



Small Group Study Guide

By Dave Runyon & Jay Pathak

Welcome

When Jesus was asked to sum up everyone into one command, he said to love God with everything we have *and* to love our neighbors as ourselves. Most of us have turned this simple idea of loving our neighbors into a nice saying, putting it on bumperstickers and refrigerator magnets and then going on with our lives without actually putting it into practice.

What would happen if every follower of Jesus took the Great Commandment literally? Is it possible that the solution to our society's biggest issues has been right under our noses for the past two thousand years?

How Change Happens

Have you ever decided that you want to work out and do a better job taking care of your body? Or, have you ever made a commitment to breaking a bad habit? Most of us have something that we want to change about our behavior and yet very few of us have figured out how to actually do it.

Changing our minds is relatively easy, changing our behaviors is a lot harder. Even when we change some of our behaviors, we quickly realize that it's even harder to change our motivations and desires. It's one thing to know you should work out, it's another thing to actually make your way to the gym and start sweating.

If you are reading this, it's likely that you believe certain things about God and how he has instructed us to live. You are probably aware that there is a big difference between believing something and actually doing it. Most people know that they should work out and break a few of their most obvious bad habits, but very few actually learn how to live differently and become the kind of person that Jesus is calling them to be.

Over the next few weeks we're going to give you an invitation to get back to the basics and to actually take the second half of the great commandment literally. The vast majority of us wish that we were closer to our neighbors, but that is often where it stops. The real question is this, "How can we become better neighbors?"

Take Small Steps

The way to become a better neighbor is by learning to take a series of small steps in the same direction. You won't become the kind of neighbor you want to be thinking really hard about it. You'll only become a great neighbor by following the bread crumbs and taking small steps that lead you into a new way of living. In order to become a good neighbor, we must move beyond knowing and start doing.

Form Habits

40-45% of the decisions that we make are habit. When you suddenly become aware that you are at your destination and aren't sure how you got there...that is a result of your habits. Growing in your neighboring skills requires forming habits that enable you to become a great neighbor. The key to life change is making small movements that lead us down the road towards a new way of living.

Most of what we're going to encourage you to do over the next few weeks will seem small and simple. The steps might seem repetitive at times and that is intentional. If you engage each week we are confident that you will form some new habits that will help your to live out what Jesus said matters most.

The first and most important step is to learn, retain, and use the names of your literal neighbors. At the end of every session, you will share with your group the progress that you are making in this area.

How to Make the Most Out of Your Group Experience

*** Check out this 2 minute message from Dave & Jay: <https://vimeo.com/117416104>

We want to encourage you to lean into the repetition and allow the people in your small group to hold you accountable to doing some small things that will make a big difference. As with any small group, what you get out of it is directly related to what you put into it. That is why we have designed this study in such a way that allows you time to process with your group, as well as time to reflect and pray on your own. In order to maximize your growth and experience over the next six weeks, we recommend that you do the following:

BEFORE Each Group Session

1. Read the assigned chapter(s) before each meeting and avoid reading at the last minute. Find a quiet place where you can truly process the material and encounter the God who wants to transform your heart and mind.
2. Read through the questions and write down your responses. Take time to write down what you really think, even if it might be unpopular, controversial, and jot down any questions you still might have. In short, be honest! Avoid waiting until the last minute and just trying to quickly fill-in the "right answers."

3. Communicate with your host if you need to miss a session for any reason.

DURING Each Group Session

1. Participate by sharing your honest thoughts. Go one small step past your normal comfort zone.
2. Respect the hosts by following their direction and staying on topic.
3. Respect others in the group by allowing for equal participation. If you are an extrovert and a verbal processor, try to keep your comments concise. If you are an introvert, please share! The group will benefit from hearing your thoughts.
4. Help create a safe environment for honest discussion by not divulging other people's personal information.

CONCLUDE Each Group Session (the most important part!)

1. Go through the three exercises: Block Map, Pray for a Neighbor, Share a next step
2. These three steps will happen every week. These steps help you take small steps that build momentum in an atmosphere of accountability. This is how habits form and you will become a different kind of neighbor.
3. Listen carefully to everyone's presentation of their block map, prayers and next steps. Listen so you can be praying for the other people in the group throughout the week.

AFTER Each Group Session

1. Reflect on the topic and discussion by filling out the "On Your Own" journaling section.
2. Pray. Ask God to do what only He can do – change your heart to be more like His!
3. Actually do the Next Step that you identified each week. Take action and share with your group about what you experienced!
4. Have fun with this!

Welcome to The Art of Neighboring!

Session One: The Call To Neighboring

Assigned Reading = Chapters 1 & 2

Getting Started

Share about your neighborhood and the types of relationships that you have with the people who live on your street or in your building. On a scale of 1 to 10, how “connected” is your current neighborhood?

Discussion Questions

1. What was your big take away from this week’s reading and/or the video? What stuck out to you? What did you like? What was difficult or confusing?
2. Read Acts 17:26-27.
 - A. What jumps out at you from this passage? How does it fit the context of the rest of his sermon in Acts 17?
 - B. Do you have any “invisible” neighbors (page 17)? Do you think you are invisible to them as well? How does it end up like this?
 - C. According to Acts 17 that we just read, why do we live where we live? Why has God placed us in our neighborhoods? What about those that surround us? Why are they there?
3. In chapter one, the mayor states, “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? Why don’t government programs alone solve the problems of society?
4. 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 attempt to justify ourselves in order to avoid taking the Great Commandment literally? In what ways are you tempted to make a “neighbor” into a metaphor?
5. What would happen if everyone made it a point to know and befriend their literal neighbors?

Moving Forward

At the conclusion of each gathering we will do 3 things. Often groups lose track of time and end up rushing through the second half of the content. We strongly believe that these 3 exercises are the most important part of this study. If you only have time to do one section each week...do this one!

1. Do the Block Map - Take out the block map and fill it in right now... just start with the names of your neighbors...

Go around the room and share how many of the names you knew? Did you have any epiphanies as you did this exercise? What did you learn or feel as a result of doing this exercise?

Write the names of your neighbors by listing out the names of the adults and children of the 8 closest houses or apartment units next to you. Pay attention to the blank spaces (YOU SHOULD HAVE already done this earlier in this first session). Every other week you will go around and share how many neighbors you know by name and if you have made any progress since the last meetings. Take a second and identify each of the neighbors and decide if they are a stranger, acquaintance, or relationship.

2. Identify one neighbor that you are going to pray for during the next week.
3. Share one small “next step” that you feel God is calling you to take in the next 7 days.

On Your Own

Take a few minutes to journal about your past experiences with neighboring. How do you think God might want to stretch you over the next six weeks?

*Read Chapter 3 before the next meeting

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?



YOU ARE HERE



Session Two: The Time Barrier

Assigned Reading = Chapter 3

Getting Started

What was the “next step” that you shared the last time we were together? How did it go?

Discussion Questions

1. What was your big take away from this week’s reading and/or video? What stuck out to you? What did you like? What was difficult or confusing?
2. Read Luke 10:38-42
 - A. Do you associate more with Martha or Mary? If you were going to defend Martha in that moment what would you want to say?
 - B. Discuss the following myths and how you see them impacting our culture (pages 45-46).
 - i. Things will settle down someday.
 - ii. More will be enough.
 - iii. Everybody lives like this.
 - C. Which of the three myths do you struggle with the most? How does that reveal itself in your life?
3. Imagine yourself with the time it would take to be a great neighbor. What are the things you would have to sacrifice to make that a reality? Why would it be worth it? What could change in your life or in your neighborhood?
4. On page 48 Dave shares about the tension that that he felt when making a decision about which sports league to enroll his son in. As you consider the issue of margin in your own life, what could you say “no” to, in order to spend more time in your neighborhood?

Moving Forward

1. Do the Block Map - Write the names of your neighbors by listing out the names of the adults and children of the 8 closest houses or apartment units next to you and pay attention to the blank spaces. Take a second and identify each of the neighbors and decide if they are a stranger, acquaintance, or relationship. Go around and share how many neighbors you know by name and if you have made any progress since the last meeting.
2. Identify one neighbor that you are going to pray for over the next week.

3. Share one small “next step” that you feel God is calling you to take in the next 7 days.

On Your Own

Look at your calendar and do an audit of how you have spent your time over the last two weeks. Reflect on how well your calendar is aligned with your priorities.

*Read Chapter 4 before the next meeting (catch up by reading chapters 1-3 if you are behind)

Session Three: The Fear Factor

Assigned Reading = Chapter 4

Getting Started

What was the “next step” that you shared the last time we were together? How did it go?

Discussion Questions

1. What was your big take away from this week’s reading and/or video? What stuck out to you? What did you like? What was difficult or confusing?
2. Read Luke 5:27-32
 - A. Are you uncomfortable about spending time with anyone on your block? Anyone you would feel strange being seen with? Why?
3. Discuss the impact that the 24 hour media cycle has on your world view. What are you afraid of that you have only seen on the news?
4. What’s the worse case scenario if you engaged your neighbors? Does knowing them increase the likelihood of your worst case scenario?
5. Who do you think is scared of you? Why?
6. What do you think are the main reasons people are often afraid of their neighbors? Do you have any fears or concerns about the people in your neighborhood?

Moving Forward

1. Do the Block Map - Write the names of your neighbors by listing out the names of the adults and children of the 8 closest houses or apartment units next to you and pay attention to the

blank spaces. Take a second and identify each of the neighbors and decide if they are a stranger, acquaintance, or relationship. Go around and share how many neighbors you know by name and if you have made any progress since the last meeting.

2. Identify one neighbor that you are going to pray for over the next week.
3. Share one small “next step” that you feel God is calling you to take in the next 7 days.

On Your Own

Journal about a time that you overcame a fear. What were the steps that you took in completing that process?

*Read Chapter 7 before the next meeting

Session Four: Motives Matter

Assigned Reading = Chapter 7

Getting Started

What was the “next step” that you shared the last time we were together? How did it go?

Discussion Questions

1. What was your big take away from this week’s reading and/or video? What stuck out to you? What did you like? What was difficult or confusing?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:8b and Matthew 5:14-16. Are you comfortable sharing your story and telling people about the impact Jesus has had on your life? When did you last share your story with someone? What makes it hard to do this?
3. "We don't love our neighbors to convert them, we love them because we are converted" (p.102)
4. Instead of sharing your story first, have you ever tried asking others about their story? How can you focus on listening and create a safe place for honest two-way sharing? What kind of questions help people share their story at a deeper level? What’s the deepest moment you’ve ever had hearing another person’s story?

Moving Forward

1. Do the Block Map - Write the names of your neighbors by listing out the names of the adults and children of the 8 closest houses or apartment units next to you and pay attention to the blank spaces. Take a second and identify each of the neighbors and decide if they are a stranger, acquaintance, or relationship. Go around and share how many neighbors you know by name and if you have made any progress since the last meeting.
2. Identify one neighbor that you are going to pray for over the next week.
3. Share one small “next step” that you feel God is calling you to take in the next 7 days.

On Your Own

Reflect on the biggest obstacles that exist for you to share your faith. Journal some of your fears and prayers regarding sharing your faith.

What have you learned through this whole process? Take some time and write some things you’ve learned/are learning about neighboring in general.

*Read Chapter 8 before the next meeting

Session 5: The Art of Receiving

Assigned Reading = Chapter 8

Getting Started

What was the “next step” that you shared the last time we were together? How did it go?

Discussion Questions

1. What was your big take away from this week’s reading and/or video? What stuck out to you? What did you like? What was difficult or confusing?
2. Read 1 Kings 17:7-16
 - A. Why didn’t God just provide for Elijah directly? How do you think it felt to have to ask the widow for help? How do you think the widow felt?

3. What are your neighbors knowledgeable and/or passionate about? How could you enter into their world and allow them to serve you?
4. Are you good at allowing other people to care for you? What makes it hard? How often do you ask for help from someone outside of your immediate family?
5. “The art of receiving is not complicated. It comes down to being aware of our own needs. It’s about opening our eyes, then being vulnerable enough to ask and receive” (page 128). What current needs do you have that a neighbor might be able to help you with?

Moving Forward

1. Do the Block Map - Write the names of your neighbors by listing out the names of the adults and children of the 8 closest houses or apartment units next to you and pay attention to the blank spaces. Take a second and identify each of the neighbors and decide if they are a stranger, acquaintance, or relationship. Go around and share how many neighbors you know by name and if you have made any progress since the last meeting.
2. Identify one neighbor that you are going to pray for over the next week.
3. Share one small “next step” that you feel God is calling you to take in the next 7 days.

Session 6: Peacemaking

Assigned Reading = Chapter 11

Getting Started

What was the “next step” that you shared the last time we were together? How did it go?

Discussion Questions

1. What was your big take away from this week’s reading and/or video? What stuck out to you? What did you like? What was difficult or confusing?
2. Read Romans 12:17-18
 - A. How do we know if we've done everything that depends on us? Is this even possible?
3. Share about a conflict you had with a neighbor. If you’ve not had one, have you witnessed one? What could have happened differently?
4. What happens over time when you fail to forgive people who have wronged you?

5. Have you ever become friends with someone that you once considered an enemy? How?
6. Is there a conflict in your neighborhood that you could be a peacemaker in?

Moving Forward

1. Check out the website: artofneighboring.com and tell us about your journey through this experience. Also, check out the Resources section on the site on more information, including how to throw a great block party in your neighborhood.
2. Be sure to send your small group leader and pastor an email telling them what you learned through this experience and the best story you heard from your group.