

**PROVERBS, HANDBOOK ON LIFE IN CHRIST
HOW TO BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR**

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IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR LORD, ONE ANOTHER IN THE CHURCH AND ESPECIALLY WITH THE UNSAVED - PARTICULARLY OUR NEIGHBORS. BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN TODAY'S CONTEXT OF THE SELF-SERVING WHO DO NOT THINK IN TERMS OF GENEROSITY

A GOOD NEIGHBOR IS GENEROUS AND GRACIOUS

Prov 3:27 **Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. 28 Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow"--when you now have it with you.**

ACTUALLY, THIS QUALITY STARTS FROM WITHIN AND OVERFLOWS TO THOSE CLOSEST TO YOU AND THEN TO YOUR NEIGHBORS. IT IS A GENEROSITY OF HEART AND IS COMMANDED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND EXPECTED IN THE CHURCH AGE.

Deut 15:4 "However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you,"... 7 "If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother." 8 "Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs."

THIS PASSAGE IS PRIMARILY RELATED TO CANCELLING DEBTS. BUT THERE IS PROVISION FOR THE POOR ALSO. THE BASIS FOR A SOUND ECONOMY IN ISRAEL WAS NOT GREED AS IT IS TODAY BUT RATHER GENEROSITY OF HEART. AS GOOD NEIGHBORS WE ARE EXPECTED TO BE GENEROUS NOT JUST TO THE FAMILY NEXT DOOR BUT TO OUR COMMUNITY.

NOW, LET'S TALK ABOUT ANY PERCEIVED DEBT OUR NEIGHBOR MIGHT OWE US. WE ARE NOT TO BE TIGHTFISTED AND KEEP CLOSE ACCOUNTS OF WHAT WE DID AND WHAT WE EXPECT OUR NEIGHBORS TO DO IN RETURN IN ORDER TO KEEP IN OUR GOOD GRACES. **BE OPEN HEARTED AND OPENHANDED.**

Lev 19:18 **Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.**

OUR LORD MADE COMMENTARY ON THIS VERSE. WHEN THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES TRIED TO APPLY THIS COMMAND TO JUST THOSE WHO AGREED WITH THEM. HE USED THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN. THE TRUTH IS THAT EVERY ONE THAT CROSSES OUR PATH IS THE OBJECT OF GOD'S REDEPTIVE PLAN AND AS SUCH SHOULD BE LOVED BY US JUST AS THE LORD LOVED THEM WHEN HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR THEM ON THE CROSS.

WE SHOULD BE PEACEABLE WITH OUR NEIGHBORS

Romans 12:18 **"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."**

Prov 16:7 **When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.**

ROMANS 12:18. THE WORD FOR "PEACEABLE" IS *eirenopoios*. IT MEANS TO BE PEACEABLE - A PEACEMAKER. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS CHRISTIANS TO PLAY THE ROLE AS PEACEMAKER, EVEN IF WE THINK WE HAVE BEEN WRONGED BY OUR NEIGHBOR. I MUST SAY THAT THE "SALT EFFECT" AS MENTIONED BY CHRIST GOES BEYOND THE TELLING OF THE GOSPEL AND REACHES INTO THE VERY FABRIC OF ANY SOCIETY. WE HAVE NO IDEA OF THE EFFECT THAT A SMALL NUMBER OF CHRISTIAN HAVE IN A COMMUNITY WHEN IT COMES TO ITS OVER-ALL HEALTH AND MORAL SOUNDNESS.

PROVERBS 16:7. THIS IS NOT A PICTURE OF A CHRISTIAN PLEASING EVERYONE WHO LIVES NEXT TO HIM. RATHER, IN THIS CASE, HIS NEIGHBOR IS NOT HIS FRIEND. NEVERTHELESS, THE NEIGHBOR HAS TO LIVE AT PEACE WITH THE CHRISTIAN BECAUSE **IT REALLY DOES TAKE TWO TO MAKE A "WAR."**

Mark 9:50 **Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.**

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WE PICK ON LOT, ABRAHAM'S NEPHEW. I WANT TO DEFEND ONE ASPECT OF LOT'S LIFE. HE WAS THE VERY SALT OF THE CITY, SODOM, HE LIVED IN. NOT UNTIL LOT AND HIS FAMILY WAS REMOVED DID THE LORD JUDGE SODOM. SO IT IS TODAY ACROSS OUR COUNTRY. ON ONE HAND, I WONDER WHY THE LORD HASN'T JUDGED OUR GREAT COUNTRY FOR ALL ITS IMMORALITY AND OUTRIGHT GODLESSNESS. ON THE OTHER HAND, I MUST AGREE THAT THE LORD SURELY DOES STAY HIS JUDGING HAND BECAUSE THERE ARE CHRISTIANS WHOSE VERY PRESENCE PRESERVES AND GIVES SAVOR.

SALT WAS NOT ONLY USED FOR A PRESERVATIVE AND AS MONETARY STANDARD, BUT IT WAS (AND IS TODAY) USED TO GIVE OTHERWISE BLAND TASTING FOOD A GOOD TASTE. THE PRESENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN IN HIS COMMUNITY IS TO BE AN ASSET - TO GIVE WHAT OTHERWISE WOULD BE A BLAND COMMUNITY A GOOD TASTE WITH THE LORD. THE CHALLENGE, OF COURSE, IS FOR US TO BE AT PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER AND I THINK WITH OUR NEIGHBORS AND THUS WE BECOME THE VERY MEANS OF A COMMUNITY'S PRESERVATION AND SAVOR IN GOD'S SIGHT.

AVOID EVIL NEIGHBORS

Prov 21:10 **The wicked man craves evil; his neighbor gets no mercy from him.**

THE CHRISTIAN DOES NEED TO EXERCISE DISCRETION, HOWEVER. THE HEBREW FOR "WICKED" MEANS TO BE MORALLY BANKRUPT AND UNGODLY. THIS IS NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH A NEIGHBOR WHO DOES NOT RESPOND TO OUR ATTEMPTS OF EVANGELISM. THE WICKED MAN IN THIS TEXT'S SENSE IS ACTIVELY AGAINST GODLINESS AND SHOWS SIGNS OF AN ABANDONMENT OF MORALITY IN THE SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG. THERE IS A BALANCE BETWEEN INVOLVEMENT WITH A NEIGHBOR IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE CHRISTIAN'S TESTIMONY CAN BE HARMED AND THE WILLINGNESS FOR TO OFFER THE GOSPEL TO SUCH A MAN IN THE CASE OF OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO AVOID ENTANGLEMENT WITH EVIL PEOPLE BUT SHOULD BE READY TO OFFER THE VERY MEANS TO FREE SUCH A MAN FROM HIS SIN - JESUS CHRIST'S SALVATION.

LEARN FROM OUR HEAVENLY FATHER HOW TO BEHAVE WITH OUR NEIGHBORS

Matthew 5:43 **"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**

WE ARE TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS BUT NOT TO BECOME ENTANGLED WITH THEIR SINFUL LIFESTYLE. OUR HEAVENLY FATHER CAUSES HIS GOODNESS (COMMON GRACE) TO AFFECT BOTH THE GOOD AND THE EVIL. WE SHOULD BEHAVE LIKE HIM SO THAT OUR TESTIMONY MAY SHINE IN OUR NEIGHBORS LIVES AND THAT THEY MIGHT BE ATTRACTED TO OUR LORD.