just one more session after Tuesday. I hope it's been encouraging as we think about befriending our neighbors for the sake of the gospel.

Today, I want to share something recent that I didn't expect to talk about. Until last week, one of our neighbors ran a full dog grooming business from their house. We had no idea when we moved in, but soon we couldn't miss it—2-3 cars dropping off dogs every hour for almost two years, plus three employees. Monday through Friday.

The situation was frustrating. The mail was sometimes undeliverable, and we found dog "presents" on our lawn. At one point, a customer (not even a neighbor) stopped me while mowing the lawn to tell me how he would handle the lawn clippings differently! Our other neighbors weren't happy. It has been the talk of the street for quite some time. To all of their points - yes, our HOA has rules against running businesses like that out of a home, and yes, it was definitely a nuisance.

But Erin and I decided early on that as far as it depended on us, we would live in peace. Our passage today encourages us to live in harmony. To not repay evil with evil, and to live at peace with everyone. Everyone includes the neighbor running a dog business out of their home.

That phrase, "as far as it depends on you," is such an important qualifier. We can't control how others will respond or perceive us, but we are responsible for how we act. I can't control if my neighbors don't see the nuisance they are creating. But I'm in control of how I treat them. I'm in control of my body language – if I'm warm and friendly or cold. I'm even in control of cleaning up someone else's dog mess.

I'm not sharing this to give ourselves a pat on the back— I'm sharing because I want you to know, that I truly know all of these things we have been talking about aren't easy. And I'm also sharing because just last week, I had my car parked out front and happened to run into our neighbor. He informed me that they had decided to move their business back to a physical location. And because we had resolved to live at peace, there was no animosity when he told me. And because there was no animosity, he was genuinely accepting when I told him I had been praying for them, that I hoped the move would be successful. And because we were at peace, the stage was further set for future conversations. And I'm hopeful that someday he, his girlfriend, and their kiddos will come to know Jesus.

Now, I know it doesn't always turn out like this. Sometimes, things don't resolve until the day the Lord makes all things right. But until that day, let's resolve to live at peace, as far as it depends on us. Because who knows, as I lived last week, you never know what gospel opportunity may be right around corner.