

Adult Education Class: September 11, 2016

“Love my Neighbor or Fear my Neighbor? Choosing to live in community with our Jewish and Muslim Neighbors” – Introduction

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Personal inspiration for this class:

- My recent experiences working with Syrian refugees in Jordan with the Syrian American Medical Society
- Current negative political climate
- The spiritual influences of my aunt, my dad, and my uncle; seeing their abilities to bring people together and to maintain the integrity of their Christian beliefs in a loving way when dealing with non-Christians
- My understanding of what the Bible asks us to do as Christians
- My experiences as a psychologist at Cook County Hospital working with underserved peoples from all over the world for 28 years
- My experiences in doing marital therapy for 30 years and helping couples work through their conflicts by learning to truly listen and understand each other
- My work with the Young Center for Immigrant Children’s Rights
- My work with Physicians For Human Rights
- My work with Doug Wilson in leading retreats for pediatric residents on intercultural sensitivity – i.e., understanding our own biases & assumptions before we try to understand others

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, **I am with you always**, even to the end of the age.”*

Matthew 28: 19-20

David Jeremiah states, “When followers of Christ are slow to share their faith or pour into the lives of others, it is often because they do not really take Jesus at His word: **I am with you always.**” (The Jeremiah Study Bible, p. 1336)

“We build those bridges when we lovingly and patiently communicate the Gospel. You don’t have to have a seminary degree. You don’t have to know a lot of the religious vocabulary. In your own authentic, honest, and unguarded manner, share with people what Christ has done for you.”

(Charles Swindoll, *A Man of Grace and Grit: Paul*, p. 149)

“In essentials unity. In non-essentials liberty. **In all things charity.**”

(Charles Swindoll, *A Man of Grace and Grit: Paul*, p. 179)

Jesus challenged us to look at the world through what Irenaeus would call 'grace-healed eyes.'" (p. 155)

- *"He who despises his neighbor sins; But he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he."* Proverbs 14:21
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What *lens* do you see the world through? Through what lens do you see Jews and Muslims? What are your own assumptions and biases? How does your own history and experience shape how you see the world?

Mark Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Loving Your Neighbor: Seeing Others Through the Eyes of Jesus*:

- *"Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves."* James 1:22
 - "Our incapacity to remember to do the right thing distorts our capacity to see the right thing as well. In failing to act justly we show we have lost our call to see clearly. If we cannot see ourselves, we are going to be all the more distorted in our vision of our neighbor and of God. That's how the story of injustice turns out." (p. 87)
 - *Reflection*: Our perceiving can be done from such safe distances that the needs of others make no claim on us. This is part of our lives of privilege. What are the evidences of privilege in your life, especially in your assumptions? What are examples of how privilege shapes your life at this point? (p. 90)
 - *Reflection*: In what ways have you come near to people in pain or experiencing injustice? How have such situations affected you? How penetrating or heart-changing were those experiences? How do they or don't they daily shape your heart? (p. 92)
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Class objectives:

- To challenge you to be aware of your own biases and assumptions when interacting with others who are different from you
- To challenge you to see others through the eyes of Christ
- To gain a greater understanding of the beliefs and customs of our Jewish and Muslim neighbors in order to build relationships and ease/dispel fears and misunderstandings
- To challenge you to find ways to get out of your comfort zone so as to be active in the world and to find ways to reach out and influence others as a Christian
- To learn how to discuss issues of faith with respect and sensitivity
- To have a better understanding of refugees and what we as Christians can do to welcome them and support them

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Luke 10:27

- *The Parable of the Good Samaritan: Luke 10:25-37*
 - There was a longstanding hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans. In 722 BC, the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom and swept Israel away in captivity to Assyria. During those years, the Jews dropped all their prohibitions against intermarrying with the Assyrians and they lost their ethnic purity.
 - In 586 BC, the Babylonians conquered the southern kingdom, Judah. During their captivity, they did not intermarry with the Babylonians. When the Israelites from the southern kingdom returned to their homeland, they considered those from the northern kingdom who had intermarried to be half-breeds – Samaritans.
 - A popular prayer in those days among some of the southern-kingdom Jews was, "Lord, do not remember the Samaritans in the resurrection."
- The priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan all noticed the man. But only the Samaritan **saw** him with eyes of **compassion**. Compassion means "a deep moving within the inward spirit." The Gospel of Matthew uses it three times to describe Jesus' loving and active relationship with people.
 - *"But when he saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd."* Matthew 9:36
 - *"And when Jesus went out, he saw a great multitude; and he was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick."* Matthew 14:14
 - *"I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."* Matthew 15:32
- Of the 10 lepers whom Jesus healed, the only one who returned to thank him was a Samaritan – a "foreigner." As David Jeremiah says, "The least religious people sometimes have the greatest capacity for love and gratitude."
- Philip Yancey in *The Jesus I Never Knew* states, "In God's kingdom there are no undesirables. By going out of his way to meet with Gentiles, eat with sinners, and touch the sick, he extended the realm of God's mercy....In his own social interactions, Jesus was putting into practice "the great reversal" heralded in the Beatitudes. Normally in this world we look up to the rich, the beautiful, the successful. Grace, however, introduces a world of new logic. Because God loves the poor, the suffering, the persecuted, so should we. Because God sees no undesirables, neither should we. By his own example,

