

# WEEK 5 - How does Jesus interact with those who are in close proximity?

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.

- In thinking about neighbors who are in close proximity to you, if you were stuck on a deserted island, whom would you want to be with?
- Do you live in an area where your neighbors are close by or in an area where your neighbors are far apart? How does this affect your relationship?
- Do you generally assume that people around you are doing okay within our affluent society?

### STUDY GUIDE

We know Jesus came to reveal and share God's love. Every one of his interactions with people is an expression of love. We might think that Jesus would perform miracles to draw a crowd or display his power. These miracles, though, were nothing more, or less, than expressions of his universe-creating love being extended to people in need. We see this in the way Jesus loved his friends, bringing healing to them in quiet ways.

For example, in Mark 1 we see Jesus calling his first disciples. Peter was one of these. The small group went to the synagogue where Jesus set a man free from a demon. This new group then went to Peter's house. Peter's mother-in-law was sick in bed. They mentioned this to Jesus, and he immediately went and healed her. This is a very personal and intimate expression of Jesus's love. Peter and his friends followed Jesus without even knowing the deep way he would care for those closest to him.

We see another very tender moment when early in his ministry Jesus, his mother, and disciples went to a wedding. This would obviously have been the wedding of either some friends or family for Jesus. These were people he already knew and loved. The wine runs out before the wedding is even over. Jesus's mother looks at him and says their friends

have run out of wine. Jesus says this isn't a good time for him to go public. Mary turns to the folks helping with the feast and says, do whatever he tells you. Out of love for his friends Jesus quietly and miraculously makes wine.

The gospels are full of times when Jesus expresses his deep love for his friends and family. He doesn't favor them. He doesn't need to, because his loving power is available for everyone. When his dear friend Lazarus died, John 11, we know that Jesus planned to raise him from the dead; but, even in this moment we see Jesus crying of the pain and loss associated with such suffering. All of his actions are an expression of love, even to those with whom he is closest.

Don't look at these scenes and think that Jesus favors his friends and family. Look at these scenes and realize that Jesus indiscriminately overflows with his powerful love for all. His powerful love extends to us, and to all around us today. He even invites us to join him in expressing his love to all.

### **Scripture to Read**

- John 2:1-12, John 11:1-44, John 15:12-17, Matthew 8:14-17

### **Deeper Discussion Questions**

1. After you read through the stories above, think and talk about how each of these are natural, authentic expressions of the overflow of Jesus' love.
2. The people close to Jesus in the stories mentioned are in moments of grief, illness, and potential social shame or embarrassment. How can you love the people you're close with well in similar moments?
3. This group you are part of can be a place where you readily care for each other in moments of need. How do you want to be able to offer care to each other when it's needed?
4. Receiving help can be a challenge. Talk as a group about the need to connect with each other during the tough moments of life.

## **PRAYER**

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

## **EXTRA RESOURCES/ARTICLES/RESEARCH**

1. Research: [Rutgers Study Finds that Neighbors Improve Well-being in Middle and Later Life](#)
2. YouTube TEDx talk ["The unseen value of being a good neighbor | Michael Wood-Lewis"](#)
3. Meal Train - [The Benefits of a Meal Train Reach Far and Wide](#)