



The Art of Neighboring “Fear Factor”

Announcements:

Small Groups – Life is Better Together! Small group sign ups have started! Small groups will launch in September. Join a small group at Shift Church and find a place to grow, as well as have a positive impact on the lives of others. Even if you’re currently in a small group, or have participated in the past, please sign up again so we can determine which groups are full or still have room. For questions email info@shift-church.com.

Second Shift Students – Shift’s Student Ministry kicks off September 9th. We will be having a parent’s night on August 26th at 6 pm in the worship area in Westwood middle school. We will go over the program, the why’s behind it and you’ll get to meet our leaders.

Growth Track – stepONE – Follow – Sunday, 12pm – Discover your personality and gifts and learn how to use them to find your purpose in life and your best fit in ministry. Step Three happens the third Sunday of every month.

Change:

Welcome
Small Group Study Guide By Dave Runyon & Jay Pathak

Dear Hosts,

Thank you for opening up your home and for your willingness to facilitate this experience for your group. We hope and pray that this study will be a powerful tool for you personally and for everyone in your group.

When Jesus was asked to sum up everyone into one command, he said to love God with everything we have and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Most of us have turned this simple idea of loving our neighbors into a nice saying, putting it on bumperstickers and refrigerator magnets and then going on with our lives without actually putting it into practice.

What would happen if every follower of Jesus took the Great Commandment literally? Is it possible that the solution to our society’s biggest issues has been right under our noses for the past two thousand years?

How Change Happens

Have you ever decided that you want to work out and do a better job taking care of your body? Or, have you ever made a commitment to breaking a bad habit? Most of us have something that we want to change about our behavior and yet very few of us have figured out how to actually do it. Changing our minds is relatively easy, changing our behaviors is a lot harder. Even when we change some of our behaviors, we quickly realize that it's even harder to change our motivations and desires. It's one thing to know you should work out, it's another thing to actually make your way to the gym and start sweating.

If you are reading this, it's likely that you believe certain things about God and how he has instructed us to live. You are probably aware that there is a big difference between believing something and actually doing it. Most people know that they should work out and break a few of their most obvious bad habits, but very few actually learn how to live differently and become the kind of person that Jesus is calling them to be.

Over the next few weeks we're going to give you an invitation to get back to the basics and to actually take the second half of the great commandment literally. The vast majority of us wish that we were closer to our neighbors, but that is often where it stops. The real question is this, "How can we become better neighbors?"

Take Small Steps

The way to become a better neighbor is by learning to take a series of small steps in the same direction. You won't become the kind of neighbor you want to be thinking really hard about it. You'll only become a great neighbor by following the bread crumbs and taking small steps that lead you into a new way of living. In order to become a good neighbor, we must move beyond knowing and start doing.

Form Habits

40-45% of the decisions that we make are habit. When you suddenly become aware that you are at your destination and aren't sure how you got there...that is a result of your habits. Growing in your neighboring skills requires forming habits that enable you to become a great neighbor. The key to life change is making small movements that lead us down the road towards a new way of living. Most of what we're going to encourage you to do over the next few weeks will seem small and simple. The steps might seem repetitive at times and that is intentional. If you engage each week we are confident that you will form some new habits that will help you to live out what Jesus said matters most.

The first and most important step is to learn, retain, and use the names of your literal neighbors. At the end of every session, you will share with your group the progress that you are making in this area.

How to Make the Most Out of Your Group Experience

We want to encourage you to lean into the repetition and allow the people in your small group to hold you accountable to doing some small things that will make a big difference. As with any small group, what you get out of it is directly related to what you put into it. That is why we have designed this study in such a way that allows you time to process with your group, as well as time to reflect and pray on your own. In order to maximize your growth and experience over the next six weeks, we recommend that you do the following:

BEFORE Each Group Session

1. Read the assigned chapter(s) before each meeting and avoid reading at the last minute. Find a quiet place where you can truly process the material and encounter the God who wants to transform your heart and mind.
2. Read through the questions and write down your responses. Take time to write down what you really think, even if it might be unpopular, controversial, and jot down any questions you still might have. In short, be honest! Avoid waiting until the last minute and just trying to quickly fill-in the “right answers.”
3. Communicate with your host if you need to miss a session for any reason.

DURING Each Group Session

1. Participate by sharing your honest thoughts. Go one small step past your normal comfort zone.
2. Respect the hosts by following their direction and staying on topic.
3. Respect others in the group by allowing for equal participation. If you are an extrovert and a verbal processor, try to keep your comments concise. If you are an introvert, please share! The group will benefit from hearing your thoughts.
4. Help create a safe environment for honest discussion by not divulging other people’s personal information.

CONCLUDE Each Group Session (the most important part!)

1. Go through the three exercises: Block Map, Pray for a Neighbor, Share a next step
2. These three steps will happen every week. These steps help you take small steps that build momentum in an atmosphere of accountability. This is how habits form and you will become a different kind of neighbor.
3. Listen carefully to everyone’s presentation of their block map, prayers and next steps. Listen so you can be praying for the other people in the group throughout the week.

AFTER Each Group Session

1. Reflect on the topic and discussion by filling out the “On Your Own” journaling section.
2. Pray. Ask God to do what only He can do – change your heart to be more like His!
3. Actually do the Next Step that you identified each week. Take action and share with your group about what you experienced!
4. Have fun with this!

Session Three: The Fear Factor

Assigned Reading = Chapter 4

Getting Started

What was the “next step” that you shared the last time we were together? How did it go?
[Go around the room and have everyone share.](#)

Play the video: <https://vimeo.com/117436824>

Discussion Questions

1. What was your big take away from this week’s reading and/or video? What stuck out to you? What did you like? What was difficult or confusing?
2. Read Luke 5:27-32
A. Are you uncomfortable about spending time with anyone on your block? Anyone you would feel strange being seen with? Why? [We all battle hidden judgements and fears. Sometimes we are aware of the way we are seeing others and sometimes we are really just afraid of how others will see us. We all have certain types of people that we are tempted to judge.](#)
3. Discuss the impact that the 24 hour media cycle has on your world view. What are you afraid of that you have only seen on the news? [Everyone feels a little sick after watching the news. We are suddenly afraid of things that we didn’t even know existed before we watched it. We’re afraid of all kinds of things like sicknesses, bed bugs, and terrorism, but we’re really frightened by the people that might be surrounding us.](#)
4. What’s the worse case scenario if you engaged your neighbors? Does knowing them increase the likelihood of your worst case scenario? [We are all afraid that the horrible stuff that we see on the news is living around us. It’s easier to hide and hope it will go away. The irony is that this isolation ends up making us more suspicious and fearful. If these kinds of people are living around us it would be WAY better to know that. And usually we realize that they aren’t who we were afraid that they are.](#)

5. Who do you think is scared of you? Why? Most of us don't realize that our fears make people afraid of us. We perpetuate the cycle by withdrawing and end up making people afraid of us. While we're busy guessing who they are and believing the worst, they are often doing the same thing about us. Someone has to break the cycle.

6. What do you think are the main reasons people are often afraid of their neighbors? Do you have any fears or concerns about the people in your neighborhood? How would it be different if you knew their story? We usually have mercy for others when we understand their story. It is the unknown that leads us to make assumptions and leads us to keep our distance.

Moving Forward

Again, this is the way you'll close every session and this is the most important part of this study. Manage your time well and resist the temptation to cut this part short!

1. Do the Block Map - Write the names of your neighbors by listing out the names of the adults and children of the 8 closest houses or apartment units next to you and pay attention to the blank spaces. Take a second and identify each of the neighbors and decide if they are a stranger, acquaintance, or relationship. Go around and share how many neighbors you know by name and if you have made any progress since the last meeting.

2. Identify one neighbor that you are going to pray for over the next week. Take time to pray in the group for the neighbors that were mentioned.

3. Share one small "next step" that you feel God is calling you to take in the next 7 days.

Options they might choose:

~Learn a specific neighbor's name

~Invite a couple over for dinner

~Ask a neighbor for advice on how to take care of your lawn because their's is nicer

~Have everyone share that step out loud and write them down so that everyone can be praying throughout the week.

*Remind everyone to read chapter 7 and remind them when the next meeting time is!

On Your Own

Journal about a time that you overcame a fear. What were the steps that you took in completing that process?

*Read Chapter 7 before the next meeting