



The Art of Neighboring “Taking it Seriously”

Announcements:

- **Growth Track - stepTHREE – Discover – Sunday, 12pm** – Learn the spiritual journey that God has for each of us: to follow Jesus. Step One happens the first Sunday of every month. God has an incredible purpose for your life, and the Shift Growth Track is designed to help you connect with that purpose. On the growth track, you will spend four Sundays diving into what it looks like to *follow* Jesus, *connect* to the Church, *discover* your purpose and then *make a difference* with your life.

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!

Welcome to The Art of Neighboring!

Session One: The Call To Neighboring

Assigned Reading = Chapters 1 & 2

Getting Started

Share about your neighborhood and the types of relationships that you have with the people who live on your street or in your building. On a scale of 1 to 10, how “connected” is your current neighborhood?

Play the Video: <https://vimeo.com/117428367>

Discussion Questions

1. What was your big take away from this week’s reading and/or the video? What stuck out to you? What did you like? What was difficult or confusing?

2. Read Acts 17:26-27.

A. What jumps out at you from this passage? How does it fit the context of the rest of his sermon in Acts 17? [Any comments and questions are fine here. We want people to process the Scripture together and give their honest thoughts.](#)

B. Do you have any “invisible” neighbors (page 17)? Do you think you are invisible to them as well? How does it end up like this? [Allow for open sharing. Note: Invisible neighbors are simply the neighbors that we see but don’t yet know.](#)

C. According to Acts 17 that we just read, why do we live where we live? Why has God placed us in our neighborhoods? What about those that surround us? Why are they there?

[We are hoping people make these types of observations:](#)

[1 – God has a hand in determining where people live.](#)

[2 – Where we live isn’t all about us – sometimes God puts us in places so that those around us \(our neighbors\) can find HIM!](#)

3. In chapter one, the mayor states, “The majority of the issues that our community is facing would be eliminated or drastically reduced if we could just figure out a way to become a community of great neighbors.” To what extent do you think this is true? Why don’t government programs alone solve the problems of society? [Allow for open sharing. We are hoping people see that government programs are not the only, nor necessarily the best, solution to social problems.](#)

4. Luke 10:29 says this about the teacher of the law: “But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” [In what ways do we attempt to justify ourselves in order to avoid taking the Great Commandment literally? In what ways are you tempted to make a “neighbor” into a metaphor? Jesus was trying to get the Jewish people to see outside their ethnic boundaries by showing that ANYONE can be their neighbor. The authors make the point that the Jewish people were already good at caring for their actual neighbors so Jesus was giving them the “graduate level” definition. We tend to do the opposite in our culture. Since we mostly agree that everyone is our neighbor, we tend to neglect our geographic neighbors and give the word neighbor a more metaphorical definition. It is critical that we understand that Jesus calls us to love our actual neighbors. It is important for this to soak in since this will be a shift in thinking for many people. As long as people define neighbor as a metaphor, they will justify neglecting their geographic neighbors.](#)

5. What would happen if everyone made it a point to know and befriend their literal neighbors?

[This is a good opportunity for people to dream together about how the world would change if this were true.](#)

Moving Forward

At the conclusion of each gathering we will do 3 things. Often groups lose track of time and end up rushing through the second half of the content. We strongly believe that these 3 exercises are the most important part of this study. If you only have time to do one section each week...do this one!

1. Do the Block Map - Take out the block map and fill it in right now... just start with the names of your neighbors... (Allow for extra time to do the map this first time around)

Go around the room and share how many of the names you knew? Did you have any epiphanies as you did this exercise? What did you learn or feel as a result of doing this exercise? Most people naturally feel a little guilty when they realize how little they know about their neighbors. Allow people to feel what they feel, but this is definitely NOT the time to try to make people feel guilty or that they are not doing enough. Allow God to work on people in HIS timing. As a host you might feel like you should know more of your neighbors since you are a host. Avoid that temptation. We are all on this journey together and we all have room to grow. Let people see you are real and honest and that you don't have it all figured out either. Your group will trust you more for your honesty!

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. Pay attention to the blank spaces (YOU SHOULD HAVE already done this earlier in this first session). Every other week you will go around and share how many neighbors you know by name and if you have made any progress since the last meetings. Take a second and identify each of the neighbors and decide if they are a stranger, acquaintance, or relationship.

2. Identify one neighbor that you are going to pray for during 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 3 and remind them when the next meeting time is!

On Your Own

Take a few minutes to journal about your past experiences with neighboring. How do you think God might want to stretch you over the next six weeks? Encourage people to take some time to reflect on the session and do the "On Your Own" journaling.

*Read Chapter 3 before the next meeting