

w e e k e n d s e r m o n s e r i e s

LOVE WHERE  multiply
YOU LIVE



WOODBURY LUTHERAN CHURCH 2018



Love Where You Live

What if, when Jesus said: “Love your neighbor as yourself”, He really meant it. That He really meant your neighbors--the people next door to you? And what if, the Apostle Paul was right when he said: “From one man [God] created all the nations throughout the earth...and he determined their boundaries”? What if it isn't an accident that you live on the street you live? What if God has a reason for putting you in that house or apartment you find yourself in--so that you can love those people right next door and right across the street: your neighbors? Jesus said: “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments: Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.” What if, this fall, we got better at doing what Jesus says matters most? What if we followed Jesus in loving where we live?

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Week 1: Why Do We Love Our Neighbors?

Ice breaker:

What does it mean to love your neighbor?

How are you currently loving your neighbors? Do you find it easy or challenging to love your neighbors? Why?

Video

Discuss

1. Jesus knows what is most important.

- What things seem most important to Jesus when you look at the accounts of His life?
- Read Matthew 22:36-40. What does verse 40 mean and how does that impact our view of loving God and loving our neighbor?
- Is there anything you need to change in your life to be more like Jesus and share the love He gives you with others?

2. Jesus knows how important it is to stay connected to the Father.

- How are you currently connecting with your Heavenly Father?
- Read John 15:5-17. Why is it important to stay connected to the Father--especially when we think about loving where we live?
- What does it mean for your life that God chose you? What does it mean for you to bear fruit?

3. Your life should mirror what you believe.

- What are the most important things in your life?
- Read James 2:14-26. James notes there is a tension between faith and works. How do those two work together in these passages?
- If someone asked your neighbor about you, how would they describe you? Are the things you say are most important in your life mirrored in your faith and your living?

Next Steps

Commit to spending time with the Lord everyday. Spend time in His Word and in prayer. Find the Circles of Influence diagram in the index of this book. Take time to prayerfully consider people in your life that fall into each of those circles. Pray for God to show you with whom He is calling you to share Jesus' love.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for making a way to me to have direct access to You through Your Son, Jesus. Forgive me where I fall short at loving people the way You love them. Lord, help my faith and my life reflect Your Son as I love my neighbor. Jesus, unleash Your power in me, in my relationships, in our communities, and in Your world. Amen.

Week 2: Listening

Ice breaker:

What makes a good listener?

What is it like to have someone *really* listen to you?

Video

Discuss

1. Jesus listened to his Heavenly Father.

- How do you listen to your Heavenly Father?
- We cannot forget to listen to our Heavenly Father. Read Mark 1:35. What does Jesus prioritize in this verse?
- In light of listening, why is prayer important to our Heavenly Father?

2. When Jesus spent time with people, He was a good listener.

- When you think about Jesus listening, what comes to mind?
- Read Luke 24:13-35. What do you notice in Jesus' listening in this account?
- When you think about listening, is there anything you learn from Jesus in Luke 24 that you might use in the future?

3. Listening is a skill everyone can have.

- Does listening come naturally to you? Explain.
- Read James 1:19. Although not biblical, you may have heard it said this way, "God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason". In light of listening, what does James 1:19 and having

“two ears and one mouth” mean to you?

- What would it look like in our world if more people were quick to listen?

Next Steps

In a world of distractions, it can be challenging to really listen to people and get to know them. But when we do listen, people notice. Here are three things to help us all practice listening:

1. Practice silence - just 3 minutes a day, practice silence. Try it right now in your small group.
2. Wherever you are, stop and listen. How many sounds can you hear? This will help with the quality of listening. Try it with your small group and then try it with your family or a friend. Sit in a room and just be silent and see how many different things you can hear. Make it a game - see who can hear the most things.
3. This one is going to take a little more time. Sit with someone and practice listening to them. **RARA** will help you.
 - **R**ecieve - Really listen to what is being said. Focus on the person sharing and his/her story.
 - **A**ppreciate - Appreciate and acknowledge what is being said.
 - **R**ecap - When they finish, repeat back to the speaker what's been said. This ensures you hear and understand and lets the speaker know you have listened.
 - **A**sk - Ask questions about the story that allow the speaker to expand on their story - the emotions and feelings behind it, showing that you care.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for being a good role model and teaching me to listen. Help me to listen to You more completely. Guide me as I listen to my neighbors so I can know them better through their stories. Help me to see and love them the way You do. Amen.

Week 3: Living Curiously

Ice breaker:

What things pique your curiosity in life? Why?

Can you remember a time when someone's actions made you more curious about who they were as a person? What was the action and why did you want to know more?

Video

Discuss

1. Living curiously means welcoming others like family.

- Do you find welcoming others difficult? Why or why not?
- Read Matthew 5:46-48. How does Jesus talk about welcoming? Why do you think He talked this way?
- How might welcoming differ between introverts and extroverts? Between women and men?

2. Living curiously means serving our neighbors generously.

- Have you ever been served generously by someone? Share.
- Read Acts 16:11-15. How does Lydia model generously serving?
- Do you currently serve your neighbors generously? Why or why not?

3. Living curiously means bringing hope, rooted in Jesus, into people's lives.

- What does it mean to actually believe in the hope Jesus brings?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:54-58. How does Paul talk about hope? What does it look like to “always work enthusiastically for the Lord”?
- Has another Christian ever brought you hope before? What did that look like? Why was it impactful?

Next Steps

Choose one neighbor from among those who live close to you or those in your circles of influence. How can you serve them this fall in a way that might make them curious? Take time to brainstorm with your small group. Check the index of this booklet for neighboring ideas. Remember to take into account what you have heard while listening.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for calling all people to Yourself. Thank You for going to the cross to pay the price for our sins and the sins of the world. When You walked on the earth You lived in a curious way that brought people to wonder at You. Lead us in living curious lives, not to put more focus on us, but so that others would come to see You and know You. Guide us by Your Spirit. Amen.

Week 4: What is Your Story?

Ice breaker:

Think about a story someone shared with you recently. What made it so memorable?

What often makes you want to share a story from your life with others?

Video

Discuss

1. God tells us to make disciples.

- Have you ever tried reaching out and sharing your faith? What happened?
- Read John 16:33. Jesus tells us there will be trouble in this world but we will have peace. Where do we find that peace?
- What would it take for you to live a life where you reach out and share your story consistently?

2. Making disciples starts with relationships.

- As we work through this study, is there anyone in your circles (neighbors) God is calling you to have a deeper relationship with?
- Read Acts 1:8. Jesus told His disciples to be witnesses everywhere, starting in their neighborhood. When you read these words from Jesus, do you believe this is a call on your life as well? Why or why not?
- If you are not reaching out and engaging with your neighbors, what is holding you back?

3. Your story is a part of God's story ... and it matters!

- What is the hardest thing about sharing your story?
- Read Hebrews 12:1-3. Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith and He is still writing your story. How does that change the way you think about your story up to this point? How does it change the way you think about your future story?
- When you think about being a part of God's story, how do you feel?

Next Steps

Sharing our story can seem intimidating if we don't know where to start. Let's work on this together. Start by writing down 3-6 events that have happened in your life. They might be highs or lows. After you have written these things down, answer the following questions for each event (taken from Telling His Story by Telling Yours by Joe Maschhoff).

- What has God done in my life?
- What did He save me from?
- How did He do it?
- Whom did He use to help me understand what it is all about?
- When did this happen or start to happen?
- How has He continued to change me?

After writing about each of these events, you have several pieces of your story to share with others. When sharing, you will probably share different things depending on your neighbor's perspective. Remember, listening and sharing helps you grow in your relationship with others.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for inviting me into Your story, letting me be a part of it, and choosing me to continue Your work here. Lord, mold me and use me; help me to live out my faith with my life. Help me to be Your hands and feet right here to my neighbors. Amen.

Index I: Ideas for Neighboring*

Intentional Neighboring:

1. Have a cookout or ice cream party and invite your neighbors.
2. Stoke the fire pit, provide the ingredients for s'mores, and invite your neighbors.
3. At work, look for someone who is regularly overlooked and underestimated. Invite them to lunch with you and one or two other employees.
4. Participate in gatherings hosted by others, like Home Owners Association functions or parties thrown by other neighbors. Go to community gatherings like festivals, art shows, and celebrations. Be open to talking with people.
5. Give out baked goods to neighbors and be willing to linger if conversations begin.
6. Invite neighbors to a happy hour in your doorway.
7. Do a food-drive or invite your neighbors to join together and somehow make a difference for the community.
8. Invite neighbors or co-workers over to watch the big game.
9. Invite neighbors or co-workers to a wine or craft beer tasting party. Have everyone bring their favorite kind and share what they like about their choice.
10. Do you enjoy exercising ... or would you like to start? Invite neighbors to regularly power-walk or bike with you.
11. If your child is involved in a school group (like band, sports, or drama), invite those families over for some fun.

** Excerpted from Greg Finke's Joining Jesus on His Mission.
More information can be found at <https://dwelling114.org/>.*

12. Invite a different neighbor over for lunch or dinner once a month.
13. If you live near a university, see if they have a way for you to invite international students to your home.
14. In neighborhoods with multiple cultures represented, have a multicultural dinner with people bringing their favorite cultural dish.
15. Work with neighbors to have a community garage sale and give the money to a community cause.

Spontaneous Neighboring:

1. Find reasons to be in your front yard rather than closed up in the house or apartment. Watering flowers, weeding, sitting on the front porch or driveway, etc. puts you into position to see who might wander by.
2. When you stop for your morning coffee, don't go through the drive-through. Stop and go inside. Be aware of the people around you. Look for people that just "happen" to be looking around as you are. Smile. Look for people who are regularly there when you are. Eventually introduce yourself.
3. Walk your dog when you see others are out walking theirs.
4. Be a regular at the neighborhood pool, community center, or park.
5. Be quick to offer assistance to neighbors who need a hand with a project.
6. Offer to babysit for weary moms or so a young couple can have a date night.
7. Be a "regular" at a lunch spot. Start to get to know the wait staff and other "regulars". Tip well.

8. Let your kids play in a park-league. Strike up conversations with other parents.
9. Have a regular game-playing time out in the front yard with the neighborhood kids. Kickball, wiffle ball, basketball, touch football, tag, water balloon fights, and more.
10. Bring morning treats to work. See what happens.

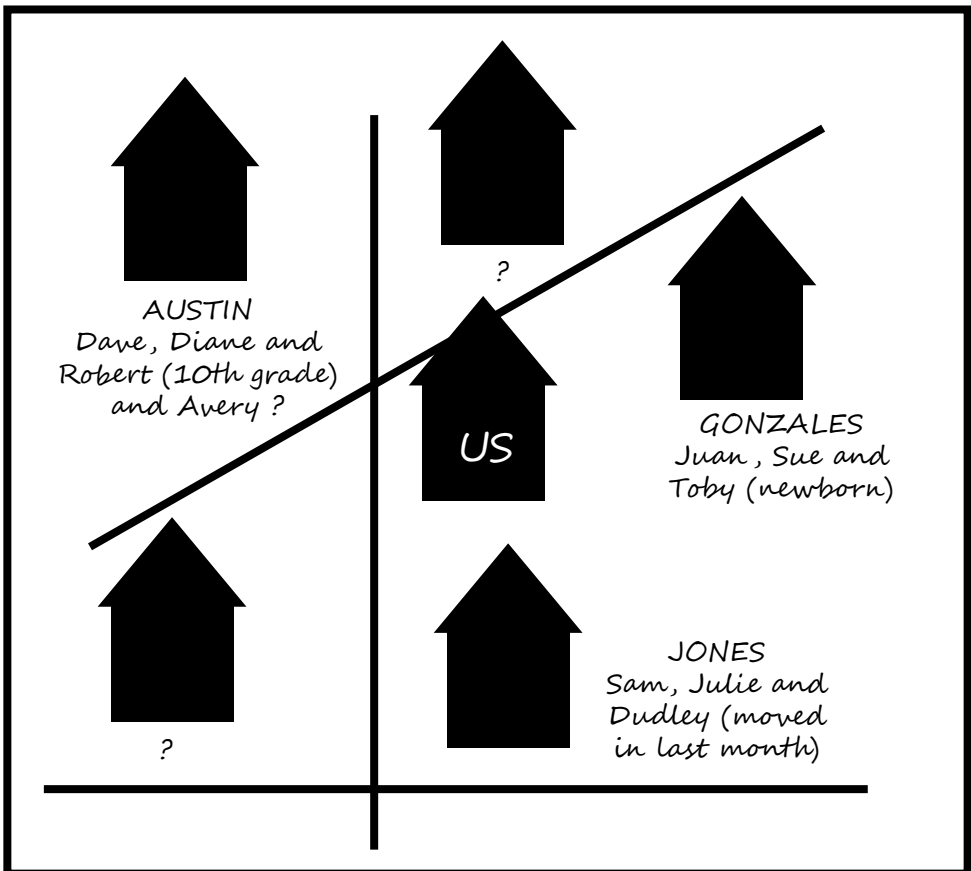
Index II: Neighboring Helps

Neighborhood Prayer Map

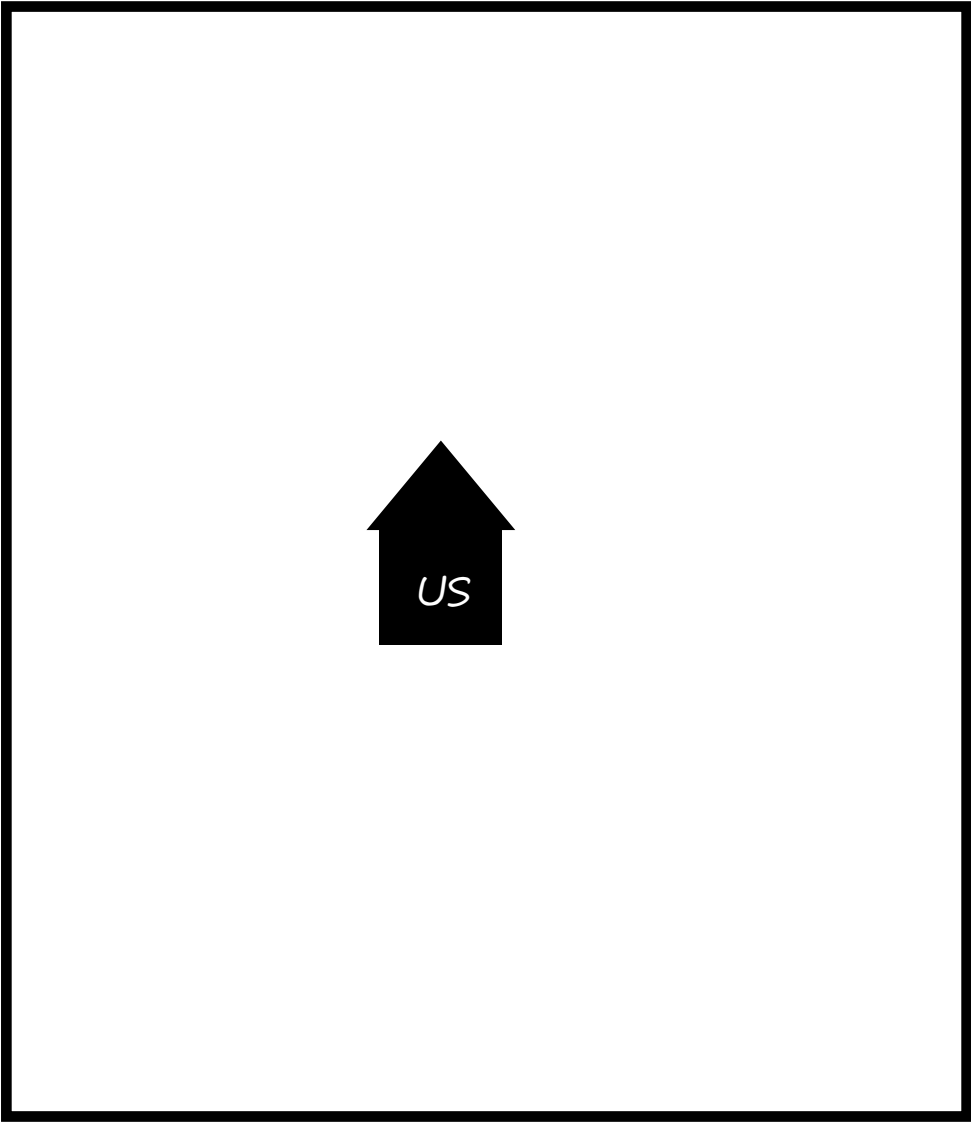
Instructions:

1. Draw a map of the streets and homes around yours.
2. If you know the occupants, write their names beside their home.
3. If you don't know the occupants, write "?".
4. As you get to know your neighbors better, write additional details you can include in prayer.

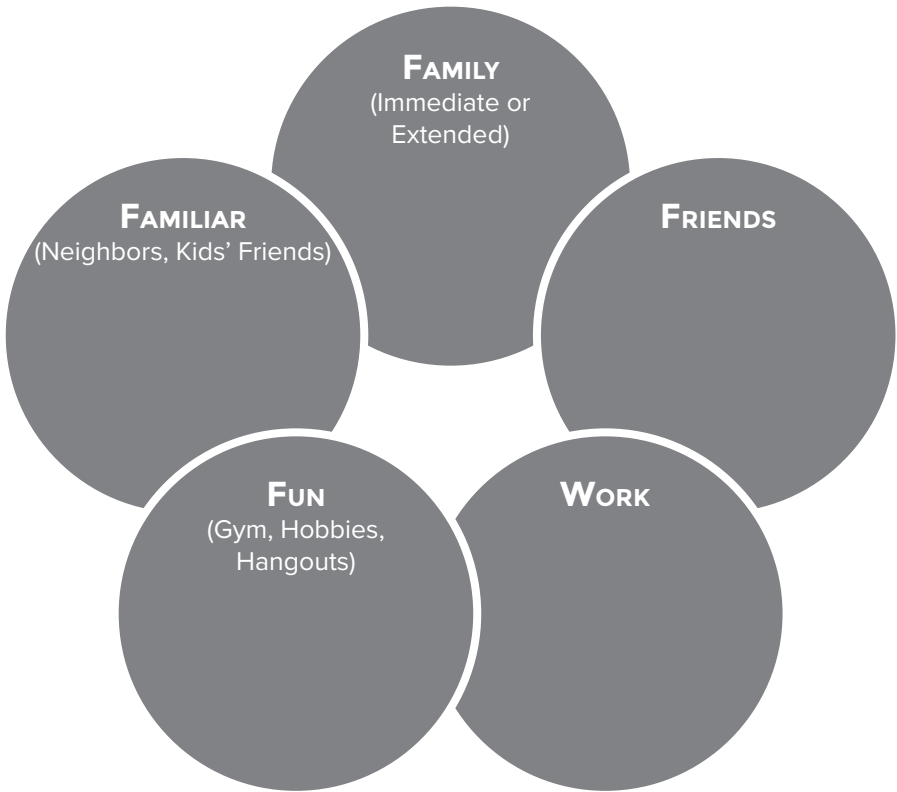
Example:



Draw your own Neighborhood Prayer Map



Circles of Influence



SERMONS.WOODBURLUTHERAN.ORG

LIBERTY RIDGE CAMPUS

11395 EAGLE VIEW BLVD
WOODBURY, MN 55129

OAK HILL CAMPUS

9050 60TH ST N
STILLWATER, MN 55082

VALLEY CREEK CAMPUS

7380 AFTON RD
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