



small groups

Discussion Guide



Won't You Be My Neighbor

Galatians 5.13-14

Ice Breaker

(5 minutes)

Barry said we are a selfie people living in a selfie world, and he referenced that the word "selfie-stick" has been added to the dictionary. What is your opinion on the selfie-stick? Have you been known to use one?

Lesson Review

(40 minutes)

Barry began his sermon with a quote from Bryan Stone who said,

"The church can no longer assume as it once did that the surrounding culture will assist in the task of producing Christians. The home base from which Christians thought to Christianize the rest of the world feels less and less like 'home,' despite the desperate attempts by some to keep it that way. Ironically, it may be that it is precisely from a position of marginality... that through humility, repentance, and disavowal of its former advantages... a church at the periphery of the world may yet be a church for the world. What the gospel needs most is not intellectual brokers

or cultural diplomats but rather saints who have taken up the way of the cross and in whose lives the gospel is visible, palpable, and true. It needs disciples who follow Jesus with or without the support of their culture and for whom the power of the gospel is demonstrated not through winning but through obedience.”

– Bryan Stone

Discuss

- Do you agree with this quote? Why or why not?
- If Bryan Stone is correct, what are the implications for Christians today?

Barry spent a few minutes giving us the background to the situation in the book of Galatians. Take a moment to read Galatians 5.13.

- Paul had come to Galatia and preached the gospel of grace in Christ. Barry said, “Paul’s gospel promised the Galatians that they could be set right with God not because of anything they’d ever done or ever could do, but in spite of everything they’d ever done and ever could do. They could be set right with God on the basis of trusting in what Jesus had done on their behalf.”
- But after Paul left, false teachers came into the church and taught that Christians need the gospel + the law to be right with God. For these false teachers, the essence of Christianity was law-keeping and rule-keeping. The false teachers taught legalism instead of grace.

Barry said the tendency toward legalism continues down through the church even to this day. And that there are two fundamental ways legalism plays out in our lives today: (1) externalism; (2) separatism.

- Externalism is about law-keeping and rule-keeping, a focus on outward performance.
- Separatism is about boundary-making and people-separating, disengaging from others and the world.

Discuss

- Which tendency have you seen people gravitate toward in your experience?
- Have you ever been guilty of either of these?

Barry stated that behind all our sin and indulging of the flesh is “the outlook oriented toward the self.” The church in Galatia was called to freedom in Christ, but that they were not to abuse their freedom. The essence of Christianity is not rule-keeping but people-keeping. Real freedom, as Barry described, is “turning out from ourselves and toward our neighbors.” We are to turn out from ourselves and be others-oriented because God’s love is others-oriented.

“The defining feature of God's love is its "other-directedness." When we are called to imitate the love of God, we are being called out of ourselves, called to live a life of unconditional concern for the well-being of others.... The entire story of Scripture-from creation to consummation is a story of God's relentless, other-directed love.”

– Philip Kenneson

Read Galatians 5.13b-14 and Discuss

- Do you agree that behind our sin is the issue of “the self?”
- Why is it difficult to serve others humbly?
- How does the command to “love our neighbor” challenge us?

Application

(15 minutes)

Barry offered this as a point of application: *start where God has put you.*

- Where has God put you? Make a list of places in your ordinary day where you engage with people.
- Now make a list of people (or groups of people) you engage with and ask if they’re a stranger, or an acquaintance or a relationship.
- What next steps can you take this week to move from strangers to acquaintances to relationships with the neighbors around you?

