

Ice Breaker Question:

Did you walk your neighborhood and pray for your neighbors this week? If yes, how did it go? If not, what held you back?

Read this week's scripture: Mark 12:28-31, 1 Peter 3:13-16

Discuss:

1. When have you done something where joy or excitement overrode your fear to allow you to try something new?
2. 1 Peter 3:13 talks about being "eager to do good." Are you active or passive in doing good?
3. What do you think are the main reasons people are afraid of their neighbors? Do you have any fears or concern about your neighbors? How can we as a home group help overcome those fears?
4. Of the following excuses for not reaching out to our neighbors, which one resonates with you and why?
 - I'm an introvert.
 - I'm not good at reaching out.
 - I won't have something to say or offer.
 - I'm so busy, I'm afraid of adding something to my plate.
 - It's too big of a commitment to build a relationship with my neighbors.
 - I am particular about who I spend my time with and I don't want to spend time with my neighbors.
5. Do you think there is someone in your neighborhood who is scared of you? Why or why not? How can you help your neighbor's fears?
6. Peter says, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." (1 Peter 3:15). What do you think that means? Have you ever had someone ask you the reason for the hope that you have?

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 Tony and Terry Smith in the death of Tony's father.

Reminders for your group:

- > ZPC Spring Spruce-Up | Sunday, May 1 | 10 am-1 pm | Around ZPC
- > Save the Date! | ZPC All Church Retreat | Friday, August 26-Sunday, August 28 | Brown County | Look for more details coming soon.

Leaders notes:

The most often repeated command in the Bible is "do not fear." God wants us to not fear, but be bold. We need to be bold in reaching out to others and being prepared to share why we have hope in God. Be ready for someone to ask you why you are different. And share God's joy with them through words and actions. Be ready to reach out to a new neighbor.

[Question 1] We want our people to be willing to overcome fear to reach out to neighbors. The joy of seeing the value in connecting with someone as Jesus calls us to do can outweigh the fear of not reaching out. Examples of joy overriding fear might be skydiving or asking someone out on a date – fearing they will say no, but finding they say yes.

[Question 2] Peter is encouraging disciples not to fear doing good. If our neighbors ask for help or say hello to us, it's easy (passive) to say hello or yes, I'll help. It's harder to be active, or proactive, in reaching out. God calls us to "go" and reach out to others. Think of ways you can be active in doing good.

[Question 3] It's easy to fear the unknown. We may fear that people are different than us, that they may not like us, or think we are strange. We may struggle with judging someone because we know they have different priorities – or think they are judging us. As a home group, encourage each other with real stories about reaching out to others, including neighbors.

[Question 4] While these are reasons not to meet new people, they can be overcome. God has gifted each of us with unique abilities and called us to him. He has called us to be a light to others. We can do that while still being ourselves.

[Question 5] We may not realize that our fears make people afraid of us. If we withdraw, we may end up making people fearful of us. Not knowing someone can make us guess what they are like and make us or them fearful. We can be the ones to break the cycle – with God's courage.

[Question 6] If you are a little "odd" for Jesus – you actually do reach out to neighbors, or have a lot of joy or peace or hope in your life, people may ask why you are that way. When they do, be prepared. Being prepared might mean expecting to be asked that question, and then humbly sharing what God is doing in your life.