

Home Groups | Week 1 [April 10, 2016]
Hoosier Neighbor | Luke 10:1-11, Mark 12:28-33

Ice Breaker Question:

Share one thing about your neighborhood. On a scale of 1 to 10, how connected is your neighborhood?

Read this week's scripture: Luke 10:1-11, Mark 12:28-33

Discuss:

1. How did you do on the block map? Did the exercise surprise you one way or the other?
2. In the Mark 12 passage, Jesus talks about loving your neighbor. Do you find it easy or difficult to love your literal neighbor? Why or why not?
3. In the Luke 10 passage, Jesus says to "Go!" Why does Jesus command his disciples to go out? Why is it important to be with others in their homes [Luke 10:5-7]?
4. In the book, *The Art of Neighboring*, a town's mayor says, "The majority of the issues that our community is facing would be eliminated or drastically reduced if we could just figure out a way to become a community of great neighbors." To what extent do you think this is true?
5. What distresses you spiritually about the neighborhood in which you live? What specific needs do you see? What do you feel God is calling you to do? (Serendipity Bible, by Zondervan)
6. Luke 10:29 says this about the teacher of the law: "But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" In what ways do we try to justify ourselves to avoid taking the Great Commandment literally? In what way are we tempted to generalize neighbors and how does that let us off the hook?
7. What is your earliest recollection of "church?" How has it shaped your understanding of God and of sharing life with others? How has your understanding of church changed?

Prayer:

Keep the following prayer requests from our church family in mind as you close:

- > Prayers of healing for John Lindenschmidt, Greg West, Talbott Sumners, and Hadley Lehr.
- > Prayers of comfort for David and Anne Norris in the death of Anne's mother, Mark and Sue Burks in the death of Sue's mother, Kurt and Lynn Strueh and Scott and Sarah Akin in the death of Kurt and Sarah's cousin, and Becky and Denny Emery in the death of their grandson.

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Reminders for your group:

> Save the Date! | ZPC All Church Retreat | Friday, August 26-Sunday, August 28 | Brown County | Look for more details coming soon.

Leaders notes:

We began a new church-wide study on *The Art of Neighboring* this week. You can buy the book for \$9 at ZPC. Jesus called us to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. How do we do that? Hopefully this study will help us to move to love literal neighbors in more practical ways.

[Question 1] We were asked to fill out the block map in worship. For those who weren't at worship, you can explain the exercise. Discuss how many names each person knew and how that exercise went. Did it surprise your group members in some way? This is not a time to make people feel guilty for not knowing neighbors, but to get a feel for where we are and allow God to work on us.

[Question 2] Jesus challenged us to love others – even our very neighbors who live right next door! Sometimes it is easier to love someone far away – it is less risky and costly to love someone at a distance. Some neighbors might be easy to love, others not so much. Discuss if it is easy or hard to love your actual neighbors.

[Question 3] If we don't "go," it is easy to stay in our safe homes and not meet neighbors. Homes also mean intimacy. In the ancient middle east, it was very important to invite someone to share a meal. Sharing a meal, especially in a home, can be very intimate – more than meeting someone at work or in a restaurant. Jesus wants to challenge us to go deep with others.

[Question 4] Allow for open sharing here. You may want to discuss that government programs can't solve all relational problems and social problems. But people helping their neighbors, especially with Christ's love, can solve some problems and fill many gaps.

[Question 5] Your neighbors may be dealing with things like illness, death of a loved one, being spiritually dry, broken relationships, financial hardships, or unemployment. Perhaps God wants to use you to bridge the gap between him and your neighbor by being a listening ear, being a friend, watching someone's kids, or providing a meal or helping hand. Watch and see what God wants.

[Question 6] We might generalize that "neighbors" means anyone – maybe even the poor children near downtown or in Mexico. We can give to them or serve occasionally and thus we have loved our neighbors. We tend to neglect our actual neighbors because it is risky to spend time with them – it might cost us! As long as the term neighbor has a general meaning, it can let us off the hook by serving anyone in a general way.

[Question 7] Jerry shared that his understanding of church has changed over the years. A first understanding of church might be brick and mortar, a place where we meet on Sundays. But church is also the people of God, doing God's work in our neighborhoods, places of work, or in the world. Church is also sharing life with real people who have real joys and real problems and carrying each other's burdens in the name of Jesus Christ.