

## Streetlights

Text : **Matthew 5: 13-16**

### **INTRODUCTION :**

#### **A. Did you ever have a next door neighbor move away ?**

1. Most have.
2. What went through your mind when they started moving ?
3. A certain level of apprehension is common.
  - a. What kind of neighbor will move in ?
  - b. Until you meet them one can imagine all sorts of things, most often not so positive.

#### **B. Neighbors run the gamut from angels to demons.**

1. Over the years who was your best neighbor ?
2. Who was your worst neighbor ?
  - a. One member told me of a neighbor who escaped the great abyss to be a tormentor.
  - b. Neighbors like this are the subject of comedy movies and murder mysteries.
- \*. *The worst neighbor I ever had lived on one side of me at the same time the best neighbor I ever had lived on the other side.*
3. What distinguished the worst neighbor from the best neighbor ? *Which one are you ?*

#### **C. What is a Christian to do when he finds himself living by an evil neighbor ?**

1. When the strong smell of sulfur fills the air while the new neighbor's moving van is being unloaded, what is a Christian to do ?
  - a. Should he gird himself for war ?
  - b. Should he barricade himself in his house ? ( *Survival mode* )
  - c. Should he just put up a for sale sign and move ?
2. Actually, none of the aforementioned responses are appropriate.
3. The scriptures have more to say about situations like this than one might think.

#### **D. Our lesson this morning will explore some appropriate biblical responses.**

1. It is normal for unsaved people to be wicked.
2. The Christian should not react to the wicked.
3. Christians are to be examples to the wicked.
4. Christians must be longsuffering with the wicked.
5. Any Christian should be the best neighbor ever.

## I. It is normal for unsaved people to do wicked things.

### A. All of God's creatures act according to their nature.

1. Birds fly and fish swim.
2. We've all heard the fable of the frog and the scorpion.
3. How foolish are those who raise wild animals as pets and are surprised when they do things consistent with their nature. ( **lions kill** )

### B. Likewise, those who have not been born again will act like unregenerated people.

1. **John 8: 43-44** Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. **44** You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
2. **Eph. 2: 3**- Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.
3. People who are living to fulfill the desires of their flesh are called darkness.  
**Eph. 5: 7-8** Therefore do not be partakers with them; **8** for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light
4. The Apostle describes the sinful nature, the actions which are normal for sinners.  
**Rom. 1: 28-32** And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, **29** being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, **30** slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, **31** without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; **32** and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

### C. It is unrealistic for us to expect that people of the world will act contrary to their nature.

1. It is like a lion to be domesticated. It can be restrained, but its nature is to attack.
  - a. No matter how well-trained an animal may be, his true nature remains.
  - b. Good example ... Las Vegas performers nearly killed by his lion.
2. Man is the only animal whose nature can truly be changed. ( **I Cor. 6: 9-11** )  
( *It takes God to make that change possible ... and it is only in Christ.* )

## II. The Christian should not react negatively to the wicked. ( *Puts them in control.* )

### A. Christians must remain true to their spiritual nature.

1. Being in flesh the old nature calls to us, but we must never revive it.
 

**Gal. 5: 16-17** But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.
2. This struggle never ends.
  - a. Be especially alert when you think you stand. ( **I Cor. 10: 12** )
  - b. The old nature will keep popping up. ( **Rom. 7: 18, 23 ; 8: 5ff** )
3. Every time the Christian is confronted with evil a spiritual battle is fought.
  - a. How will he respond; will he conform or be transformed ?
  - b. Remember ... **Rom. 12: 1-2**

### B. When the Christian's response to evil is according to the old nature, the world has won.

1. The old nature cries out for one to respond in kind, but the new man restrains.
  - a. **REMEMBER :** Satan is at war with your soul. ( **I Pet. 2: 11** )
  - b. He deliberately tries to engender evil responses. ( *Taunts* )
  - c. Jesus gives instructs us how we are to respond to such attacks.
 

**Luke 6: 29-** Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; ( *Challenge* )  
and whoever takes away your coat,  
do not withhold your shirt from him either.
2. **Focus:** The Christian understands who is in charge and who determines outcomes.
  - a. All vengeance belongs to God. ( **Rom. 12: 19** )
  - b. He alone determines if, what and when there will be retribution for evil.
  - c. **II Thes. 1: 6-9** ... Ultimately, all those who afflict Christians will be judged.
3. *Therefore, Christians may never respond to evil with evil.*
  - a. The Christian responds in a way that all men consider correct.
 

**Rom. 12: 17-** Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.  
Respect what is right in the sight of all men.
  - b. The Christian does good in the face of evil.
 

**I Thes. 5: 15-** See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

### C. The nature of the Christian is love.

1. Love is what distinguishes the Christian from the world. ( **John 13: 34-35** )
2. Christians respond to their enemies in love and pray for them. ( **Luke 6: 27-28** )
3. Love takes no account of wrongs suffered. ( **I Cor. 13: 5** )

## III. Christians must be an example to the wicked.

### A. Children learn many more things from their environment than we think.

1. They will pick up attitudes that the parents didn't even know they had.
2. Our society is now experiencing the detrimental effects of unrestricted TV.
3. We are all the sum total of our life experiences. ( *sight, sound, interaction* )

### B. Many more people are watching us than we realize.

1. Each person with whom you come in contact leaves an imprint on your life.
2. This is why God warns us about with whom we associate.
  - a. **I Cor. 5: 33- Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."**
  - b. **II Cor. 6: 14- Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?**
3. HOWEVER ... It is not the desire of God that Christians be isolated from the world.
  - a. **John 17: 15-16 I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.**
  - b. All Christians are missionaries sent as sojourners in the world to rescue lost souls.

### C. It is the desire of God that His followers are to be on display before the world.

1. **Matt. 5: 13-16** ... Christians **ARE** the light of the world.
  - a. Put on a lampstand for all to see.
  - b. As lights we have two functions ... *Enlighten man & Glorify God*
2. Being lights, Christians form a contrast with the world.
 

**Phil. 2: 14-15 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; <sup>15</sup> so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.**
3. Like the Apostle, we should be able to tell others to follow us.
  - a. **ILL.-** Not like the guy with "*Follow ME To Heaven*" on bumper, but drove crazy.

- b. **Phil. 3: 17-** Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

\* *It is clearly God's plan that you be the light on your street, in your workplace, etc.*

#### IV. As Christians we must be patient & longsuffering with the wicked.

##### A. We must be as the warm climate which melts the thickest of glaciers.

1. A few days of hot sun will have little effect, but will harden the crust.
2. A few years of 50 degree temperature will melt it away.

##### B. Consistent love will melt the coldest heart.

1. **I Pet. 3: 1-4** ... Peter teach women that their character will convert w/o nagging.
2. **ILL. -** Every Sunday morning a woman walked past a man's house on her way to church. Year after year he watched her grow old to the point of needing a cane, but rain or shine she never missed a Sunday. As she grew older the man made sure his walk was kept clear of ice in the winter so she would not fall. Finally, the woman stopped passing the man's house and learned she had died. As the weeks passed, the man became more and more curious as to what there was about that church which could motivate someone be as faithful as that old woman had been. Because of her influence, the man started attending that church and eventually became a very faithful Christian. *Never underestimate influence.*

##### C. That which works against us can also be made to work for God.

1. Just as the world can slowly influence Christians to leave the faith, Christians can slowly lead others to the faith.
2. Jesus associated with sinners, but He was not at their gatherings to party.
3. When light is shown in darkness life will grow.

#### CONCLUSION :

##### A. What do I do when I have a neighbor with the character of Satan ?

1. Convert him to Christ.
2. Do for him what others did for you.

**Col. 1: 13-14** For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

3. As God's streetlight in your neighborhood :
  - a. You must be mindful that it is normal for unsaved people to be wicked.
  - b. You must never allow yourself to return evil for their evil.
  - c. You must never give up on those with whom you come in contact.
  
- B. We must be aware that part of our ministry is to be the streetlight on the block.**
  1. Like the streetlight, as long as there is darkness we are on duty.
  2. The streetlight is put on a high post to maximize its ability to illuminate.
  3. Just hanging on to the post doesn't get the job done, a streetlight must shine.
  
- C. Streetlight don't glorify themselves, but everyone sees them.**
  1. **Matt 5** ... You **ARE** the light of the world.
  2. Shine brightly.
  3. Don't allow the darkness to overwhelm you .

### **INVITATION :**

- A. There is no darkness so dark that the light cannot penetrate it.**
  1. No matter how black and dark your sins, Jesus can shine new life to your soul.
  2. No matter how wicked your neighbor, the light of God's love can reach him.
  3. Just look what He did for those wicked Corinthians.
 

**I Cor. 6: 9-11** Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, **10** nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. **11** Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.
  
- B. Let your light so shine that they may see your good works and glory your ..**
  
- C. If you are in darkness, now is the time to open the door of your heart and let the light of God's love shine in.**

**Lesson Text :**

**Matthew 5: 13-16**

**13** You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. **14** You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; **15** nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. **16** Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.