

Love Your Neighbor Movement

Week 3 Guide

Outside Your Circle

We have spent time focusing on who we know in our immediate contexts and praying for our communities. This week we want to look more broadly and think about the people who are outside our “circles.” These are the people in our community who would not immediately come to mind as our neighbors.

This week we want to **take an honest look at where we are in our community. Prayerfully and honestly answer these questions.** It is tempting to excuse ourselves from these hard questions. A passing hello every time we see someone -- or having an acquaintance with a co-worker, or being polite to the grocery store worker -- does not mean we know them or are in a relationship with them. However, it could be an open door to building a relationship with them -- and this is a great thing!

We want to genuinely reflect on our interactions in our communities. Pray through them, asking God to give you wisdom and discernment. When you ask, ***be open and willing to listen to him as he shows you.***

A couple of reminders as we begin to answer these questions.

Marginalized people groups are those on the margins of society. In one way or another, they are not part of the majority population, and because of that are often excluded from participating in society in full. These groups can include (but are not limited to): immigrants, refugees, racial and cultural minorities, the LGBTQ population, the homeless population, people with disabilities, those who were formerly incarcerated, people living in poverty, senior citizens, those in the foster care system, and people of minority religions.

Those who are different from you may -- and likely will -- include these groups, but may also include differences such as political views, marital/family status (singles, families with children, families without children, those widowed or divorced, etc), ages, socioeconomic status, education levels, and so on.

Remember, **we are not trying to use relationships to manipulate people into spiritual conversations or to check a box of “friendship diversity.”** We want to get to know them, be their friend, and show them Jesus’ love.

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Fill out the following table by choosing 3-5 places in your community that you visit on a regular basis. Think through places like grocery stores, restaurants and coffee shops, gyms, hair and beauty salons, other businesses, etc. Then ask yourself: who do I know who works there? Do I have a relationship with them, or do I just know them in passing? Who works there that I could begin building relationships with?

Places I Frequent	People at Those Places I With Whom I Have a Relationship	People to Build a Relationship With

Answer the following questions.

Who are the marginalized people in my community?

How am I connected with them? Who do I know? Do I have a real relationship with anyone?

Is there anyone I know in passing I can begin to build a friendship with?

Who are the people in my community who are different from me?

How am I connected with them? Who do I know? Do I have a real relationship with anyone?

Is there anyone I know in passing I can begin to build a friendship with?

Where are places in my community that these groups of people gather to work or play?
(Examples include parks, restaurants or businesses owned and patronized by marginalized groups, community organizations led by marginalized groups or people who are different from you)

Think about the places you previously identified as ones you regularly go to. Are any of these places ones where I am intentionally intersecting my life with those who are different from me or with the marginalized in my community? If not, why not?

How can I change my routines so that I begin intersecting my life in these spaces?

Choose 2-3 places you've just identified that you can begin to go to be intentional in building bridges and relationships with people in your community who are different from you or are marginalized. Think also about places where you will be the minority.

1.

2.

3.

List 3-5 action steps you can take to begin building relationships with people in your community, and specifically with people who are marginalized or different from you.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Examples of Action Steps:

- Begin conversations with the people you identify. Pray for them. Remember what they tell you (write it down later if you have to) and ask them about it next time you see them.
- Visit the store/coffee shop/gym/etc at the same time every trip. Use the same cashier or barista.
- Find a restaurant in your area owned & staffed by someone of a different culture and begin eating there regularly. Even better if this is a restaurant typically frequented by people of the same culture where you will be the minority.
- Take encouraging notes to your regular cashiers or baristas.
- Attend a peaceful protest or prayer rally in support of justice concerns. Listen and learn.
- Invite people to join you at a park to hang out or over to your house for dinner (or out to eat, follow social distancing guidelines & be safe).