



## ***How do I Effectively Witness to My Neighbor?***

By Kurt von Schleicher

A relationship with a neighbor can be kind of like one with a family member in the sense that we seem to be around them a lot when outside and they are watching our lives to see if what we say actually corresponds with what we do.

You might be asking: Where did Jesus teach us to be neighborly as a good witness and to proactively do unto others as you would have them do to you? That is a great question about the golden rule. Jesus said, ***"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it"***(Matt. 7:12-14, nkjv).

He said, ***"Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful"***(Lk. 6:30-36, nkjv).

Christ said, ***"Honor your father and your mother," and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"***(Matt 19:19, kjv).

Spiritual maturity means that what we say will be backed up by a selfless life of love and victory—that our profession will line up with our walk. We never want to offend our

neighbors unnecessarily, because we have to live with them. The Gospel truth might be offensive to them, but we do not want to add to that offense by acting the fool. We need to be rich in love and good works toward all men, but especially towards our neighbors. We've had neighbors are very presumptuous before and do things in our yards and driveways that are just rude. There have been times when I felt like telling them off, but I can not do that. Sure I can lovingly talk with them about the truth or even ask them to move their car out of my driveway multiple times, but I really want to do my best to maintain my witness. It seems like with some neighbors, if we give them an inch they want to take a mile. We even had one neighbor tear down his fence and our fence that were right next to each other but ours was not even leaning over or falling apart yet. He just put in another one on our property that would match his new pool area, deck and all, and then he wanted us to pay for much of what he did, when we already told our neighbors that we really liked fence that we just painted white. He couldn't even see it to dislike it, because it was hidden behind his parallel fence that was blocking it. We must remember that all this material stuff is so temporal and yet the neighbors are not—they will exist somewhere for all eternity and hopefully it will be in heaven!

Our family currently has Moslems dwelling on one side of us, two sets of homosexuals and one set of Buddhists living on the other side of us and a lovely but broken Hispanic family living on the other side. And keeping the lines of communication open, cultivating and maintaining a good neighborly relationship with them and even apologizing to them when we need to is so important. I must remember that there is a "Got Jesus?" sticker in the window of my truck out front, in the driveway that every neighbor can see or joke about. One day we noticed that one of our gay neighbors put a new sticker on his truck that said, "Hate! Is that a family value?" We've only reached out to them in love, but it made us wonder if that is how many gays view "the born again-s"? I think it is. But having a Jesus-freak sticker on my truck means I need to drive in a manner that I don't always feel like driving in, even around town where they can see us. Our lives are an open book. We have nothing to hide. We don't want to point the finger of accusation at anyone; their conscience already does that at them. Conflict in the home or in the hood often arise due to an un-yielded right, but meekness means a Christian is to have all rights yielded to God without that *I'm-a-stupid-doormat* mentality. We want our neighbors to know what we are all about even when we are sometimes wronged. Having a *holier-than-thou* attitude is forbidden, along with that ugly *we-hope-you-wretched-sinners-burn-in-hell* attitude.

Maybe you've graciously turned down attending some drinking parties on your block? I hope so, but have you ever invited any of your neighbors over for a meal or something good? Do they know that you have an inclusive attitude or are you exclusive and cloistered all the time? Do you feel superior to them? Hey, we Christians are not better than any of our neighbors, we are just better off. And we must be very aware of our outward witness-expression and how it comes off to them. He who lives in a glass house should refrain from throwing stones. The Bible reveals that all this is a legitimate means of evangelism. Jesus said, ***"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"*** (Matthew 5:16). It

is God's will that, "*with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*"(1 Peter 2:15).

Your irreligious well-meaning neighbors may disagree with what you believe a lot of the time, but seeing your good works done in love might make them think, "Hey, I don't really believe what that family believes, but they sure do—every single day! They are totally convinced of this Jesus being the only way to heaven, so maybe there is more to this thing that we should look into. They are certainly very sincere in their faith. I know that our neighborhood needs more people like them."

A smile, a friendly wave, the loan of some tools that you may never see returned to you, a simple gift for no reason, practical help with some yard work or plumbing, some fresh-baked goods, etc., all that can pave the way for a friendship (authentic evangelistic relationship) where you will leave the results up to God. Offer to help with some house painting or something like that (if you are single and they are of the opposite sex, or if they are a homosexual, you should never be in their house alone so you will avoid all appearance of evil). Volunteer to watch their pet, pick up their mail, or newspapers while they're on vacation. Be very careful with all their stuff for sure and remember to return what they loan you on time! Maybe compliment them on their landscaping or ask for some gardening tips. Do keep your house, cars and RVs in good repair. Yes, keep your yard up, for that will help your neighbor's properties as well as yours retain their values. The way you steward God's belongings will actually reflect on your inner spiritual situation. Why have your place look like a redneck dump with cars and junk lost in your un-mowed grass, or allow your property to be an eyesore to their irritation? You will bug them if you are lazy. And Jesus taught us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Invite them over for a barbecue or for dessert with your family. Way too many Americans can not tell you the names of their neighbor today, but they have memorized the jiggles and words to many stupid TV commercials. What is wrong with this picture? Pray for an opportunity to verbally share the Gospel, and be prepared for that question about spiritual matters that might come your way.

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