

Love Your Neighbors

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by Ben Purves

Love your neighbor. This command is echoed through Scripture (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:37-40). What does it mean to love your neighbor? Who is your neighbor?

Jesus answers this question with the parable of the Good Samaritan. Neighbor love requires crossing of societal boundaries and caring for the vulnerable. Though it might prove costly or difficult, loving our neighbors is a crucial part of following Jesus.

Sometimes we frame neighbor love as community outreach. We love our neighbors by dropping off canned goods at the local food bank. Other times we envision neighbor love as giving our spare change to the woman with the cardboard sign in the median.

It's as if everyone is my neighbor. But as we go through our day, we pass countless 'neighbors' on the road, at our workplace, and in the store. We don't have the time or resources to love and care for everyone. And all too easily 'everyone is my neighbor' can become 'no one is my neighbor.'

With limited time and resources, where do we begin? Let me encourage you to start with your actual neighborhood. Love those who are your actual neighbors. God has sovereignly placed you next to them, and them next to you (Acts 17:26-27). Your neighbors are not next-door by accident, but by design.

Here's a few practical ways to love your neighbors:

1. Meet them

While western individualism would prefer to keep us strangers, take the initiative to meet them. Introduce yourself and your family, and find out who your neighbors are. Spend time in the front yard. Welcome new neighbors. Make margin in your life so you can be a true friend.

2. Pray

Pray for your neighborhood. Pray for the ministry of the gospel. As you learn about the needs and struggles of your neighbors, pray for them.

3. Serve

Serve your neighborhood as opportunities arise. Shovel snow for the elderly or the single mom. Help someone move that piece of furniture. Bring a meal to someone who's sick. Give a ride so your neighbor doesn't have to hire a taxi. Put the love of God on display to your neighborhood.

4. Be Hospitable

As you're able, use your yard and/or home to be hospitable to your neighbors. Hospitality is such a practical way to bless others, and your friendship and home may become an invaluable connecting point for your neighborhood in our relationally impoverished world.

5. Point them to Jesus

In Jeremiah 31:34, we see a promise of the New Covenant which one day will be fulfilled: "And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Until this day comes, let us love our neighbors with truth and graciously point them to Jesus – "Know the Lord."

Last, I invite you to join us during the 10am hour in the sanctuary for our [Gospel Community series](#) as we consider what it means to be a community created *by the gospel*, and a community that is *for the gospel*. These next two Sundays will conclude our series as we think together about loving our neighbors.

Resources

[The Art of Neighboring](#) by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon

[Bless Every Home](#) – A neighborhood mapping resource for prayer and outreach.

[The Gospel Comes With A House Key](#) by Rosaria Butterfield

[Neighboring](#) – Tim Brister at the 2016 OBC Equip Conference