

# **Neighborhood Group Vision (Part 4): “Love Your Neighbor Outside Your Group” Luke 10:25-37 Pastor Bruce Zachary**

**Jesus told the Parable of the Good Samaritan to help God’s people understand whom our neighbor is and how we are to love them. Let’s discover together how we can love God and neighbors outside of our group better.**

**Intro.** I confess, six months prior to rediscovering the Great Commandments, I wasn’t a good neighbor. I wasn’t a bad neighbor in the sense of loud music, crazy parties at all hours, unabated dog barking, junk piled in front of our condo, etc. On the other hand, I rarely took the time to talk with neighbors. I found it all too easy to use my garage door opener, after a friendly wave to a neighbor with my car window rolled up, pull the car into the garage and close the door without actually engaging my neighbors. But I quickly learned how to be a better neighbor after rediscovering the Great Commandments. NG are different than other small groups, because they reinforce and encourage the values of loving God and neighbors better.

**Subject: loving neighbors outside of your group**

**Object: love God and neighbors better**

**Context:** NG Vision [Matt. 22:37-39] to saturate our community with Christ-centered NG where we learn to love God and neighbors better. Review parts 1-3.

**A. Who is your neighbor? [Luke 10:25-37]** an expert in the Mosaic Law is seeking Jesus to discern how to inherit eternal life [25]. He correctly understands the essence of the law is to love God supremely and love neighbors as self [26-27] [Deut. 6:4, Lev. 19:18, Matt. 22:37-39]. In an effort to justify himself asks, Who is my neighbor? [29].

The Greek word *plesion* translated “neighbor” is akin to our words “friend” or “countryman.” A 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jew felt his duty was to fellow Jews (people like them).

**1. Neighbors are people where you live, work, study, and play** Jesus told a parable about a man from Jerusalem, presumably a Jew, robbed and beaten on the Jericho Rd. The Jewish priest and Levite passed by without helping [30-32]. But a Samaritan had compassion and showed mercy by caring for a wounded Jew [33-35].

Jews looked down at Samaritans as being less spiritual and moral, and had nothing to do with them. Yet the Samaritan treated the Jew as a neighbor. How convicting for that audience and for us to consider.

**2. Neighbors are different than you, and often someone you are not naturally drawn to. Love transcends race, religion, and social commonalities [36-37]**

The lawyer can no longer justify himself. He did not love neighbors as God commanded. Jesus instructs him to likewise show mercy: kindness, care, help (love).

**B. How to love your neighbor outside the group: 7 best practices**

**1. Create margin + be intentional:** *Remember the religious people (priest and Levite) were too busy with religious task to care for their neighbor.* Many of us feel too busy with life, work, or church related activities to have time for neighbors. Loving your neighbor is not just one more activity we can add to our endless list. If we are going to do so effectively, we will need to create margin and be intentional. Take a look at your schedule and commitments and prayerfully simplify your life. If you have a family, call a family meeting to discuss and pray about your collective commitments.

*\* I was too busy with commitments at the church building to know neighbors. So, I looked at what I could reasonably change.*

**What can you change in your life to have time for neighbors?**

**2. Befriend + build relationships:** *Just as Jews looked down at Samaritans as being less spiritual and moral, and had nothing to do with them. The culture around us may perceive that Christians do the same.*

*\*\* Walk around neighborhood or local park when neighbors are out. Deb G re mail. Saying "Hi" and asking neighbors names (write them down), ask how they are doing. Being intentional to chat when opportunities arise rather than avoid.*

Keep in mind that relationships take time. Seek to be sensitive to how people relate and what pace of relational development they are comfortable with. Some people are face to face while others are shoulder to shoulder. Face to face people like spending time talking. Ask them, "How are you doing?" Or, ask them to share their story with you. Be a patient and good listener. Face to face people tend to relate best over a meal or coffee. Others are shoulder-to-shoulder people. They would rather do something than just sit and talk. Consider recreation together.

*\*\* bz riding bikes with friends from church + neighbors*

**3. Pray with + for them:** praying with and for neighbors is a great way to show love and to let people know that you follow Jesus.

*\* When my neighbors share a struggle I offer to pray with and if they seem resistant, then I'll offer to pray for them later. No one has ever refused!*

**4. Serve + ask for help:** *Just as the Samaritan cared for the wounded traveler in tangible ways, we too demonstrate God's love with actions fueled by compassion.*

Serving neighbors is a tangible way to show God's love. Look for ways you can serve or be served. *\* Phyllis re trash can, \*moving boxes in garage, Don re hedge trim (easier to offer to help than to ask).*

Seek ways that your Neighborhood Group can serve together: Visit an assisted living facility, groceries for a family in need, VCPC re diapers + cards

**5. Meals:** Invite a neighbor for a meal: breakfast, lunch, dinner, and accept invites

*\*\* Try to create a rhythm [e.g. 1 x a week or 1x per 2 weeks]*

**6. Spend time in your NG to share stories and praying for neighbors:** Share how you recently loved your neighbors. Remember to be sensitive to avoid sharing information that might embarrass them if they attend the group some day.

Sharing these stories will inspire. Create a rhythm in your NG to pray for neighbors.

Praying for our neighbors not only moves the heart of God but also changes our hearts towards our neighbors.

**7. Invite neighbors to encounter Christ with you:** Look for open doors that God will give you to invite your neighbors to experience Christ with you. This may mean that you invite them to your Neighborhood Group, have a spiritual conversation, invite them to a church service or share the Gospel with them. Seek to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and it won't be forced. Generally speaking, people in our post-Christian culture want to see the authenticity of Christ in you before they will be open to hearing about Christ from you. Be bold, but remember that faith is a process for many people. Preach the Gospel in word and in your actions. Be comforted in the fact that you don't need to have a seminary degree to be able to share Jesus with someone. The Holy Spirit will give you the right words to say (Matthew 10:19).

**Conclusion:** To love God and neighbors better, pray and seek God's wisdom to create margin in your life. Consider your next step: BELONG become part of a NG, BUILD be equipped to lead a group, or BEFRIEND and create relationships with people where you live, work, study, or play.

### Study Guide Qs

1. Review the seven best practices for how to love your neighbor outside the group. How might these ideas help people to love neighbors outside their group better?
2. Which of the practices feel most comfortable for you?
3. Which of the ideas have you put into practice? Share a story with your group about what happened.
4. Which practice(s) are you likely to focus on more in the coming season?
5. What other practice(s) do you want to suggest that wasn't on our list?