

The Art of Neighboring: Pause - Adjust - Act

Glen Elliott - November 5, 2017

Series Big Idea: Jesus wants to change the world. And his plan is simple and effective. It all starts with those close to us. Paul in Galatians 5:14 said: *For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."* Jesus gave us what is referred to as the Great Commandment - Love God with your all and love your neighbor as yourself. Everyone agrees! But to many it is just a nice thought and idea. It has now become cliché! The majority of the problems of our community could be drastically reduced and even eliminated if we became a community of great neighbors. Followers of Jesus should be light in their neighborhood! We should be different, not isolated, but engaging. Obeying this one command can change the world. That is our mission! The power of being a good neighbor is beyond what we can imagine. It is the plan of Jesus. Back to the basics!

Message Big Idea: We are commanded to love our neighbor. A neighbor is anyone that we are in physical proximity with. A good neighbor refuses to allow the lack of time or the fear of the unknown to stop them from loving others. Jesus told a story of a good Samaritan who illustrated what it means to be a good neighbor. A good neighbor who sees someone in need will adjust to respond and act with kindness and compassion.

Main Idea: Don't just walk by, but pause, adjust and act.

Main Text: Luke 10:25-37

Links: [Peopling series](#)

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. Would you consider or classify yourself as a "good neighbor?" Why or why not? How do you live this out? What makes it hard to be the neighbor that you know you should be or want to be?
2. We all have certain kinds of people that are harder to love. What kind of folks are the hardest for you to love as a neighbor? Who are your "non-neighbors?" What kind of person do you tend to have a calloused heart toward? Why?
3. Share a time when you saw someone with a need and you decided not to engage or help. Why did you "walk on by" without helping? If you could have a do over, what would you like to do differently?
4. Where do you tend to struggle the most when you see someone in need: making an adjustment to your schedule or plan or acting in a practical way?

Screen Information:

Slide1: Luke 10:25-37 (pg. 709)

Slide2: Don't just walk by but pause, adjust and act.

Slide3: Don't just walk by but pause, adjust and act.

Pics/Video4: Yargers in Rocky Point

Slide5: Don't just walk by but pause, adjust and act.

Message:

We are continuing our series called *The Art of Neighboring*. We are looking into what Jesus said were the things that matter most. Jesus summarized what matters most into what we call the Great Commandment. We are to love God with our all and love our neighbor as ourself. According to Jesus - this is what really matters.

Loving God and others is not just a feeling. Love is not just wishing someone well. Love is an action. Love seeks what is best for another person. Jesus says we are to love our neighbors, that is anyone we are in proximity with who might have a need. We are to genuinely love them as we want to be loved.

But we find it is hard to love our neighbors. Why? What hinders us from being good neighbors? What keeps us from loving our neighbor as ourselves? Jesus knew that we struggle to be good neighbors and he uses a story to help us lock on the things that are critical to help us love our neighbors well. Turn to Luke 10:25-37 (pg. 709 - NIV). **25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"**

26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

27 He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

The teacher of the law was asking what good deeds he must do to earn eternal life or salvation. He goes to the most fundamental question any of us must ask and answer. What is the path to be sure we have eternal life?

Last week we saw in Matthew 22 when Jesus gave us the Great Commandment - Love God with all your being and love your neighbor as yourself. But here in Luke 10, we have a very interesting turn of events. This time it is not Jesus, but a teacher of law who quotes what we now call the Great Commandment. The teacher gets it right! Then Jesus cryptically says; "So do it!" Do that and you'll know God and the ways of God. Actually do the Great Commandment and you'll live the life God wants you to live. That's the way to real living.

But Jesus isn't saying that the teacher or anyone can earn their salvation and earn eternal life by being good. We will never be good enough to earn our way into heaven. Rather, what Jesus is saying is that if you love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind you will go way beyond just doing good things. What you'll seek and find is a real relationship with the living God and that will affect everything.

The teacher of the law was also like a religious lawyer who was an expert at finding loopholes. He was just trying to find the easiest way to get to heaven with the least effort so he asks the loophole question. What's the bare minimum I have to do. Look at verse 29 - ***But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*** Like a good lawyer, he wants to know the scope of who is to be identified as a neighbor. He probably has in his mind who fits the definition of a neighbor and who doesn't. To most Jews a "neighbor" was someone who belongs to their own community. A neighbor was "one of us" and he would assume that would be another Jew in good standing with the community. But anyone who flagrantly sinned or was outside the Jewish race was not considered a neighbor.

This story is recorded in our Bibles for our benefit. Anyone of us can be like the teacher. We look for the easiest way to get what we want. We want to spend eternity with God so what are the minimum requirements. There is only one - really love God and have a real relationship with him. And that requires we also love our neighbor - that's part of it.

And, like the teacher, we consciously or unconsciously determine who is worthy of our love based on if we like them, if we know them, if they act right, if they look right and yes, if they are of a people we are comfortable with. Who have you intentionally or unintentionally determined are not your neighbors and therefore not required to love?

Jesus knows what's going on in the teacher's heart. By the way, he knows what's going on in our hearts also. He knows the man believes that some people are okay and his "neighbors" and there are those who are his "non-neighbors." There are those who can be in my sphere of love and those who are outside my sphere of love.

So Jesus answers the teacher's question by telling a parable or story. It starts at verse 30 - ***30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.***

Let's pause here. The 17 mile road from Jericho to Jerusalem was through a desolate and rocky area that was very dangerous. A man was beaten, robbed and left for dead. That was not a surprise. Then a priest and later a Levite passed by. They both were important people who had important things to do. Good chance they both were going to Jerusalem to serve in the Temple. That was a big deal.

But why didn't they stop? There was a religious law that said if a person touched a dead body or blood he would be declared "unclean" and then they wouldn't be able to serve in the Temple. Or maybe they were just afraid that they too would be attacked by the same thugs waiting for someone to stop and help the poor guy. Or maybe they just bought the idea that it is always safer not involve yourself in someone else's problem. We don't exactly know their reasoning. The fact is they walked by someone in need.

Jesus continues the story and shocks the people who heard it. He's talking to a Jewish audience. They heard that a priest and Levite didn't help. So they assume the next person will be a good Jew who would stop and help. But Jesus says in verse 33 - **33 *But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'***

There is so much to this story. First, two people who could have helped the dying man were too busy, too selfish, or too afraid. They refused to adjust their schedule or plan to give aid to the man. They were afraid to get involved. They knew better! They knew that man was in serious trouble and needed them more than they needed to do what they thought was God's work. The irony is that they walked by the very thing God wanted them to do on their way to do what God wanted them to do. We do the same!

Now you might protest right now, and rightfully so, that if that had been you, you would have stopped. Would you? But remember why Jesus was telling this story. We are to love our neighbor and that means helping anyone in need at any time. We don't predetermine who our neighbor is like the religious types had done. We don't get to predetermine when it is a good time for us to help someone. In fact someone rarely needs help when it is convenient - have you noticed?

But it is a man of a different race who provides aid. He was the outsider! It was the Samaritans that the teacher of the law considered a "non-neighbor." The teacher had determined that Samaritans were unworthy to be loved. In fact they were so prejudiced that the Jews hated the Samaritans. And yet it was such a man who saved a Jewish man who was dying. He loved the man at the point of his greatest need. He knew if he had been in the man's shoes he would hope someone would help. The Samaritan loved his neighbor as himself.

So Jesus answers the question - who is my neighbor, the one we are to love? Love is seeking the best for any person at the moment of their need. Neighbors can be anyone who is in our path on our daily routine. A neighbor is anyone we are in proximity with who has a need. They might live by us. We might work with them. We might go to school with them. A neighbor might be someone we are not exactly comfortable around. A neighbor might be someone who seems lazy, irresponsible, or doesn't follow the way

of Jesus. A neighbor might be someone, maybe like the man dying, who should have known better than to get themselves in the kind of trouble they are in. Know any folks like that? They might be sitting next to you!

The Good Samaritan was good neighbor because when he saw a need he did three things that the priest and Levite did not. He PAUSED to reflect on the situation, then he was flexible and ADJUSTED his schedule and delayed his plan and he ACTED and responded with compassion. That's a good neighbor. No, I'm not talking about State Farm insurance. Here's the point Jesus is making: **Don't just walk by but pause, adjust and act.** Let's look deeper at this.

We see a person who has issues. They are struggling. They might be in trouble. They need help. We see it, just like the priest and Levite did. The first thing we have to confront is a natural inclination to just walk on by, so to speak. It is part of our human condition to avoid getting involved in someone else's mess. Our default reaction is this: It's not my business.

It is easy to use the idea of a beggar on the median or at a shopping area as the norm of how we should act. We suspect from experience that if we give money they'll just go buy alcohol. That often is true. But don't let that be your standard for all people in need. Yes, we do need to set good boundaries with people we know to be foolish. If you want to learn about that, may I encourage to watch the [Peopling series](#) online.

But here's the point and the principle. The priest and Levite just kept walking. But when we see someone in need, our first response should be to PAUSE. That's first! It is in the pause that we assess the situation. Maybe we can we ask some questions. We use the pause to pray asking for God's guidance. We use the pause to ask that key question - "What is the wise thing to do?" "What would God have me to do?"

If, and that can be a big "if", the need is a present one, a real one and one you can help with, then you have to consider the next part - ADJUST. We need to make a conscious decision and effort to adjust our thinking and plans to accommodate our neighbors. But we don't want to change our plans. We have things we have to do first, then maybe we'll get involved with our neighbors. The Samaritan did a big time adjustment. He delayed his business trip and maybe risked a deal and lost money. He took a risk of being hurt himself. He paid money out of his own pocket to pay expenses for the man who was a total stranger! That's what it means to be a neighbor. He made a huge adjustment in his plans, how he used his time and money and more. That was not a part of his plan that day as he was on his business trip.

Let's be honest. It is hard to adjust to a need we see because we have in focus what we consider to be our needs. Our plan, our agenda, our need is hard to set aside, even for a short while. I might miss my favorite show or game. Getting to know my literal neighbor might mean I have to invest some time and effort. But this conscious decision

to adjust our plan or what we think is important is critical to being able to actually love our neighbor.

And that leads to the last vital part of loving our neighbors. Love is always an action. Love is always costly in some way whether it means costing us time, effort, reputation, possessions or money. And so love must ACT. The Samaritan didn't just wish him well or offer to pray for him. He acted. He stopped the bleeding, cleaned the wounds, took him to an inn and paid for the man's recovery. That's love in action. Love is practical. Love addresses real needs.

Jesus finishes the conversation with the religious teacher and so we'll finish with his words in Luke 10:36 - 37 - **36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"**

37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Jesus' words are direct - Go and do the same! The Samaritan refused to live in safe isolation. He got out of his comfort zone. He got involved. Yes, he took a risk. And in our world today, we have to initiate and break through the isolation that others have created. We have to break out of our own isolation. Don't walk by someone in need. Don't ignore the needs you see. **Don't just walk by but pause, adjust and act.**

I've asked Dave Yarger to come and share about a time he was tempted to walk by a need without pausing, adjusting and acting. Hi Dave. Introduce your boys. [*Dave introduces boys*] Thanks for your willingness to share with us. Now to be fair, in many ways you've been a good neighbor. For example for the last few years you've done our Halloween Challenge and made a big impact in your neighborhood. How did it go last Tuesday? [*The response and connections, how many hotdogs, etc.*]

But a while back we did a message and in the message there was another challenge we call the Red Card Challenge. The idea is that if you took a Red Card that we had made, you had to do what it said. What was the Red Card Challenge you got and what did you do? [*How you got card, what it asked, your struggle, etc.*]

Now our team just went to Rocky Point in October and we built 5 houses. This year you went. You got a do-over, a second chance! What caused you to go this year...finally, and what was it like. [*Share what you did and your experience - pics in background*]

Thank you. So let me give you a challenge like we gave Dave and his family. This time all the challenges will be about loving your neighbor as yourself. I'll give you two options and you choose one. As I've been teaching, if you have been thinking of someone who is your neighbor, someone who you pass by or rub shoulders with on a regular basis, someone who has a need, then pause, and decide now to adjust and act!

If you don't have a person in mind, then let me challenge you to take the Red Card

Challenge. In the lobby there are mailboxes. Those mailboxes represent your actual neighbors. I want to challenge you to go and take a red card out of the mail box. You don't have to take one. But if you do, you are making a commitment to do what it says. If you take a card, it will require you to pause and reflect, then adjust your life and act in a practical way to love your neighbor. For those of you who have joined us live online, you'll see the Red Card Challenge banner on your screen. Just click it and you'll instantly receive your challenge by email.

All of the red card challenges are things that almost anyone can do. None are particularly difficult or expensive. But they will require you to do what Jesus asks us to do. As you leave -. **Don't just walk by but pause, adjust and act.**