

# Study Guide: The Art of Neighboring

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## Key Scripture

### Matthew 22:37-40

"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

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## Discussion Questions

### Understanding Our Current Reality

1. **The Neighborhood Assessment**
  - What surprised you most when you thought about how well you know your literal neighbors?
  - On a scale of 1-10, how connected do you feel to the people who live around you? Why?
2. **Barriers to Neighboring**
  - What are the biggest obstacles that prevent you from connecting with your neighbors? (Time, fear, awkwardness, busyness, etc.)
  - Which excuse resonates most with you: "They're too busy," "I'm too busy," or "They probably don't want to be bothered"?
3. **The Great Commandment**
  - Why do you think Jesus linked loving God and loving our neighbor so closely together?
  - How have you separated these two commandments in your own life?

### Going Deeper

4. **Defining "Neighbor"**
  - Like the religious expert in Luke 10, how do we try to find loopholes in who qualifies as our "neighbor"?
  - What's the difference between loving "everyone" metaphorically versus loving specific people literally?
5. **Fear and Misunderstanding**
  - Share about a time when you made assumptions about someone that turned out to be wrong.

- How does not knowing our neighbors lead to fear or misunderstanding in our communities?

6. **Intentional Placement**

- Do you believe God has purposefully placed you in your specific neighborhood? Why or why not?
- If you believed your address was part of God's mission for your life, how would that change your perspective?

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## Key Takeaways

- **The Great Commandment is two-part:** We cannot separate loving God from loving our neighbor
- **Specificity matters:** Loving "everyone" feels overwhelming; loving the person next door is doable
- **Isolation has consequences:** When we don't follow Jesus' command, we experience isolation, fear, and misunderstanding
- **Start small:** Neighboring doesn't require a program—just a smile, a wave, learning a name
- **Your placement is purposeful:** You live where you live for a reason

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## Practical Application

### This Week's Challenge: The "See and Smile" Challenge

#### Level 1 (Everyone):

- Simply notice your neighbors this week. Wave or smile when you see them.
- Complete or update your "neighbor map" with names or identifying details

#### Level 2 (Stretch yourself):

- Learn the name of one neighbor you don't currently know
- Have a brief conversation beyond "hello" with someone on your street

#### Level 3 (Go for it):

- Do something practical for a neighbor (take out their trash can, offer to help with yard work, bring cookies)
- Ask a neighbor if there's anything they need prayer for

## Group Activity Options:

### **Option A: The Neighbor Map Exercise**

- Take 5 minutes to draw your neighborhood and fill in what you know about the 8 closest homes
- Share one insight that surprised you about what you don't know

### **Option B: Barrier Identification**

- As a group, list all the barriers to neighboring on a board/paper
- Brainstorm practical solutions for each barrier
- Commit to addressing one barrier this week

### **Option C: Cookie Brigade Planning**

- Plan a time when 2-3 group members will make cookies together and deliver them to neighbors
- Set a date within the next two weeks

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## **Accountability & Prayer**

1. **Share Your Commitment:**
  - Which level of the challenge will you commit to this week?
  - Is there one specific neighbor God is bringing to mind?
2. **Accountability Partners:**
  - Pair up with one other person to check in with during the week
  - Text each other about your neighboring experiences
3. **Prayer Requests:**
  - Pray for specific neighbors by name (or description if you don't know names yet)
  - Ask God to give you eyes to see people and opportunities to love them
  - Pray for courage to overcome awkwardness and fear

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## **Looking Ahead**

**Next Week's Focus:** We'll dive deeper into the specific barriers that keep us from neighboring well and develop strategies to overcome them.

### **Come Prepared:**

- Bring stories of your neighboring experiences from this week
- Be ready to share one thing you learned about a neighbor

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## Additional Resources

- **Book Recommendation:** *The Art of Neighboring* (mentioned in the teaching)
- **Church Initiative:** New Resident Boxes—sign up at [events.crossgates.org](http://events.crossgates.org) to help pack boxes or receive boxes to give to new neighbors

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*Remember: This isn't about adding one more thing to your busy life. It's about being intentional with the life you're already living and the people God has already placed in your path.*