

Session 3: Practical Steps in Loving Those Around Us

Key Takeaways from this Session

1. **The Progression of Neighboring:** Stranger → Acquaintance → Relationship
 2. **Hospitality vs. Entertaining:** The highest form of hospitality is accessibility, not perfection
 3. **Jesus' Example:** He went to parties and met people where they were
 4. **Small Steps Matter:** Moving from theory to practice requires simple, actionable steps
 5. **Use Your Gifts:** Partner your gifts (hospitality, teaching, administration) with neighboring
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Session

1. **The Progression:** Where do most of your neighbors fall on the stranger-acquaintance-relationship spectrum? Why do you think that is?
2. **Jesus at Parties:** In Luke 5:27-32, Jesus ate with tax collectors and "sinners." The religious leaders called them "scum," but Jesus went anyway. What does this teach us about who we should reach out to in our neighborhoods?
3. **Hospitality Redefined:** Catherine Wolf said, "The highest form of hospitality is accessibility." How does this change your view of what it means to welcome neighbors into your life?

Personal Reflection

4. **Gift Assessment:** What gifts or talents do you have that could be used in neighboring? (Examples: hospitality, teaching, administration, cooking, handyman skills, gardening, etc.) How might you use these gifts to connect with neighbors?
5. **Barriers to Neighboring:** What scares you most about building relationships with your neighbors? (Fear of rejection, feeling unqualified, past negative experiences, time constraints, etc.)
6. **The "Not Ready" Trap:** In this session was mentioned how we often wait until everything is perfect before inviting people over. When have you fallen into this trap? What would it look like to prioritize presence over perfection?

Going Deeper

7. **One-Sided Relationships:** Someone mentioned concern about relationships that aren't reciprocated or feel taken advantage of. How do we balance being generous with maintaining healthy boundaries?
 8. **Sharing Your Story:** Do you feel comfortable sharing your story and the impact Jesus has had on your life? If not, what makes it difficult?
 - For those who grew up in church: How can your story be just as powerful as someone with a dramatic conversion?
 9. **Evangelism vs. Relationship:** The session emphasized that the Great Commandment doesn't say we have to convert our neighbors—just love them. How does this take pressure off? How might this actually lead to more authentic spiritual conversations?
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Individual Commitments

Take 5 minutes to fill out your neighborhood map (if you haven't already):

- Place your house in the center
- Write the names of neighbors you know
- Mark whether they're strangers, acquaintances, or relationships
- Circle one person to focus on this week

Action Steps for This Week

Choose ONE of the following to commit to:

Moving from Stranger to Acquaintance:

- Learn the name of one neighbor you currently just wave to
- Introduce yourself to someone you've never met
- Create a simple neighborhood directory

Moving from Acquaintance to Relationship:

- Stop and have a 5-minute conversation with a neighbor (ask about their yard work, pets, kids, etc.)
- Invite a neighbor over for a simple meal (doesn't have to be fancy!)
- Share something you already have (extra food, flowers, baked goods)
- Offer to help with a practical need (covering hydrants before a freeze, lending a tool, watching pets)

Low-Pressure Connection Ideas:

- Start a "giving plate" tradition—put cookies or treats on a plate and pass it to a neighbor
- Host or join a neighborhood gathering (block party, garage sale, HOA meeting)
- Ask a neighbor: "Is there anything I can pray for you about?"

- Take a walk and intentionally greet people you pass

Partner Up: Find one person in the group to be your neighboring accountability partner. Exchange contact information and commit to:

- Praying for each other's neighboring efforts
 - Texting updates about small wins or challenges
 - Checking in next week about your action step
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Reflection Questions for the Week

Journal or think about these throughout the week:

1. What activities do I already do at home or outside that I could invite a neighbor to join?
 2. In this session was mentioned the boy with five loaves and two fish (John 6). What "little bit" do I have that God might multiply if I'm willing to share it?
 3. Where am I making neighboring about me (my clean house, perfect food, right words) instead of about the other person?
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Scripture from this Session

1 Thessalonians 2:8 - "We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's good news, but our own lives too."

Luke 5:31-32 - "Jesus answered them, 'Healthy people don't need a doctor, sick people do. I've come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent.'"

Before Next Week

- Complete your chosen action step
- Keep your neighborhood map on your fridge as a reminder
- Text your accountability partner with an update
- Come ready to share what happened (the good, the awkward, and everything in between!)

Next Week's Topic: Navigating the difficulties of neighboring—when it doesn't go as planned, setting boundaries, and giving and receiving well.

