



NEIGHBORHOOD

FIELD GUIDE

**"...LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR
AS YOURSELF."**

LUKE 10:27



THIS BASIC FIELD GUIDE

The purpose of Vision 2020 is to end loneliness in the neighborhood by serving as catalysts of belonging so that strangers can become neighbors, neighbors can become friends, and friends can become family through Jesus Christ.



.....
 ————— *God commands us in* —————

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT:

"... love your neighbor as yourself." Luke 10:27.

.....

THE INSTRUCTION IS SIMPLY TO LOVE THEM.

In loving our neighbors, opportunities will arise to share our faith.

Who is my neighbor? The classic answer is Jesus's parable of the Good Samaritan. Read Luke 10: 25-37. It ends with "Go and do likewise."

*In Vision 2020, "likewise" starts with your neighbor next door. Not someone remote. Not someone to whom you already consider you are ministering. As Rick Rusaw and Brian Mavis say in *The Neighboring Church*, "We don't just love the neighbors we choose but the ones God chooses for us." They add,*

"WE HAVE BEEN PLACED BY GOD IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS."

.....

STEP ONE:

Who are my immediate neighbors?

Pray for an open tender heart and for God's guidance as you start to reach out to His children who live next door to you.

Now use the image on the next page to assess how well you currently know your neighbors. This image comes from Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon's book *The Art of Neighboring*. Your home is the middle square and the 8 neighbors who live closest to you are the surrounding squares. If you live in a dorm or a retirement facility, you may have to be a little creative.

For each of the surrounding squares try to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the names of the people who live here?
- 2) What is something about the people who live here that is not obvious from looking at their home?
- 3) What is something about the people who live here that they would only share with someone they trust?

Don't worry if you aren't able to answer all or very many of these questions. The purpose of this exercise is to just assess your current knowledge of your neighbors.



Next, make a plan to remember things you learn about your neighbors.

Make a list. Don't rely on your memory. You could use a spreadsheet or you could use paper, one sheet for each neighbor. Label with the street address or apartment number if you don't know their names. You can use this list to keep track of things that you learn about your neighbors over the next few months.

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'VE FINISHED STEP ONE.

STEP TWO:

What holds me back from getting to know these neighbors better?

Circle the concerns you have.

No time

Embarrassment

Fear/shyness

Past conflicts

Physical barriers: fences, gates

My/their disability (mobility)

Differences: not like me

Other _____

Let's prayerfully look at each one.

No time: Until the Coronavirus hit, no one had any extra time. Many of us were on a treadmill of activity, hurrying from one obligation to the next. Pathak and Runyon suggest reassessing our priorities. Do we place God first, then family, then work? Or have we let God slip into second or third or ?? place? We have here a "Selah" (meditate on this) moment.

How do we waste time? Are there things that we do routinely for "relaxation" or "avoidance" that could very easily be eliminated? Examples might be light reading or TV, internet cruising or internet games. Which of these can make way for God's Great Commandment? Selah.

Schedule life for interruptions. When the schedule is packed, we pack it further and then find we can never accomplish what we set out to do. Is this satisfying? On the contrary, it makes us feel inadequate. Another approach would be to refine our schedule down to the basics and schedule time for detours. Stop using such straight lines between home and soccer practice and dinner and homework. Allow a little time to explore the back roads. Add an extra 10 minutes to allow for a side visit with the neighbor stopping at the mailbox or walking the dog. Selah.

Embarrassment: Sometimes we are so focused on our own lives that we ignore everything around us. It's embarrassing to admit that we don't know the name of someone we wave to all the time as we fly past them on the way to the kids' swim team practice.

Remember, our entire society has been living this way, packing more events into our overcrowded lives. So, let's be up front about it and prepare to admit that we're imperfect.

How about, "I'm sorry, I can't remember your name! I'm Jan and I live on the corner." (They may be relieved because they don't remember your name, either.)

Or "I met you a couple months ago but I have totally forgotten your name. I'm Jan."

Or "I can't believe I've lived here 5 years and I still don't know your name! I'm Jan."

Fear/Shyness: This is not a new concern in the 21st Century. Moses had the very same problem. *"O my Lord, I am not eloquent ... I am slow of speech."* Exodus 4:10.

Pray for an opportunity and then be watchful for it to come. Pray for something simple: "Lord, prepare my heart and give me a chance to greet this neighbor."

Past conflicts: Perhaps we have had an unfortunate interaction with a neighbor in the past. In the city, it's often noise issues (parties, loud engines roaring at unseemly hours) or lot lines or trees that dump their leaves or messy fruit across the fence. In the country, it's fences and fence lines and cows getting into the wrong fields. Sometimes when we think about a few neighbors we realize we really don't want to get to know them better at all!

God isn't saying we need to invite them to live with us. God wants us to love them and be kind to them. There are many ways we can be kind and loving to others. Start small and work from that point.

Examples: Pray for peace and healing between you and a difficult neighbor. Pray for good things to happen to them. Pray for simple opportunities to show love. Now slow down and watch for these chances to materialize. But continue to pray!

Physical barriers: It may be difficult for you to get past a large gate or fence. Maybe there's no mailbox to tuck a note into. Some neighbors pull right into the garage and close the door immediately.

Perhaps the barriers are your own. Maybe you have trouble getting around. Walking may be difficult or you may be confined at home.

Pray that God would lower the barriers and present opportunities to meet neighbors. Then watch and wait for God to show you how.

Differences: Be sensitive to cultural differences. Your neighbor from another country or another ethnic group might have values and habits that seem unusual you. Perhaps their lifestyle is quite different, or they have strong political opinions that you disagree with. Seize the opportunity to learn something new by having respectful conversations. You don't have to agree with them, but you can and should show God's love. Remember, your neighbors are made in God's image and precious to the Lord, just as you are.

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'VE FINISHED STEP TWO.

STEP THREE:

**Making Contact*

- Start with an “easy” neighbor. Maybe someone you’ve waved to or worked with, someone you feel you know a little.
- *Pray* for opportunities for a conversation.
- Don’t try to do everything at once. Start with a simple hello and a brief conversation.

Conversation starters:

- Pets
- Coronavirus – are you working from home? Will you still telecommute after we open up?
- Kids (if you have seen any. Be careful here – some childless couples carry burdens you may not be aware of).
- Yard tools
- Plants/gardens
- Cars
- Neighborhood news
- Be ready to share a little information about yourself. Don’t just quiz someone.

Pray about your future interaction:

“Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this” Psalm 37:5.

Now, get started!

Afterwards, make some notes in your folder or spreadsheet so you won't forget details and repeat yourself.

Since you now know a little about this neighbor, make an effort to slow down and acknowledge them each time you run into them. This means not always rushing in and out of your driveway. It means adding a little extra time in your schedule so you have time to stop and chat before that trip to the grocery or to pick up the kids.

Congratulations! You've done Step 3. This is basic neighboring.

Repeat again and again and fill in your neighborhood map.

***Looking forward.** Eventually, we'd like you to consider organizing some kind of block party or potluck for your neighborhood. Begin to pray about this and consider how that might look in your context. We are working on some resources to help you with this and will let you know when they are available.

References

Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon, *The Art of Neighboring*, Baker Books, 2012.

Rick Rusaw and Brian Mavis, *The Neighboring Church*, Thomas Nelson, 2016.

Karen Wilk, *Don't Invite Them to Church*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2010.

BONUS STEP: PRAYER WALKS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Seek the shalom of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. - Jeremiah 29:5-7

We believe in the power of prayer and recognize that prayer for our neighbors is one of the best ways to help us pursue our goal of ending loneliness in our neighborhoods.

We have created a Prayer Walk Guide for our church neighborhood, but how about creating your own prayer walk for the neighborhood around your home or workplace?

Use our Prayer Walk Guide as a model, and then map out your walk in one of two ways: sketch it out on the proceeding blank pages, or use Google Maps.

PLAN YOUR WALKS



Safety First! Remember to be mindful of traffic, bikers and runners, dogs and other animals, poor lighting, adverse weather, and not all neighborhoods are safe and secure, especially when it is dark out.

If you are unfamiliar with an area in your neighborhood, try driving it in daylight first. Walk with a buddy. Only walk alone if you are comfortable that it is safe to do so. Wear appropriate clothing for the weather, your exertion level, and use proper footwear. Know your limits and check with a medical professional if you have any concerns.



TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PRAYER WALK:

1. Pick a time of day, day of the week and frequency for your walks.
2. Be prepared to say "hello": Hi there, hello, good morning, good afternoon, I like your _____.
3. Pray before you leave that the Lord would open your eyes to see the neighborhood and the people the way He sees them.
4. Don't rush, walk slowly and try to notice small details.
5. Be discreet. Pray silently and if you're in a group, try to look like you're out for a stroll.
6. Pray as specifically as you can. What breaks God's heart, what brings Him delight? How are the needs of the widower next door different from those of the large family two houses away?
7. Take notes. After your walk, write down anything interesting that you saw or anything that the Lord may have placed on your heart.

MAPPING A WALK



You likely know your neighborhood already. But maybe you want to estimate how long it will take, or know how far the walk will take you. You can use Google Maps (www.google.com/maps) to very simply create a route .

- Click in the Search Google Maps bar and enter your address or your destination
- Click the blue button to 'get *directions*' 
- Click the little walking man 
- Enter somewhere you would like to go, or click on the map. **It's that easy!**

Sketch Your Route

PRAYER NOTES:

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