

23-0827p Transcript

23-0827p - *Neighborly Apologetics, Foundations, Basics*, Scott Reynolds

Bible Reader: Roger Raines

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Neighborly Apologetics, Foundations, Basics

Transcript (0:03 - 30:50)

Scripture Reading

Bible Reader: Roger Raines

James 2:8,

(0:03) Good evening. I'll be reading from the book of James, chapter 2, verse 8. James 2, verse 8.

(0:14) If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the scriptures, you shall love your neighbor as thyself, and you are doing well. (0:25) This concludes this reading. (0:27)

Transcript

Preacher: Scott Reynolds

(0:33) Okay, let's begin our look into neighborly apologetics. (0:41) They'll start out by saying, this introduction to neighborly apologetics is kind of an apologetic on neighborly apologetics to make a difference for why we're doing apologetics this way. (0:56) And if you're concerned about the word apologetics, you'll know more about it in a moment.

(1:02) But why we're doing apologetics this way, neighborly, rather than the traditional way that apologetics has morphed into in our Christian world today. (1:14) Dell says, I'm not belittling that, the way that we've used apologetics. (1:19) I'm just saying that I think we need to have a perspective that is in line with the Lord's call for us to be engaged with the people who live around us.

(1:33) And he will expand on the comparison, which we will not get to tonight. (1:39) That will be the next time that I do this, the next Sunday night that I'm speaking. (1:44) He will expand on the comparison between what he calls academic apologetics and neighborly apologetics, which I say we probably won't get to it.

(1:56) We're not going to get to it. (1:57) But a change to neighborly apologetics, he believes, is necessary for us to engage the current world that he believes God has given over to a depraved

mind. (2:13) And if you were here on the 30th for my lesson, you know, have an understanding of what a depraved mind is.

(2:21) And if you look on TV and you see the nonsense going on, you can also see a demonstration of depraved mind. (2:30) That God, it's God's doing, that God has given them over to. (2:36) So, on to neighborly apologetics.

(2:39) We begin with the royal law. (2:43) James tells us, fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture. (2:49) Love your neighbor as yourself, James 2, 8. (2:56) Paul says, for the whole law is fulfilled in one word, love.

(3:03) Love your neighbor as yourself, Galatians 5, 14. (3:06) I am emphasizing the word love there, Paul didn't say it twice, but that's the word he's talking about. (3:13) For the commandments, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, (3:23) and any other commandment are summed up in this one word, love.

(3:29) Love your neighbor as yourself, Romans 13, 9. (3:32) Jesus tells us, love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (3:40) This is the first and greatest commandment. (3:43) And the second is like it, love your neighbor as yourself.

(3:48) All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments, Matthew 22, 37-40. (3:58) So love, he says here, is a steadfast sacrificial zeal that seeks the true good of another. (4:07) And neighbor is the Greek word, P-L-E-S-I-O-N, which is something like plaition, something like that, plaition.

(4:16) For one who lives near or nearby a neighbor. (4:26) And so, putting those together, we have a steadfast sacrificial zeal that seeks the good, true good, (4:35) of the one who providentially lives near to you. (4:40) So if you go and read Paul's dissertation on Mars Hill in the Oropagus, (4:48) you will see that he says that God has placed each one of us exactly where he wants us in the world.

(5:00) So our neighbor is providentially, God has placed our neighbors by us. (5:09) So do you see your neighbor this way, that he's providentially placed by God? (5:16) So the royal law is love your neighbor. (5:21) This is ground zero in the work of the kingdom.

(5:25) And God wants us to be engaged in the people that are providentially around us. (5:31) This means that God has entrusted the primary work of the kingdom to the common Christian family. (5:38) And that's what we read about in the scripture, about the role of, and he put pastor, I put elders, (5:44) and the leaders in the church, their job is to equip the saints for the work, (5:50) and that is in line with the royal law.

(5:55) So the vision we offer here, in this context, neighborly apologetics, is Christian families, (6:03) my wife, my kids, we together are going to engage ourselves in building real relationships. (6:13) So the Christian family, we will build real relationships with our neighbors, (6:18) significant relationships with those who are providentially in our Jerusalem, he calls it. (6:26) And that must be something out of the engagement project, which I haven't seen yet, (6:31) but I'll probably see it pretty soon, since that's part of his program.

(6:38) Through prayer, and that is, prayer is absolutely critical, (6:44) with grace and wisdom and truth being attractively winsome, (6:49) tearing down walls, building up trust, and doing the work of the kingdom. (6:54) So he has three memory verses, we're only going to get to see two tonight.

(7:00) So I have three memory verses for you as a family to memorize.

(7:05) You as parents memorize them, have your children memorize them, (7:09) as we begin to engage our neighbors. (7:12) Because I think these are key verses that will help us understand and realize (7:18) what it means when God calls us to have a defense for our faith. (7:24) The first one comes from 1 Peter, memory verse number one.

(7:29) 1 Peter 3, verse 15, (7:33) But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, (7:37) always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you (7:43) for a reason for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect. (7:53) And so here in this passage, we'll look at a few of these words and phrases (7:59) and draw them out in understanding what God is calling us to do. (8:03) The first is apologia, or make a defense, from which we get the word apologetic, (8:12) and that's what it means, making a defense.

(8:15) The rest of this passage is telling us that we are to make a defense to anyone (8:20) who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. (8:26) And my position is, Dell says, that no one is going to ask you for a reason (8:34) for the hope that's within you if they don't know you. (8:39) If we haven't built a relationship with someone, they are not going to do that.

(8:45) They just won't. (8:46) Shallow relationships won't bring that about. (8:50) Drive-by Christianity won't bring that about.

(8:54) Relationships will. (8:56) We have to be faithful in our walk when things don't go well that we manifest that hope. (9:04) Otherwise, we'll look just like anybody else.

(9:08) But it's in that deep relationship that people can see that witness of hope (9:14) that is in you and begin to ask those questions. (9:19) We'll see this in every verse, that the notion that this is to be done with gentleness (9:26) and respect, which is the great understanding of how we're going to do neighborly apologetics, (9:33) that it is always going to be done with grace. (9:36) It is always going to be done with respect.

(9:39) It will always be done with gentleness. (9:43) And all of this, as the scripture says, then honors Christ. (9:49) The Lord is holy.

(9:53) Remembering verse number two from Colossians, Colossians 4, verses 5 and 6. (10:00) Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. (10:07) Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, (10:13) so that you might know how to respond to each person. (10:18) We're going to spend more time on this verse because it is so important for us (10:23) in terms of how God is laying out for us how we conduct ourselves toward outsiders.

(10:32) We're going to look at wisdom, the first word that is important there, (10:36) for us, is this notion of wisdom, and this is so critical. (10:42) I will confess, Dell says, that for most of my Christian life, (10:47) my conduct toward outsiders was not driven by wisdom. (10:53) It was driven by my agenda.

(10:57) It was driven by my desire to beat them academically, logically, rationally, (11:03) to win the argument, to show them that they were wrong. (11:08) And of all those things, I'm quite ashamed of. (11:11) But for sure, my conduct was not done with wisdom, (11:15) and it especially was not done according to what we're going to see in the rest of this verse.

(11:22) It's important for us to recognize and understand, (11:26) because I think many of us do misunderstand the notion of wisdom. (11:31) But if you really do a study on wisdom, (11:34) you will find that godly wisdom is not what you may think it was. (11:40) I used to think that wisdom was for me, right? (11:45) I wanted wisdom.

(11:49) I used to ask God for wisdom, you know, according to the Scripture. (11:54) If any man asks for wisdom, and I didn't get it. (11:58) And one of the reasons I didn't get it was because I was asking for it in a selfish way.

(12:05) I wanted it for me and for the wrong reasons, you know, to puff myself up or whatever that was. (12:14) But godly wisdom is not primarily for yourself. (12:19) Godly wisdom is primarily for the shalom or peace of another, for the true good of another.

(12:26) This is why God was pleased with Solomon. (12:31) When Solomon asked for wisdom, he didn't ask for himself. (12:34) God made that clear.

(12:36) He said, you didn't ask for things for yourself, but he asked for wisdom, (12:41) and the Scripture tells us he asked for wisdom for the shalom or peace of his people. (12:47) So we begin talking here about how we're going to go forward in neighborly apologetics, (12:54) and the word wisdom is critical for us. (12:58) And we'll talk more about that and what that looks like.

(13:02) He says in just a minute, but that's not going to happen tonight. (13:06) So a minute somewhere else down the line. (13:12) But in the rest of the passage, let's look at this.

(13:16) Let your speech always be with grace. (13:19) And this is reinforcing what we talked about in the Peter passage, (13:24) that our attitude here in neighborly apologetics is not going to be done of arrogance. (13:34) It's not going to be done.

(13:37) I'm sorry. (13:39) Yeah, that would be right. (13:40) It's not going to be done where we look down on people.

(13:43) It's not going to be one rather where we're in combat with people. (13:49) It's going to be one where we are really engaging in relationship, (13:54) and our speech is always with grace. (13:57) Always with grace 100% of the time, not just when somebody's a nice neighbor, (14:04) not just when somebody's a person that you like, (14:06) but our speech is always with grace, and always grace seasoned with salt.

(14:14) And that's the next piece we'll look at, as though seasoned with salt. (14:19) This is so interesting. (14:22) This is an incredible way that the Spirit of God has moved Paul to write these words, (14:28) that our speech always with grace is seasoned with salt, (14:32) and that seasoning that provides for us the means by which we will then know how to respond to each person, (14:42) and seasoned with salt so that you might know how to respond to each person.

(14:50) This is why we need wisdom and we need discernment. (14:55) So confession again. (14:57) The way I approached people for many, many years in my life, (15:03) and I was going to count up the number of apologetic books I have, (15:07) I brought one here, personal apologetics.

(15:14) I've been through it so many times. (15:16) I even have the apologetics study Bible. (15:19) But I will tell you that my study of those was, I guess I could say, was a misdirected motive, (15:29) that my study of apologetics was primarily driven by my desire to know, (15:36) and in that

knowledge possibly feel more important, smarter than, all those kinds of things, (15:43) but for sure the motive was to win arguments.

(15:47) And that motive, I'm going to confess to you, is not one that is reflected here in Colossians 4. (15:54) Because when I approached people, (15:56) I approached people not from the wisdom and discernment to listen to how each person is speaking (16:02) and where they are so that my response to them would be tailored according to who they are. (16:10) I followed my own agenda. (16:13) And so Colossians here is telling us that we need a wisdom and discernment (16:19) and praying that the Spirit of God will give us discernment as we begin to engage with people, (16:25) seasoning our speech with grace that might stimulate a response from someone, (16:31) and that response from someone is what we then want to hear and understand, (16:36) and with the guidance from the Spirit of God to know then how we respond to each person (16:45) rather than my one, two, three agenda.

(16:50) So let's talk about this discernment. (16:55) We will deal with this more as we go forward in these lessons, (16:59) but we'll introduce it here because it's really important for us. (17:03) Why? (17:05) Because the scriptures are calling us to have wisdom to know how to respond to each person.

(17:13) That's discernment. (17:15) We need wise discernment. (17:18) And the first thing we do need to understand, of course, (17:22) is that humanity is really broken up into two categories when it comes to all things spiritual, (17:30) and that is the believer and the nonbeliever.

(17:34) And what we need to discern when we're talking with someone is if our neighbor is a believer (17:41) or our neighbor is not a believer. (17:45) Now, we confess that line is a nice little bright line there. (17:52) Now, if you don't know what I'm talking about, (17:54) if you go to tonight's sermon and you get the link and you look, it's hard to see on the paper, (18:06) but there's a little line.

(18:07) There's relationship and believer, nonbeliever, (18:11) and in between them is a bright white line on his slide, and that's what he's referring to. (18:18) And he says, now we confess that line is a nice little white bright line there, (18:24) but it's not always a bright white line. (18:28) Sometimes it's not easy to discern.

(18:32) In fact, the scripture tells us that there will be people that are weeds and tares within the body of Christ. (18:40) There will be those who have done amazing things. (18:43) You remember the very, very hard verses where people came to Jesus and said, (18:49) did we not cast out demons in your name, and all those kinds of things, (18:54) and then those most terrible words in all the universe, depart from me.

(19:00) I never knew you. (19:02) Those are hard words. (19:05) And so that line can be very difficult, hard to discern, (19:09) but it's important for us to know are we dealing with a believer or dealing with a nonbeliever, (19:17) and that will drive how we will then respond and deal with people.

(19:24) We also need to discern whether or not this is a believer or a nonbeliever who is open to God (19:31) or are they closed to God. (19:34) And so we have the believer and the nonbeliever, (19:36) and the nonbeliever, are they open or closed to God? (19:40) I think reality is still, even in this culture as much as it is slipping away from us, (19:47) that there are really very, very few

people who were totally closed to God. (19:55) I chose to watch, and this has occurred, let me tell you, (20:05) January 3rd in 2023.

(20:09) How about that? (20:12) He recorded this on January 3rd, 2023, (20:16) and this is going to reference a football game that happened the day before. (20:25) So I chose to watch a football game last night, (20:29) and a very, very critical football game in the NFL and so forth. (20:35) I spent time doing that, and if you have heard the news or you haven't, (20:40) there was a very serious injury.

(20:42) In fact, it was so serious that they canceled the game (20:45) as a result of an injury in which the ambulance came onto the field (20:50) and the first responders were doing some very drastic CPR measures on this player late last night. (20:57) He was taken to the hospital and was in critical condition. (21:03) My understanding today is that he may have improved, (21:09) that he most likely went into cardiac arrest as a result of a blow to the chest.

(21:17) But what was interesting about this was that the players were all down on the knees praying, (21:25) and the announcers were talking about praying for him (21:27) and just as we have heard the phrase that when the foxhole is under deep barrage, (21:34) there are no atheists in the foxhole, (21:37) that when people were confronted with a life and death situation, in this case, (21:43) with a very close friend, that they turned to prayer. (21:47) These are the kinds of things that we will talk about later on as these lessons proceed, (21:55) to talk about these events that are going on in the world around us to make that defense. (22:02) And so a nonbeliever who's closed to God is very difficult.

(22:08) We'll talk about that in a minute, which we won't get to tonight. (22:12) But the nonbeliever who is open to God might be willing to talk about what happened last night. (22:20) They might be willing to talk about what happened, (22:24) maybe to engage them in a question, really praying to, you know, (22:29) and if he survives and he turns out to be okay, (22:35) are they going to think that prayers did something? (22:38) And if they don't think they do anything, then why were they praying? (22:43) In other words, you can see the argument as we proceed forward here with talking to a nonbeliever.

(22:51) In the light of the mass of people praying now for someone, (22:56) and the interesting thing is that there was no one in the announcer's booth, (23:01) there was no one in the stands, (23:03) there was no one on the field that expressed their outrage that people were praying. (23:09) No one in the announcer's booth, when they were talking about calling people to prayer for this young man, (23:16) which I was so thankful that they were saying that, (23:19) but no one would dare at that moment say, (23:22) wait a second, that offends me that you're praying or that you're calling people to pray. (23:28) Anyway, these are the everyday things that occur in the world around us, (23:33) that as we ask God to help us with these things, (23:36) these are part of seasoning our speech with salt.

(23:43) Okay, so the nonbeliever, we have to recognize, are they open to God or are they closed to God? (23:50) Are they hostile to God or do they have a sense that maybe there is someone out there, so to speak? (23:57) We also need to recognize if your neighbor professes to be a believer, (24:01) are they a believer that has a solid worldview? (24:05) Or are they a believer which, you may know, surveys show 93% of self-identified born-again believers, (24:17) 93% do not have a biblical worldview or it's a very shallow worldview. (24:27) So do they have a solid biblical worldview or do they not have a solid biblical worldview? (24:34) If they have a solid biblical worldview, you may want to invite them to go through the engagement project, (24:41) which is how do you engage in

the people that God has given over to a depraved mind. (24:53) So you might want to invite them over to go through the engagement project with you (24:58) so that they can begin to understand the royal law.

(25:03) This is what God has called us to do and why you and your family are willing to engage the people (25:09) that are in your location, that are your neighbors, (25:14) and to call them alongside of you to pray with you as you maybe gauge your neighborhood. (25:25) If they do not have a biblical worldview, then I would think and suggest you do everything you can (25:33) to help them build a biblical worldview. (25:36) One of the ways to do that is to invite them to go through the truth project with you, (25:40) and then after that to go through the engagement project with you.

(25:44) And one of the things I've always had a problem with the way we're set up in the Churches of Christ, (25:51) we're set up to baptize. (25:55) That's our emphasis. (25:57) Go out and make disciples.

(26:00) We don't make disciples. (26:01) We make Christians. (26:06) And then we forget about them because our emphasis is going out and baptizing.

(26:12) What happens to them? (26:14) How long do they last? (26:17) Where do they go? (26:20) There's so much, so many people who've fallen through the holes (26:25) because we don't have a plan in place. (26:30) You ask, and the question comes up, now that I'm a Christian, now what? (26:37) And the only thing that I've ever seen was the suggestion, (26:42) go through the book, now why I'm in the Church of Christ. (26:51) What do we do with people? (26:52) And that's why I like this.

(26:55) It's so driven. (26:58) Once people commit to Christ, now they need to transform. (27:05) Now they need to be able to build.

(27:09) You know, Jesus said, I'm going to build my house. (27:12) I'm going to lay a foundation. (27:13) And you're going to build on top of that.

(27:16) But what do we build? (27:17) A worldview. (27:19) Because everything we need to know about the world is in the Scriptures. (27:25) And we need to know, when we look out in the world, how do I vote? (27:31) What do I base that on? (27:33) Do I base it on their truth claims, or do I compare what they're saying to the Scriptures? (27:40) Are my answers biblically driven? (27:45) Do I have a biblical answer for why I'm voting for who I'm voting for? (27:50) Is that even something that a Christian should think about? (27:53) Is that in a worldview? (27:55) Since we have been given, certainly choosing a leader is important.

(28:05) So one of the things we need to do with Christians is help them build a biblical worldview. (28:13) Now, he goes on to say that the important thing in all of this is that in our engaging with the world around us, (28:23) with the believers and nonbelievers, is that all of this is going to be done through a deep, significant relationship. (28:32) And to some extent, I guess, we could say that this is what is going to characterize neighborly apologetics, (28:41) as opposed to the way I used to do it.

(28:44) That this is going to be done with the context of deep, significant relationships. (28:50) And I don't want to be overly critical here, but quite frankly, modern Christianity doesn't, (28:59) and most of our programs don't really do relationships, deep relationships. (29:05) But we need to do what the Lord modeled for us.

(29:10) He built Jesus. (29:12) The very first thing Jesus built was form his small group. (29:19) He built relationships with them, and even drove those relationships deeper with three of those men.

(29:26) And it was over that period of time, as he built the relationship deeper with those men, (29:35) that he slowly began to reveal deeper and deeper things with them. (29:45) Jesus didn't just come out and tell his disciples the end game. (29:51) He built a relationship with them, and the deeper his relationship got, the more information he gave them.

(30:01) And so, the only way I believe that we're going to gain an audience, and gain an entrance with our neighbor, (30:12) and the only way we're going to be able to earn the right to be able to speak into people's lives, (30:18) especially in the world today, is through building those deeper relationships. (30:27) They're not going to listen to us otherwise, and nor should they. (30:33) And that's as far as I got.

(30:35) So, I'm going to close now. (30:39) We're extending the invitation now to anyone who's subject to it. (30:46) So, if you need, come while we stand and sing.