

What About Us?

Love Your Neighbor(hood) series

By Bill Aumack

We will see more of them in a hair a couple minutes. We'll be introducing them and voting them into membership. It's always a good day we have a baptism, Amen.

All right, you got to use your imagination this morning. Once you remember back, for some of us, it's a long time to when you are in a period of your life, about fourth through eighth grade. Okay. Now, before we do this, how many of you grew up in the church? Adventist or other church, doesn't matter. Just a church. Okay for you, folks. I want you to think about a Sabbath School teacher that you liked, that made a difference that somebody was cared about you whatever. Think about that person. Those of you who didn't grow up in the church, think about a school teacher. fourth through eighth grade a school teacher that you remember, like not the mean guy. Okay, somebody you liked. Okay. You got him? Yeah, I see a lot of head shaking. Yes. Do you remember anything they taught you? Like, man, that was the most amazing lesson on Elijah that I've ever heard. The way she taught me about adverbs has rocked my soul till today. Right? Anybody? No! What do you remember about them? They were nice. They liked you. They were kind. They spent time with you. Something right. I remember when I was, I think maybe sixth grade. My Sabbath School teacher was Dr. Piefer. And Dr. Piefer was a medical doctor in the little town we lived in. And his daughter was in my grade at school. So maybe he was teaching Sabbath school because it was his turn because his kid was in there, I don't know. And one thought that I never had as a child, but as I look back, I think about it. He was probably a busy man. He was a doctor. He had four kids, The girl that was a my grade. There was a younger son. And there was two older girls that were twins who happened to be deaf. And I'm sure that added a little more challenge to life, right. It's hard to live in a hearing world when you're deaf. And so I'm sure he was a busy man. But I remember that he spent time with us. He took us snow camping. Anybody ever been snow camping? Like one person besides me, okay.

There was this kind of a lean to, a three sided structure that had bunks in it and a big fire pit out front. So you put your sleeping bags on the bunks, you didn't have to sleep in the snow, but it was all open in the front. So you know if it was 12 degrees outside, it was 12 degrees in the bunk house, okay. It was fun when we were that age. Now I'm like, why? He took us hiking Sabbath afternoons, we'd go up in the mountains, he'd take us hiking, I don't remember anything he taught. I don't remember any Sabbath school lessons he taught. Which really breaks my heart when I think about I spent 20 years and youth group and they probably don't remember anything I taught. But I remember that he liked us, and that he spent time with us. And those are the people we tend to remember.

And we're talking about love your neighbor-hood. And when we talk about our neighborhood, we can slice and dice up a lot of different ways. Right? We can go by age, we go by race, we go by gender, we can always socio-economics, we can go a lot of different ways. And today, we're kind of gonna slice and dice by age. And when you do that, there's kind of two groups that usually get left out and they're at the extremes, the youngest and the oldest. And if you had to deal with aging parents that you have to take care of, they're kind of the same sometimes. Right? We kind of go full cycle in life. We need somebody to care for us when we're young and we need somebody to care for us when we're old. Amen. So but today we're talking about the children. And some of us might have grown up in a house where the saying was children should be seen and not heard. You heard that? Yeah. What's that mean? Shut up. Right, somebody's looking for a trophy, a male is looking for a trophy wife, and a trophy family, that he can trout out at the company functions. And go "what a great little family I have. See I'm VP material." Right. And that's, that's kind of all they're there for. I don't have time for you otherwise. And men, sometimes we fall into this other trap of men tend to show their love by trying to provide for the family. And so that's a way that's.... in today's vernacular, that's our love language. Right. That's the way we show that we love people who care about, we provide for them. And so we work hard to provide for a house. And some clothes, maybe a few extras, a vacation once a year. And then we don't have time for the kids, cause we are busy. Or maybe it's a single mom or single dad. And they're working two or three jobs, not to provide any extras, but just to not be homeless, just to make ends meet. And we get busy. And all of a sudden, there's no time for the kids. And at the other extreme,

sometimes we have kids that kind of rule the house, the child's in charge. Large and in charge at two years old, right? Whatever they say goes and they have a fit, and they get what they want. And if those are kind of the two extremes, as usual, somewhere in the middle is a better balance. Amen. So how do we do that? How do we do that?

So how did Jesus view the children? Let's open our Bibles to Mark chapter 10. Mark is the second book in the New Testament, Mark chapter 10. And if you've been in the church, a while you have heard this, this passage, you know this, but we're going to remind ourselves how Jesus dealt with the children. Mark 10, verse 13, to 16. Everybody there. All right. People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. But the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. And he said to them, Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God, like a little child will never enter it. And he took the children in his arms, he placed his hands on them, and he blessed them.

Okay, now, we've talked about this before, we know that in the first century, it was a man's world. Good to be a man in the first century. Okay, because you were large and in charge, and the women and children were just a notch above the slaves and the servants. Okay, they didn't have a lot of rights or, or anything, okay. And so here, Jesus is out. And he's, I imagine him sitting on a rock somewhere, and the people are gathered around, and he's preaching and teaching and talking to the people. Healing the people. Can you imagine that people gathered around Jesus? Somebody raises their hand says, Jesus, what about this? And Jesus gives a little mini sermon. No, no, this is how you deal with that. Let's just become a Jesus. Man. I fell in the fire last year and and burned my arm. Jesus heals him. And so he says, Jesus, what about this? Right? Is this important work? Yes. This is maybe the most important work you can do. He's showing people the love of God, God's mercy and grace and teaching them, healing them. There is nothing more important than you can do. It's certainly more important than the spreadsheet or PowerPoint that you are working on. Amen.

And so some people bring in their kids and say, bless the kids, put your hands on the kids and bless the kids. The disciples Do what 99% of us would do. Whoa, whoa, Jesus is busy. He's doing something important. Don't you know? And that was a true statement. He was doing something important. You know Jesus, he says, oh, teaching moment, right? And I looked up, he says, What does this verse one says Jesus saw this, he was what? indignant? It's a \$2 word. So I looked at a whole bunch of other versions for different ways that had been translated. And usually it comes to be very displeased or much displeased. One version, Amplified Bible, I think it was even use the word irate, which I think is probably a better description how Jesus was feeling at the moment. Indignant seems too nice, right? Indignant is when somebody makes a little social faux pas. He ate with the salad fork instead of his regular fork. Ever go to one of those restaurants? There's like six forks there. I don't know which one to use. Right. I like tacos, I can I use my fingers. Amen. Hispanics, Yea tacos! All right, so. But Jesus is doing this. And imagine Jesus now stops, and he spends like half an hour talking to the kids. Everybody kind of fades away. And Jesus has some alone time with the kids. And you know how kids are? Jesus? Look, I found this rock. How come this one sparkly? Jesus, what about this? Jesus? What about Jesus, I fell and skinned my knee. And Jesus blesses the children. Now, I want you to think about this. If you're a child, and you get blessed by Jesus, what does that do to the rest of your life? Wow. Wow, imagine being the grandma or the granddad, and telling your 300 grandchildren and great grandchildren that I had a blessed life. Because Jesus blessed me. Right? And Jesus makes time to talk to the kids.

And what what do we learn from that? Right, we all have important work to do. But we need to make time for the children. We need to make time for the children. It doesn't take long before, you know, they're not children anymore. You might be working in your office on that important PowerPoint or spreadsheet or that marketing plan or whatever it is that you do. And the kid comes in and wants to watch the same movie for the 673rd time. You've counted. You know, all the dialogue. You know all the songs. You even know the song that the birds are whistling when they walked down the little forest path. All the parents laughed because they know the song, right? They're like, I just can't today I have to get this done. We'll do it tomorrow. Then tomorrow, something else and tomorrow and tomorrow never comes. Amen. So we have to make time we have to make

time. And somebody's gonna like, Hey, I did my time my kids are grown. Well, maybe it's time for grandkids. Some of you I know we're having fun with grandkids. Some of us may not have grandkids yet, Evan and Alex. Were waiting to.... get married first! Get married first we'll wait that long. Right, but we there might be other children that could use your time too. It doesn't have to be your blood relative for you to make a difference. Amen. All right. There's no exceptions. We all need to help the children.

All right, let's turn over to Matthew chapter 18. Back one book. Matthew 18 Verses one to nine. Some of this is backstory. What I really want to focus on is verses six to seven. Matthew 18, one to nine. Give me an amen when you get there. Okay. Verse one, says at that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And Jesus called a child to him and place the child among them. And he said, Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never, never is a long time. You will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me a verse six, let's pay attention here. If who what group of people, anyone does anyone includes you and me? Yes, if anyone causes one of these little ones, those who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and drowned in the depths of the sea. This is one of the scariest things that I think Jesus ever says. Woe to the world, because of the things that cause people to stumble, Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come. Then he goes on to talk about if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off, if you're eye, gouge it out. And Jesus is not talking about self mutilation, to metaphor, get rid of the stuff in your life that causes you to stumble. Right?

And what group of people is Jesus talking about? Anyone! All the people, the whole world, you and me. Okay. And we have to be careful about this. Now Jesus is talking about more than just children here. But he's also talking about the children, right? He's talking about people who might be young in their spiritual journey. We saw two people get baptized today, they are at more of the beginning of their spiritual journey, still growing. Some of us might have been

here for 30 years, and we're still at the beginning of our spiritual journey. No judgement, right? We are where we are. Okay, but we got to be careful and not cause anyone to stumble.

Now. If I was to ask all you all here individually, so do you love the children? What would everybody say? Yes. I love the children. Would you do for them last week? That's a harder question. See, usually when we say we love the children, what that means is I hope they don't get hit by the school bus on the way to school. Right? And that's about the level of love we have. I hope you don't die. That's not much love. Right? That's, that's a pretty shallow cup of love. Right? So how can we do more than that? How can we be more effective than that? I got three quick things here. I want to go through. I could have had like 50. But I limited it to three because pastors and like it when I preach till two o'clock. And I only say that because he's right there. All right, number one. What can I do when you can pray for the children. Pray for the children every day. Pray for their growth, pray for their spiritual growth, pray for their protection, pray for their development. Pray for them by name. Oh no, you got to pray for him by name. You can't just say Lord be with all the children. That's the shallow cup again. Pray for them by name. Well, what does that mean?

You got to learn their names. You got to be able to pray for Andre and Benjamin and Josh and Sarah and Victoria. Right. You have to know all the children's names. You don't have to be best buds. But say hi to them. By Name. You know what kids also like? [bending over] How's it going? Because nobody likes looking [up] at somebody like this, right? Bend over, talk to him. Say hi. learn their names.

Number three, the last thing we can do is help out in children's ministries a little bit. Oh, no. Now, a person has to know their limits. Because I should never be in cradleroll. It's just not a good place for me to be. Okay. And I love the people that do that, because I can't. So you've got to know your limits. But help out, you don't have to teach every week. Maybe you could teach once a month, or once a quarter and give the teacher a break. Maybe you got help with snacks, or help get the craft ready. Or something else? Maybe you could read the mission story. I mean, most of us can read. They give you the story and read. Most of us can manage that right. Find a way to help.

We're getting ready to have a I don't know what to call it Children's Ministry Summit, we're going to be talking about what we can do for our children's ministries to help it grow and develop a little bit more to do more than just Sabbath School and VBS once a year, and make a difference in our children's lives. If you want to be part of that. Let pastor or I know we'll get you invited to that. Look for ways to help. Okay. It takes intentionality and actions to make a difference in somebody's life. Whether that's a children a child or whether that's an adult, right. Think back to your dating days when you wanted to catch Mr. or Mrs. Right. You had to be intentional about that. Right. Girls, you were out there standing at the right place where you knew he was going to walk by between class so he'd have to pass right past you. Right. girls? The girls are going no we never did that. Yes, you did. That's okay. All right. You were intentional. It's good. It's good. All right. Good. We need to be intentional with our children too.

So reflection... Do you really love the children? Do you love them enough to put aside your important work and make some time for them? Do you love them enough to inconvenience yourself? That's the real question. That's the real question. And then the challenge. I got way too crazy with this challenge. But I was on a roll when I wrote this. So cut me some slack. Once we challenges get involved with some of the kids be a good influence, being adopted aunt or uncle or grandma or grandpa look for ways you can help in the children's ministry. And what I really want you to do. Learn at least one child's name this week. That might be a child here at church, that might be a child in your neighborhood. It might be a child in the apartment building where you live, wherever that is. Learn a child's name. Amen.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the children that you have given us, Lord. Help us to be the kind of people that take care of those children and love those children. Lord, we ask that you give us the courage for some of us maybe to step out and try and learn a child's name. Try and make a difference in that child's life. Try to influence them a little bit, to show them that there's a God who loves them so very, very much or give us the courage to act in faith this week. Be with us now. In Jesus name. Amen.