

WAYS
OF
BEING
IN THE
NEIGHBORHOOD

INTRODUCTION

God's dream (meaning His cherished ideal) is that all people and places will be redeemed in and through Christ. It is true that we live in broken places with broken people. We are broken ourselves! However, as the Spirit makes us more like Christ, Father God gives us a remarkable invitation and ability to join Him in making His dream become a reality **right where we live**.

To love Jesus means to also love your neighbor as yourself. Oftentimes as Christ-followers we want to express our love by doing something. After all 1 John 3:18 tells us, "Little children, let us not love with word or with with tongue, but in deed and truth." Yet, even as we practice tangible love, we must learn to **BE** as we **DO**.

In the following devotion, we will highlight five ways to **BE** in your neighborhood:

- BE KIND
- BE KNOWN
- BE PRESENT
- BE FAIR
- BE CREATIVE

When these attributes embody our lives, the places where we live and the people who live there with us are given the opportunity to glimpse and experience Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven. The following passages and reflection questions are our invitation for you to become **known** in your local community as someone who is **kind**, **present**, and **fair**, and from whom the **creativity** to reflect Christ's Kingdom abundantly flows.

1 BE KIND

RESPECT & DIGNITY

DAILY SCRIPTURE:

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:4-7 NIV

Definition:

To be kind means to genuinely express a spirit of friendliness and generosity. Our kindness is not to be limited to those we know and like but offered to all our neighbors.

How God relates with you:

As a child made in God's image, you are His delight, His beloved. Even when it may not be deserved, the Lord continuously pours out His kindness on you because of how much He cherishes you.

Reflection:

God's kindness inspires us and allows us to then see others as made in His image. Our neighbors are not simply people who live close to us. They are **beloved** by God! As His valued creation, the Lord desires for our neighbors to experience His radical kindness through us. By His grace, we are given the opportunity to share God's friendly and generous nature every time we walk out our front door.

Consider:

- What is God saying to me about being kind?
- Make a note of the next three neighbors that you see. How will you show kindness to these neighbors this week?

Practical Take Away:

Lord, how would you like for me to live out in my neighborhood what you have spoken to me today?

2 BE KNOWN

Vulnerable & Authentic

DAILY SCRIPTURE:

Never once did we try to win you with flattery, as you well know. And God is our witness that we were not pretending to be your friends just to get your money! As for human praise, we have never sought it from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we certainly had a right to make some demands of you, but instead we were like children among you. Or we were like a mother feeding and caring for her own children. We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives too.

1 Thessalonians 2:5-8 NLT

Definition:

To be known means to be seen and acknowledged for who you really are. True community involves knowing others and a willingness to be known.

How God relates with you:

God knows your name. You are known fully and wholly. He knows the depths of you; the joys and the sorrows. He is also knowable. He is not a far-off God, but One that draws near to you and wants to be known by you.

Reflection:

Being known by God inspires and allows us to engage deeply with others, from knowing their names to knowing their joys and sorrows. Since we are already accepted by Jesus, we can accept others. But knowing others is only part of the story. Just as God is knowable, our neighbors should be allowed to see us living vulnerable and authentic lives. We have no need to hide or create false images of ourselves. As representatives of a knowable Lord, we can allow ourselves to be known by those we live among.

Consider:

- What is God saying to me about being known?
- Who in my neighborhood is God bringing to mind as someone with whom He would like for me to be more vulnerable and authentic?

Practical Take Away:

Lord, how would you like for me to live out in my neighborhood what you have spoken to me today?

3 BE PRESENT

Here & Engaged

DAILY SCRIPTURE:

I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night - but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you. You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous - how well I know it.

Psalm 139: 7-14 NLT

Definition:

To be present means to be at hand and ready to connect with others. Spending regular, thoughtful, undistracted time with neighbors helps to develop true community.

How God relates with you:

He is in every moment. He never leaves. He is actively listening. The Lord offers His presence to you as a gift and a promise.

Reflection:

Experiencing God's presence allows us to set aside our agendas and be with a person no matter how brief the engagement. We are "here," not distracted, but actively listening. This presence takes practice. Showing up, slowing down, giving others our full attention, and responding appropriately are not skills that come naturally or easily to everyone. Yet, as we learn to be present in our neighborhoods and with our neighbors, we are mirroring a key attribute of God.

Consider:

- What is God saying to me about being present?
- What practices or habits is the Lord asking me to start living out in my neighborhood so that I can be more present with those who live around me?

Practical Take Away:

Lord, how would you like for me to live out in my neighborhood what you have spoken to me today?

4

BE FAIR

Just & Righteous

DAILY SCRIPTURE:

The LORD is both kind and fair; that is why he teaches sinners the right way to live. May he show the humble what is right! May he teach the humble his way! The LORD always proves faithful and reliable to those who follow the demands of his covenant. For the sake of your reputation, O LORD, forgive my sin, because it is great. The LORD shows his faithful followers the way they should live.

Psalm 25:8-12 NET

Definition:

To be fair means to be impartial and to do what is right. Fairness avoids favoritism and makes sure that all people are treated in line with their value.

How God relates with you:

God never sees you as lesser than another person. And when you miss the mark, God does not treat you unjustly. Rather, He is always restoring you through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son.

Reflection:

Through Jesus, our eyes become awakened to the broken places and people where we live. Sometimes brokenness leads us to fear, and fear can lead us to isolation and exclusion. Rather than letting fear rule, we can choose to join God in His process of redemption by stepping up and doing what is right when we are able to do so. Like our Lord, we are called to right wrongs and to treat people with equal dignity in the process.

Consider:

- What is God saying to me about being fair?
- Is there someone in your neighborhood who has expressed that they have been wronged? In your pursuit of learning how to be fair, how can you build empathy toward that person?

Practical Take Away:

Lord, how would you like for me to live out in my neighborhood what you have spoken to me today?

BE CREATIVE

Imaginative & Inventive

DAILY SCRIPTURE:

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in him and through him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Colossians 1:15-20 NIV

Definition:

To be creative means to use your distinct gifts, skills, talents, and personality to develop ways of expressing the love of Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven right where you live.

How God relates with you:

Creatively! You are unique, so God interacts with you in ways that are personal to who you are. In addition, the Lord delights in you as the person He created. Should you seek to know it, He has a plan in which the ways He has gifted you will fit into His dream of redeeming all things.

Reflection:

Since you are a unique person, you bring something new to the table in God's kingdom. The Lord desires for you to be uniquely you in loving your neighbors as yourself. As you use your gifts, skills, talents, and personality for His purposes, God wants you and your neighbors to experience joy. Joy in knowing Jesus, joy in knowing one another, and joy in sharing His Good News with others.

Consider

- What is God saying to me about being creative?
- What are my distinctive gifts, skills, and talents?
- How can I use these to creatively and joyfully bless my neighborhood?

Practical Take Away

Lord, how would you like for me to live out in my neighborhood what you have spoken to me today?