

Study Guide¹

We have included this study guide to help you enter into meaningful conversation with others who have a desire to grow as believers and neighbors. We believe that the best way to learn about neighboring is in the context of community. Ideally, you will be able to process the principles found in this book with a group of your friends. The following questions will provide a loose framework for your discussions. We encourage you to chase rabbit trails, welcome tangents, and be open to where God leads your conversations. Each session covers two chapters and is designed to be used after the corresponding material has been read.

Session 1

The Call to Neighboring

Chapters 1 & 2

Starter Question: What factors did you consider before choosing your current residence?

Read: Acts 17:26–27 What do you like about this passage? Do you have any questions about these verses?

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How much of your block map were you able to fill in? Did you have any epiphanies as you did this exercise?
2. Describe your neighborhood and the relationships that you currently have with your immediate neighbors. Do you have any invisible neighbors?
3. According to Acts 17:26–27, why do we live where we live? And why has God placed us in our neighborhoods?
4. 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?
5. 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 seriously?
6. What would happen if every Christ-follower made it a point to know and befriend their literal neighbors?

Action Steps

1. Create your own block map and place it somewhere in your home where you will see it often.
2. Learn the name of one of your unknown neighbors this week and fill in their squares on your block map.

¹ Pathak, Jay and Runyon, David. The Art of Neighboring. Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. All of this content is from the study guide found in the book.

Session 2

Overcoming Barriers

Chapters 3 & 4

Starter Question: On a scale of 1 to 10, how hectic is life right now?

Read Luke 10:38–42 What do you like about this passage? Do you have any questions about these verses?

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Which of the following myths do you struggle with the most?
 - a. Things will settle down someday.
 - b. More will be enough.
 - c. Everybody lives like this.

What practical steps can you take in order to break the habit of thinking like this?

2. Do you currently live at a pace that allows you to be present in your neighborhood? 3. Are there some good things in your life that are keeping you from the “main thing”?
3. Are there some good things in your life that are keeping you from the “main thing”?
4. Discuss the impact that technology has had on how you view the world.
5. Are you skeptical about anyone on your block? Why?
6. Discuss or think about some practical ways you can overcome your fears of interacting with neighbors you don’t know.

Action Steps

1. 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.
2. Go and meet one of your neighbors who you know nothing about. Leave a note if they don’t come to the door.

Session 3

Moving Down the Line

Chapters 5 & 6

Starter Question: What is the best party that you have ever been to?

Read Luke 5:27–32 What do you like about this passage? Do you have any questions about these verses?

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. In what ways did Jesus's behavior at the party challenge the social norms of his day?
2. What would it cost you to participate in or organize the kind of parties Jesus was known to attend?
3. Who currently throws the best parties in your neighborhood?
4. Take out your block map and identify which of the following three words best describes each of your eight closest neighbors—Stranger, Acquaintance, or Relationship?
5. Share something that you have done for or with someone that seemed small at the time but had a big impact.
6. What are the activities you most enjoy doing, and how might they become tools for building relationships with your neighbors?

Action Steps

1. Partner with someone on your block and begin to plan a neighborhood block party.
2. Be purposeful this week in doing one small thing that moves you down the line:
Stranger → Acquaintance → Relationship

Session 4

Posture Is Everything

Chapters 7 & 8

Starter Question: When was the last time you had a conversation with someone who seemed to have an ulterior motive?

Read Matthew 5:14–16 What do you like about this passage? Do you have any questions about these verses?

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Has anyone ever tried to sell you something that you weren't interested in?
2. Why do some people have a lot of baggage when it comes to having spiritual conversations?
3. Are you comfortable sharing your story and telling people about the impact Jesus has on your life? When did you last share your story with someone?

4. “We don’t love our neighbors to convert them; we love our neighbors because we are converted” (p. 102). Discuss the tension in this statement.
5. Are you good at allowing other people to care for you?
6. “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” (p. 128). What current needs do you have that a neighbor might be able to help you with?

Action Steps

1. Try telling a friend your whole story as it relates to God. Ask them for feedback.
2. Ask someone in your neighborhood for help or advice in an area where you are lacking.

Session 5

Open Doors

Chapters 9 & 10

Starter Question: Share about a time in your life when God guided you by opening or closing a door.

Read Matthew 17:1–9 What do you like about this passage? Do you have any questions about these verses?

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How would you have felt if you were one of the nine disciples who weren’t invited by Jesus to go up on the mountain?
2. Why do you think that Jesus made a decision to spend the majority of his time with a small group of people?
3. What’s the difference between being responsible to a person and being responsible for a person?
4. Have you ever encountered a “messy” situation in neighboring? What happened?
5. Have you ever had a friendship in which you felt that no matter what you did, it was never enough? Share about this experience.
6. Which of your neighbors do you feel God calling you to spend more time with?

Action Steps

1. Reflect on Luke 10:5–11. Write down the names of the people of peace in your neighborhood.
2. Invite a neighbor over to your house for dinner.

Session 6

A United Front

Chapters 11 & 12

Starter Question: Share about a conflict that you've had with a neighbor.

Read Romans 12:14–21 What do you like about this passage? Do you have any questions about these verses?

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What happens over time when we fail to forgive people who have wronged us?
2. Have you ever become acquaintances or friends with someone who you once considered an enemy?
3. Share about a time in which you worked with others to accomplish something significant.
4. What are some of the reasons Christ-followers refuse to work together? How valid are these reasons?
5. What would your city be like if every Christian made a decision to become a better neighbor?

Action Steps

1. Walk around your block and ask God to give you a vision for what he wants your neighborhood to look like.
2. Share your neighboring stories with others. Encourage some of your friends to take the Great Commandment seriously and reach out to their neighbors.