



The Art of Neighboring

SERMON SERIES OUTLINE

You can give this to each pastor in an effort to help them prepare for their sermons. Make sure to tell every pastor that they are free to fit the content to fit their congregations, so some use more of this than others.



SERMON SERIES OUTLINE

VISION CASTING

This year thousands of people will hear this neighboring message in the churches who are a part of this initiative. What would our communities look like if all the households that attend our churches made a commitment to being intentional about building relationships with the 8 households who were closest to them? Allowing for overlap, **tens of thousands of families and hundreds of thousands of individuals would be impacted!**

Our desire is to see the believers in our communities become catalysts that move themselves and others from: Strangers to Acquaintances, and from Acquaintances to Significant Relationships. We have developed two “neighborhood assignments” that will help our people to take practical steps toward neighboring.

Stranger → Acquaintance → Relationship

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Block Map Assignment Block Party Assignment

The Block Map assignment encourages people to learn and retain the names of the people who live in the 8 houses that are closest to them. The Block Party assignment creates an environment where relationships can be birthed and gives people an opportunity to move beyond acquaintances.

Somewhere in each message, encourage your people to begin to pray for their neighbors and to pray about taking the next step towards relationship with those to who live near them.

Series Overview: Most people struggle to build relationships with their neighbors because:

1. They don't see the value in it
2. A lack of time
3. A lack of trust

The themes for the three sermons/homilies in this series are designed to address each of issues. While each church will communicate these messages differently, we hope to speak with one united voice concerning the main points in this teaching series.

WWW.ARTOFNEIGHBORING.COM is a site that will help the people in our congregations partner with each other to neighbor well. Please disarm any concerns that you people have by sharing that this site asks for far less information than can be found in a phone book. This has the potential to be an incredible resource that will help our people to work together to build relationships in their neighborhoods. ***The only way that this will work is if we as pastors are relentless in asking our people to simply mark their house on this site.*** An added benefit of this site is that it will create an amazing visual of “The Church” in our communities!

SERMON IDEAS, TEXTS & ILLUSTRATIONS

WEEK 1

BIG IDEA: “Taking the Great Commandment Literally” – We have been invited by the leaders of our community to live out the second half of “The Great Commandment.”

ACTION STEP: Have everyone do the Block Map exercise on the back of the bulletin card insert. Ask your people to commit to learn and retain their neighbors’ names over the course of the next week. Put the Block Map magnets and the Bulletin Inserts in your bulletins during week 1 and collect the Inserts.

THOUGHTS TO BUILD ON:

- The power and genius of The Great Commandment is that it’s so simple and yet so powerful when acted on.
- When we try to love everyone...we often end up loving no one. If we are not careful we can end up having metaphorical love for our metaphorical neighbors and the end result is that we actually do nothing. Have we become inoculated to The Great Commandment?
- *We can only do a few things really well – let’s make sure that one of them is the thing that Jesus said matters most.*
- *Neighboring really matters. Because it is relational, it is the best way to impact the people in need in our communities.*
- *A good neighbor always trumps a good program.*
- Pray - God give me a desire to be in relationship with my literal neighbors.

POTENTIAL TEXTS:

Acts 17:26-27: “From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.” **Quite simply, God has placed us in our specific neighborhoods for a reason.**

Luke 10:25-37: The Great Commandment and The Good Samaritan.

- “But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” The expert in the law tries to define his neighbor as someone that can choose to care for. Jesus expands the definition of neighbor and informs him that it is anyone in need who is nearby.
- The Samaritan meets the physical, material, financial and emotional needs of the man in his path. Our neighbors are in our path on a daily basis. What investment does God expect me to make in my neighbor? Love, Sacrifice, Service...
- If you decide to teach on The Good Samaritan, it will be important to address the fact that the actual definition of neighbor is much bigger than just our literal neighbors. “I know that many of you might be saying to yourself, but when Jesus says to love our neighbor he is talking about our enemies...and that is correct. But it’s hard to love our enemy, when we can’t even love the people that live next door to us.” We need to go back to the basics and make sure that we can do the entry level stuff before we jump to the graduate level.

Secondary Text = Mark 12:29-34; Jesus again reduces the whole law down to The Great Commandment.

When the man answers correctly, Jesus tells him "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

APPLICATION:

Block Map Exercise: Have your people reflect on those who live in the 8 houses that are closest to them

Have each person divide the 8 boxes into 3 levels and have them list out:

1. The names of each of their neighbors
2. Anything that they know about them
3. Anything of depth that they know about them (i.e. dreams, needs, desires, fears, spiritual journey, etc.)

Typically, 10 % of people can do all of #1, 3% can do #2, and under 1 % can do #3. As pastors, one of the most powerful things that we can do is to share how much of this chart you can fill out and what you are feeling led to change.

- The point of the exercise is to expose the fact that many of us don't even know our neighbors' names. It's hard to love someone if you don't even know their name.
- Tell your people that YOU are going to do this with them. Have them use the fridge magnet as a reminder and a tool to actually learn and retain their neighbors' names.

WEEK 2

BIG IDEA: In order to take The Great Commandment seriously, we must create space in our lives to build relationships with those who live near us.

ACTION STEP: Follow up on the Block Map exercise from last week and ask your people if they were successful in learning the names of some of their neighbors since last Sunday? Talk about the value of partnering with others who are in their neighborhoods. **Put the block map cards in your bulletins and tell your people about www.artofneighboring.com.**

THOUGHTS TO BUILD ON:

- The biggest obstacle to taking the great commandment seriously is TIME.
- When we say; "I don't have time to get to know my neighbor, what we are really saying is "I don't consider getting to know my neighbor as important as everything else that I do."
- We live in tension between the urgent and the important. Jesus' life was not feverish, he had time for people and for conversations.
- The result is that the way we live doesn't end up matching up with our intentions. The art of saying "no" to good things so we can say "yes" to great things.
- Do we live at a pace that allows us to be available to those who live around us? Jesus had time for interruptions...do we? What would it take to change the pace of our lives in order to be more available to those who live around us?
- Be aware of opportunities to care for others when adversity occurs. Develop internal radar for the needs and interests of your neighbors.
- The Art of Elimination Illustration – Michelangelo and the "David" statue.
- "Busyness & Hurry are the enemies of relationship and intimacy." I think that this is a quote from John Ortberg from "The Life You Have Always Wanted"

POTENTIAL TEXTS:

Luke 10:38-42: Mary & Martha. Martha is so busy that she misses out on what is most important. For those of us who struggle with busyness, our dilemma is bigger than a shortage of time...it's a problem of priorities. We tend to let the urgent things crowd out the important things. Are we missing the main thing because we are busy with other good things?

Mark 5:21-43: Jairus' daughter and the bleeding woman. Jesus kept a pace of life in which he had time for interruptions. Can the same be said of us? This is just one of several examples found in the New Testament. Are we living at a pace that allows us to be interruptible?

Luke 8:1-15: The Parable of The Sower. The third soil didn't produce because it was choked out by weeds. In the text, we learn that this soil is a picture of those who hear the Gospel message, but as they go on their way, the message is choked and dies because of life's worries, riches, and pleasures.

Secondary Text = Psalm. 90:12 "Teach me to number my days alright that we might gain a heart of wisdom." A great text on priorities. Throughout the New Testament we see that Jesus' life has a certain rhythm. He regularly slows down and sets boundaries. Mark 1:35, Luke 4:42-44, Luke 9:18, Luke 9:28, Luke 11:1, Luke 22:39

APPLICATION:

- Practical First Steps = Take walks in your neighborhood, Hang out in your front yard instead of your back yard, introduce yourself to people when you see them.
- Illustration = Big Rocks/Small Rocks visual. Communicates the importance of priorities.

WEEK 3

BIG IDEA: In order to take the Great Commandment seriously, we must love those who God has placed around us. It's not always going to be pretty, but it is going to be significant.

ACTION STEP: Ask each person to work with others in their neighborhood to gather their neighbors at least once before Labor Day. Include the block map cards again and ask your people to commit to partnering with others in their neighborhood to throw a great party. Tell your people about the block party kit that is available on www.artofneighboring.com.

Practical Ideas = Throw a block party to kick off the summer, Holiday BBQ (July 4th, Labor Day, Memorial day, etc.), Restore a specific part of your block, Organize a community garage sale and give a portion of proceeds going to a non-profit, Coordinate a neighborhood canned food drive for your local food bank.

THOUGHTS TO BUILD ON:

- Jesus has called us to engage the messiness of relationships. Real relationships are always messy, think about your family relationships.
- When was the last time we were accused of being friends with sketchy people? Drunks, gluttons, etc..? Jesus hung out with these "sinners" so much that others accused him of being one of them.
- "Good Fences make Good Neighbors" – We have a tendency to desire safe and clean environments. When this is lived out, it leads us to isolation.

- In many ways, neighboring is scarier than going downtown or even on a global trip. Your neighbors are going to be there every day!
- One of the side effects of the 24 hours news phenomenon is that it can cause us to fear those we don't know. When we turn on the TV and we hear about all of the brokenness in our world, it shapes our world view and our view of others.
- This issue of neighboring will confront many things in our lives. How we spend our money, time, etc.
- Do you reach out and show hospitality to only your friends and those who you are comfortable around? Or, do you reach out to the excluded and the marginalized?
- **The importance of identifying others in your neighborhood who are "Kingdom Minded." Encourage your people to partner with others as they build relationships in their neighborhoods.**

POTENTIAL TEXTS:

Luke 5:27-32: The Calling of Levi. Levi gathers his friends by throwing a party. Jesus comes to the party and is accused of hanging out with messy people. This would be a great text to use and then to end the sermon and the series with a challenge to throw a block party.

Luke 6:27-36: I am supposed to love who? Jesus teaching on radical love...loving those who hate you, giving to everyone who asks, etc.

Luke 10:1-12: Jesus asked his disciples to take many risks in reaching out to others. But one boundary he set was for them was to respect the walls that people put up. He said, "[Speak 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.](#)" When we connect with our neighbors, we can look for signs that there is a desire for relationship. If people reject us, then we can move on, trusting that the Spirit will continue to reach out to that person. This prevents us from being a nuisance and from wearing ourselves out on those who are not currently open to The Gospel. Encourage your people to invest in others who have a desire for relationship.

APPLICATION:

- Encourage your people to partner with others on their block to gather their neighbors together.
- Pray – God help me to see where you are already at work in the lives of my neighbors.