The Fear Factor

“It is easier to love humanity as a whole, than to love one’s neighbors.”

In the broad sense, we are good at loving people, but in the specific sense, certain individuals are hard to love. Maybe that is why the Great commandment starts with loving God, because it is not possible to love on our own. We must be connected to Him, depend on Him, and trust Him so we can be graceful, intentional, and loving with the people next door. Overcoming the fear factor is aided by the knowledge that “The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9). Loving God and loving our neighbors have as much to do with maturing Faith as anything else we’ve ever experienced.

1) For many of us it is less fearful to go on an overseas mission trip than the thought of trying to get to know our neighbors. Why is this true?

2) How does our constant intake of news make us leery or distrustful of those around us?

3) “This neighboring stuff is just too messy. I’m just not sure it’s worth it.”

What attitudes, thoughts, or actions help you have victory over such defeating statements?
In Numbers 13:1-33, the 12 spies went into the Promised Land. 10 of the spies brought back a negative report. Joshua and Caleb brought back a positive report.

-What was the difference?

-How does it make you feel that for 40 years they did not realize the good God had for them because their perceived fears kept them from what God had laid out for them?

-How do we best navigate between what is fear and what is wise discernment?

-How do you react to these three statements.
  A) Following Jesus is not necessarily designed to be safe.
  B) Much of our “fear” is better labeled “timidity”.
  C) Awkwardness won’t kill me.

Neighboring is not an introvert-extrovert thing.

How do we use our introverted tendencies as an excuse?

-This is a calling from Jesus and you have to find a way of doing it.

A) How does this statement make you feel?

B) What challenges does it bring to mind?

C) What are issues we need to pray for each other?

Is it possible to have a culture among His disciples who serve others but not a culture who love their neighbors as themselves?

-What do you see as differences in the two cultures?

-Would your neighbors care if you left the neighborhood?

-“Our neighbors are too distracted to notice another well-produced program on a screen or a piece of entertainment in a theater. They quickly move from one “truth” to another. They live too fast and are too cynical. Only an encounter with something real, humble, and embodied, where they encounter a set of eyes, a conversation, and an authentic life, will cause them to take notice.” (Prodigal Christianity: 10 sign posts into the missional frontier, David E Fitch and Geoff Holsclaw)

-Does it embolden you or make you shake in your boots when you read statements like that?
What is one **bold** step that you will take to get to know one of your neighbors this week? Write down the name and your planned step here. Share it with someone. The journey is tough by yourself; it is always better when others go with you.

“If we are going to have a story that will be heard, we are going to have to live a life that can be watched”- Jen Hatmaker