

Ice Breaker Question:

Have you had a conflict with a neighbor? What was that like?

Read and discuss Mark 12:28-31, Romans 12:9-21

1. It's critical to understand that Paul's command to love other brothers and sisters in Christ as well as those out in the world is a response to the love we have received from God. Why is it important for us to remember that?
2. Paul tells us to outdo one another in showing honor. That sounds wonderful in theory, but what does that look like in practice? Can you think of a time when you have "outdone" someone or when they have "outdone" you when showing honor?
3. Paul calls us to live peaceably with all. Does your neighborhood now (or in the past) have conflict? What might you do to help bring peace into that situation?
4. Do you think living peaceably is the same thing as being polite? What happens when you seek to live authentically, but it doesn't bring peace?
5. Compare what you read about Saul (whose name is changed to Paul upon his conversion) in Acts 7:54-8:1 to what we read about Paul in Romans 12. What are your thoughts about these two passages? How have you experienced, either personally or through another person, God's transforming power?
6. Paul says, "never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'" He goes on to say, "No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do you find these statements to be contradictory? How do we balance the focus on judgment in our lives?"
7. What has been your biggest takeaway from this neighboring series? What step(s) did you take during the last 7 weeks to love your literal neighbor? What might you do over the summer to reflect the love of God to those in your neighborhood?

As your group closes, please keep the following prayer requests in mind:

> Prayers of healing for Pat Brown, Laura Nelson, John Lindenschmidt, Hadley Lehr, and Carolyn Barnes, Nancy Baker's mother.

Reminders for your group:

> Registration Open | All Church Retreat | Friday, August 26-Sunday, August 28 | Brown County

> Summer's Here! | Celebrate with a nacho bar and bounce houses at ZPC | Thursday, June 2 | 5-7 pm

Leader's Notes:

[Question 1] Earlier in Romans Paul spells out the love that Jesus has for us. If we forget that God's love for us is the genesis of our love for others, we will end up making the Christian faith about what we do rather than about living lives of gratitude that reflect the love we have received to others. Ultimately if we forget this we end up living lives of legalism and are constantly attempting to earn God's love by doing "good" things.

[Question 2] This may be a hard one to answer, partly because it's not how most of us think! If you as the leader can come up with one example to begin the conversation, that would be helpful. Remember, it doesn't have to be a big thing (most will not be). One example might be to remember a time when a spouse or a friend chose to cancel something they were doing in order to do something you wanted to do.

[Question 3] Most neighborhoods have conflict or a difficult neighbor. Whether it's a barking dog or a lawn that is rarely cut or late night parties, living in close proximity to others is frequently the recipe for dissension. Rather than ignoring the conflict or adding to it, how might we be witnesses to the Prince of Peace in the way that we help those in conflict. (The goal here is not to be able to solve all conflict (we can't control what others do or don't do), but to simply ask what we might do to help bring peace.)

[Question 4] We all may prioritize values differently. This impacts our choices and the ways in which we respond to others. What do we do when our values, such as living peaceably and being authentic, conflict? How do you think God calls us to respond?

[Question 5] Saul/Paul went from ruthlessly seeking out Christians to kill them to discussing the "marks of a true Christian" in Romans 12. This is a pretty dramatic transformation. Some people have experienced God transforming them in very dramatic ways, while others' experiences have been more quiet. Ask group members about their experiences.

[Question 6] It can be difficult for us to let go of seeking revenge. For some, knowing God is going to take care of it is enough for them to let go. Is this what Paul is suggesting here? Or is he calling us to just not concern ourselves with it?

[Question 7] This is not a time to shame those who haven't done anything, but to celebrate those who have taken a risk in loving their literal neighbors. Remind folks that this is more than just a sermon series. It's a way of life for those who follow Christ!