

WEEK 1 - Who is my neighbor?

Spring Emphasis 2024 // Canopy Guide

Love Your Neighbor

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Use the questions below to kickstart a community building, all-play conversation that connects to our weekly topic. If your group meets for dinner, these might be great questions to share around a table.

- Who do you see as your neighbor?
- How do you interact with your neighbors?
- What are some reasons it can be difficult to see and/or love your neighbor?

STUDY GUIDE

Jesus famously said that next to loving God with our whole being, we each need to love our neighbor as ourselves. But just like the questioner in Luke 10, who prompted the Good Samaritan parable, we often find ourselves questioning, “Who is my neighbor?”

Though it may be rare to come upon a person caught by disaster - human or natural, most people will try to offer a helping hand or handout, maybe because we know that parable and use the expression of being “good Samaritans” so readily.

Yet in our case, what if we are busy or preoccupied (with good and noble things) or maybe even on our way to a religious activity? Do we rationalize “passing on the other side” when it may be costly in time, money, or ongoing involvement? In Jesus’ story, think about what it cost the Samaritan man to help out. How much of our not stopping is the exercise of wise stewardship, and how much is selfishness instead of love?

Part of what we hope to do during this series of lessons is to expand our understanding of our neighbor and sensitize us to the occasions and opportunities to practice Christ-generated neighborly love. The questioner in Luke 10 responded to Jesus’ concluding question about who in the parable was neighborly by saying it was the one who “showed mercy.” That’s what we want to emphasize in our study: what are Christlike ways we can show mercy? Beyond disastrous situations, are there people in need of mercy and love that we encounter in our daily lives - and how do we best show them the love of Christ?

What may help us most to answer that basic (“who is my neighbor?”) question is to consider the people Jesus encountered in his brief ministry. The occasions and the people with their varied circumstances, but most importantly the way Jesus treated them and engaged with them, can be most helpful and instructive for us. So that is what we propose for the next several sessions together. We hope it will be beneficial for all of us.

Scripture to Read

- Luke 10:25-37

Deeper Discussion Questions

1. What totally did it cost the Samaritan man to help the robbery victim?
2. Is it ever convenient or easy to help someone who needs mercy? (see Matt. 5:38-42, Luke 6:27-31)
3. Is it wrong to count the cost for helping someone, especially if others are affected by giving money, time, or attention? (see Luke 14:28-33)
4. Is it better to let a person know that your help is given because you serve Christ, or let your help be totally anonymous? (see Matt. 10:40-42, Matt. 6:2-4)

PRAYER

Make sure to claim some time as a group each week to pray specifically for each other.

EXTRA RESOURCES/ARTICLES/RESEARCH

1. Census Data - look at a broad view of our Johnson City neighbors:
 - <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/johnsoncitycitytennessee#>
 - <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/johnson-city-tn/>
 - <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/johnson-city-tn-population>
2. A visual representation of the text:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8mz3C6hKf0>
3. A thorough overview and analysis of the parable:
<https://bible.org/seriespage/4-good-samaritan> (don't miss the section on “Principles” toward the end of the article)