



**Sermon Discussion Guide:** Start With Hello

**Series:** If You Give A Neighbor A Cookie

**Date:** 09/07/2025

**Scriptures:** Matthew 22:36–40; 1 John 4:7–12 (NRSVue)

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### **Opening Prayer**

God of relationship and invitation, thank You for coming close to us and teaching us how to love. Remind us that even a simple “hello” can be the beginning of something holy. Open our eyes and hearts to see the neighbors you’ve placed in our lives. Give us courage to love not just in theory, but in practice. Amen.

### **Introduction & Context**

Jesus summarized the whole of the Law and Prophets in two commands: love God and love your neighbor. And 1 John reminds us that our ability to love begins with God's love for us. Neighboring doesn't need to be overwhelming—it just needs to begin. Sometimes, it starts as simply as saying hello. But between busyness, awkwardness, and fear, many of us get stuck. This week, we reflect on how to take that first step toward connection.

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **1. Loving God, Loving Neighbor**

- Jesus ties love of God and neighbor together. Why do you think those two commands are inseparable?
- How have you experienced neighbor-love as an expression of faith?

#### **2. Why We Avoid Neighboring**

- What barriers keep you from engaging with your neighbors? (i.e., time, awkwardness, fear of being overwhelmed)
- Can you relate to the “If You Give a Mouse a Cookie” analogy—fearing what could follow one small act of connection?





### 3. The Simplicity of “Hello”

- When you reflect on your own neighborhood, how many people do you know by name?
- What opportunities do you have to practice small, simple gestures of hospitality?

### 4. God’s Love as Our Source

- Read 1 John 4:7–12. What does it mean that “God lives in us” when we love one another?
- How does knowing that God loved us first empower you to initiate relationships?

### 5. Neighboring as a Spiritual Practice

- Have you ever seen an ordinary interaction with a neighbor grow into something deeper? What happened?
- How could you begin to see your neighborhood as a place where God is already at work?

### Application & Challenge

- **Pray:** Ask God to help you notice your neighbors.
- **Act:** Say “hello” to one neighbor this week—maybe for the first time, or for the first time in a while.
- **Reflect:** How did it feel? What thoughts or emotions came up? What might be your next small step?

### Closing Prayer

God of connection, help us start small and love well. Remind us that faithfulness doesn’t require perfection—just presence. May each wave, smile, or “hello” become a seed of community. Teach us to trust in the slow work of love, rooted in Your own love for us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

### Key Takeaway

Neighboring doesn’t have to be complicated or heroic—it starts with a single step. When we say “hello” with intention, we are participating in the love of God.

*This guide was developed from original content with the assistance of ChatGPT.*