the
neighboring
church
getting better at what Jesus said matters most

foreword by Gabe Lyons
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A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK
Being a Good Neighbor Is Better Than a Good Program

The person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the one who loves those around them will create community.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Motives Matter

A helpful maxim is “Begin with the end in mind.” In other words, start with a picture of where you want to finish. That’s important to keep in mind if you want to be an Effective Neighboring Church. So what is the endgame in neighboring? Try finishing these two sentences:

I love my neighbor as myself because . . .

We want to be a Neighboring Church so that . . .

The Sunday school answer is “Jesus.” Jesus said to do it, so we should do it, right? Yes, that’s true. Obedience to Jesus by living the Great Commandment is primary. If we dig a little deeper, we probably all have additional motives (sometimes ulterior motives) for neighboring. At the end of the day, how you finish those two sentences matters and makes a big .
Being a Good Neighbor Is Better Than a Good Program

THE ENDGAME

Love your neighbors so you will be best at what matters most.

So they will go to church.

So they will join a small group.
being a good neighbor is better than a good program

Why do we bring this up? Because we see loving our neighbor as our -

selves as a value to be lived out in every area and life-stage ministry of LifeBridge. Neighboring is not in a silo to itself. Our desire is to see it flow through everything. One way this affects our various ministry areas is that they have to answer the following questions:

- How is (or can) this help people love their neighbors better?
- How can we take what we have been doing in our ministry on campus and flow it out into people’s homes and neighborhoods?
- How and when are we teaching and modeling how to love our neighbor as ourselves?
- Do the people in our ministry area of influence have the margin in their lives to love their neighbors, or are we keeping them too busy at the church?

Our neighboring life pastor helps staff wrestle with those questions, promoting the neighboring value.

Measuring What You Value

An effective organization knows to measure what it values. We value worship, so we measure the number of people attending weekend services. We value service, so we measure the number of people serving both in our community and on the church campus. Because we value growth, we measure the number of people involved in small groups or study and those in prayer ministry or other activities. What about neighboring? Should we measure that, and if so, how? As we asked in the introduction, how do you measure something that is more organic? There are a couple of charts in The Externally Focused Church and The Externally Focused Quest that flow into neighboring. Interestingly enough, the topic of neighboring wasn’t in those books, but upon review we saw it was the exact trajectory on which we were headed. We just didn’t have the language for it yet. Individuals serving as a lifestyle is loving your neighbor as yourself.

Who Is My Neighbor?

He wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” —Luke 10:29

The Follow-Up Question

Lawyers always have follow-up questions, don’t they? Like any expert in the law, the man questioning Jesus in Luke 10 made sure to cross-examine his witness. “Who is my neighbor?” Basically, he asked, “Who is it exactly that I have to love?”

Why did the lawyer ask this question? Well, Scripture says his motive was to justify himself. But why was he trying to justify himself in the first place? He was stuck in a transactional worldview. It’s no surprise that he was thinking in transactions. There were 613 commands in the Jewish law, and by the time Jesus came, the Jewish leaders had taken those commands and added another two thousand layers to them with more interpretations. They had boiled down loving God and others to a list of dos and don’ts, rights and wrongs.

Transactions.

As long as the expert in the law was able to check something off his list, truth is that we simply learn to handle situations better as we move through different experiences and relationships with God. This is a cycle we do our entire lives.

But You Don’t Know My Neighbors

Sometimes neighbors are not just different from us; they are way on the other end of the spectrum. What about really hard-to-love neighbors or even dangerous neighbors? We aren’t suggesting people abandon common sense. Love doesn’t do that. Love protects. One pastor we talked to lived across the street from a registered sex offender. The pastor said, “We reached out to him a lot, but we never left him alone with our kids and didn’t let our kids go into his house. We had to keep some boundaries.”

It’s important to look at the national and state sex offender registries and know your neighbors. Be smart. Protect your kids and your neighbors’ kids, but figure out where love is in the equation.
Who Is My Neighbor?

What we THINK spiritual growth looks like...

What it REALLY looks like...

- Learn
- Grow

Disorientation
- thrown for a loop
- upside down

Orientation
- smooth sailing
- on level ground

Reorientation
- learning a new way

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What Kind of Neighbor Are You?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I like my neighbors.</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
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<td>My neighbors like me.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
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<td>I talk to my neighbors.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>I do nice things for my neighbors.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>I genuinely care about my neighbors.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>My neighbors invite me to their parties.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>I actually like going to my neighbors’ parties.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>I know what’s happening in my neighborhood.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>I watch out for my neighborhood.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>When people need help in my neighborhood, they come to me.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>No</td>
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Now tally your score: 2 points for every Yes, 1 point for every Somewhat, 0 points for every No.

What kind of neighbor are you?

17–20 points, Mr. Rogers: You are the best neighbor ever. You know your neighbors, and you’re engaged in your neighborhood.

13–16 points, Steve Urkel: You are a little quirky and sometimes annoying, but deep down you are good-hearted and always do the right thing.

9–12 points, Wilson: You are always there and are always willing to share friendly advice, but you like to stay on your side of the fence.

5–8 points, Ned Flanders: You’re trying hard, but people are just not getting you.

0–4 points, Newman: Not sure who would like living next to you.

You are in desperate need of some neighboring help.

View the quiz online at www.prodonos.com/lbcc.
The Practices of Neighboring

If we are going to have a story that will be heard, we are going to have to live a life that can be watched. —Jen Hatmaker

I Thought I’d Be a Better Dad

I (Brian) thought I would be a better dad. That thought had been going through my mind for weeks when my two girls were elementary-school age. I wasn’t a bad dad. I just imagined I would be better than I was. I realized that good intentions weren’t good enough. I needed a plan. Businesses had plans to be profitable. Sports teams had plans on how to win games. I needed a plan to be a better dad. But the plan needed to be simple. It needed to be something I could easily remember. So I came up with three habits I would do regularly for and with my girls. And I used words that rhymed so it would be easy for me to remember them.

The first and most fundamental practice would be to stay in my girls’ world. I was wrapped up in my world. My mind was on work. My rest was focused on watching sports. Staying wasn’t just about being physically present; it was about being emotionally and mentally present. It was about being a student of my children, learning who God made them to be. It was the neighboring church.

Our friend Eric Swanson asked, “What is the smallest thing you can do to live more missionally?” Many of us are convinced the answer is knowing the names of our neighbors. Just taking that small step to know their names is like taking a small step on a moving sidewalk and letting the magic happen. It is a relational game changer, as Dave Runyon would say, to go from “Hey yo!” to “Hey Joe!”

Getting to know the names of our neighbors might be easy (or already done), but what about their hopes, hurts, and histories? We want to get to know people for the sake of valuing them and praying for them. Developing a relationship beyond a wave or a handshake takes some time and intentionality.

Do you know your neighbors’ names, histories, hopes, and hurts?

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Appendix

One Another

Verses highlighting the attitudes and actions we should have for one another.

• **Love** one another: John 13:34–35; 15:12, 17; Romans 12:10; 13:8; 14:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11–12; 2 John 1:5
• **Serve** one another: Galatians 5:13, 22; Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 4:9; 5:5
• **Accept** one another: Romans 15:7, 14
• **Strengthen** one another: Romans 14:19
• **Help** one another: Hebrews 3:13; 10:24
• **Encourage** one another: Romans 14:19; 15:14; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24–25
• **Care** for one another: Galatians 6:2
• **Forgive** one another: Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13
• **Submit** to one another: Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5
• **Commit** to one another: 1 John 3:16
• **Build trust** with one another: 1 John 1:7
• **Be devoted** to one another: Romans 12:10
• **Be patient** with one another: Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13
• **Be interested** in one another: Philippians 2:4
• Be accountable to one another: Ephesians 5:21
• Confess to one another: James 5:16
• Live in harmony with one another: Romans 12:16
• Do not be conceited with one another: Romans 13:10
• Do not pass judgment on one another: Romans 14:13; 15:7
• Do not slander one another: James 4:11
• Instruct one another: Romans 15:14
• Greet one another: Romans 16:16; 2 Corinthians 13:12
• Admonish one another: 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Colossians 3:16
• Spur one another toward love and good deeds: Hebrews 10:24
• Meet with one another: Hebrews 10:25
• Agree with one another: 1 Corinthians 1:10
• Be concerned for one another: Hebrews 10:24
• Be humble to one another in love: Ephesians 4:2
• Be compassionate to one another: Ephesians 4:32
• Do not be consumed by one another: Galatians 5:14–15
• Do not anger one another: Galatians 5:26
• Do not lie to one another: Colossians 3:9
• Do not grumble against one another: James 5:9
• Give preference to one another: Romans 12:10
• Be at peace with one another: Romans 12:18
• Sing to one another: Ephesians 5:19
• Be of the same mind with one another: Romans 12:16; 15:5
• Comfort one another: 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11
• Be kind to one another: Ephesians 4:32
• Live in peace with one another: 1 Thessalonians 5:13
• Carry one another’s burdens: Galatians 6:2
Neighboring Tips and Texts from the LifeBridge Neighboring Way of Life Ministry

Give the Great Commandment as much organizational visibility as possible. LifeBridge has a neighboring tip of the week on preservice slides and a neighboring text of the week for those who have opted in. We try to keep neighboring on the radar. We never want people to forget, and if they get sick of it, we tell them to take it up with Jesus because we aren’t stopping.

Our ground rules for these tips and texts are that these must be encouraging, positive, simple, active, and fun. Each text starts with this heading: “A Neighboring Encouragement from LifeBridge.” The rest of the text stays around 116 characters long, including spaces. Below is a sampling of these tips and texts. Feel free to use them.

• Start with 1—Learn 1 name, pray 1 prayer, act 1 time in love. Every 1 counts!
• Special dates are huge in neighboring. Birthdays. Anniversaries. Graduations. Learn and love!
• Try to see your neighbors as Jesus sees them. What do you see differently?
• A Plus One is anything you do for your neighbors that helps them experience the love of God.
• Take some time today to think about one idea that could bring your neighbors together. Ready. Set. Go!
• Pray for yourself today. Ask God to give you his heart for your neighbors.
• It’s not all up to you. Be faithful to loving your neighbors. God will take care of the results. Trust him.
• Think about how you have been loved by others. Find a way to do that for your neighbor.
• Think about how God has loved you. How can you love your neighbor like that?
• Loving your neighbor is linked to loving God. How do you need to grow in loving God today?
• Throw a party for your neighbors this summer. If you need help planning it, we’ll help: neighboring@lbcc.org
• Have kids? Set up a lemonade stand and work it with them. Great family time. Awesome neighbor connections.
• God put you where you live for a reason. Your unique qualities are needed in your neighborhood. Go love!
• Want to learn how to share the story of God better? Check this out: www.gcmcollective.org/story-training
• Bring the backyard festivities to the front yard. It will make a huge difference.
• If your neighbor is out, go out with them. “How are you doing?” “What are you up to?” will get the ball rolling.
• See a need. Meet a need. See a need. Meet a need. See a need. Meet a need. Repeat.
• Maybe you are the answer to the prayer you are praying for your neighbor. Love is an action.
• Want some help in dreaming about how to love your neighbors? We can help: neighboring@lbcc.org
• Take a regular neighborhood walk with your family. Walk slowly and take time to meet and talk to neighbors.
• Neighboring is easier when you do it with friends. Who around you would be a good partner? Team up!
• Connect! Connect! Connect! Facebook. E-mail list. Phone tree. Nextdoor.com. Neighborhood newsletter. Do it!
• What do you love to do? Invite a neighbor to do it with you (camp, garden, sports, knit, cook, movies).
• Set aside a couple of meals a month to share with your neighbors. Plan it. Schedule it. Be intentional.
• LifeSports is a great way to connect with your neighbors. Get in the game! www.lbcc.org/sports
• Everyone loves receiving gifts. Find a way to bless someone through gift giving. Doesn’t have to be fancy!
• Stay in the know. The more you know the more you can step into the lives of others with love.
• Love your neighbors in ways they won’t ever see. Find ways to bless in secret. This matters too!
• If your neighbor makes you mad. Pray for them. If you make your neighbors mad. Stop it!
• Gospel means good news. How can your life be actual good news to your neighbors?
• Walk your dog with neighboring intentions. Walk a little slower and stop to visit with neighbors as you pass.
• LifeBridge has special events from time to time. Some of them may be awesome to invite your neighbors to.
• Want to read a great book on loving your neighbor? Get The Art of Neighboring by Runyon and Pathak.
• Neighboring is also about receiving. If you have a need, ask a neighbor for help. Great way to connect!
• End your conversation with neighbors like this: “And if you ever need anything, just know we’re here!”
• We love our neighbors, not to make them Christians, but because we are Christians. Pure love.
• Tell your story and don’t leave the faith parts out. It’s part of who you are. Share confidently and with humility.
• Don’t give up loving people. Sometimes love takes a long time to sink in. Keep loving people every day.
• Make yourself present in the neighborhood. Make yourself an easy person to bump into.
• Be completely you in front of your neighbors. There’s no reason to put on any kind of mask. Authenticity is key.
• Be aware of nudges from God. When he nudges, listen. When you hear him, obey. God is the best neighbor!
• If someone invites you to their party, go! That means they like you. It’s a good thing. Go love them!
• You may not get anything in return for all your neighboring. Love your neighbors anyway.
• “Our aim under love is not to be loving to this or that person or in this or that kind of situation but to be a person possessed by love as an overall character of life.”—Dallas Willard
• Somos uno: We are all one in God’s eyes. This week, look at your neighbors as if you are all one. What can you invite them to do that might allow you to feel more like one?
• Food trucks are a great way to get to know those around you. Prospect hosts food trucks every Monday night 5:30–8. Invite your neighbors to the closest food trucks near you.
• A Plus One is anything you do for your neighbors that gives them a sense of good news around them. What good news can you see and share this week?
• LifeBridge is hoping to help our neighbors in Lyons affected by the flood. Is there any way you can help your neighbors with their own floods happening right now?
• “The fence that makes good neighbors needs a gate to make good friends.” How can you build a gate between you and your neighbors?
• “Man’s greatest blunder has been in trying to make peace with the
skies instead of making peace with his neighbors.”—Elbert Hubbard

• Jesus worked more at being interested in others than being interesting to others. This week, be interested. Join us for the Learning Community this weekend.

• Invite your neighbor to something. A great chance is this Friday for the Watoto Children’s Choir, 7:00 p.m. at LifeBridge.

• What are the key tools for good neighboring? Come share yours and we’ll share ours this weekend at the Neighboring Way of Life Learning Community.