

## ***Session 1: Rediscovering the Art of Neighboring—Little Things Make a Big Difference***

### **Session Goals**

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

**Main Idea:** Christians can learn what it means to be a good neighbor to the people living nearest to us.

**Head Change:** To know God’s expectations for us in serving and loving our neighbors.

**Heart Change:** To feel the desire for connection with the families next door.

**Life Change:** To commit to regular engagement with the people next door by taking the Great Commandment seriously.

### **Open**

**Describe an interesting or memorable interaction you’ve had with someone in your neighborhood that was unexpected. What were the circumstances of this interaction? What kind of relationship was formed after this interaction?**

We all know that Jesus desires for us to love our neighbors—we’ve all heard the Great Commandment and understand that our neighbor can be anyone we come into contact with. But taking that next step to engage with the strangers around us can often be intimidating and downright uncomfortable.

In session one, Jay Pathak explains how we can start by reaching out to the people who live next door to us. Sometimes all it takes is a small gesture, a quick question, or a friendly hello to begin the engagement process.

### **View**

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Jay Pathak’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Jay answers the following questions.

**What did the mayor request of Jay and the other pastors? How did they respond? What were they convicted about?**

**What was the catalyst for Jay's desire to get to know the families in his neighborhood?**

**How did Jay describe what good neighboring looks like? What did it look like for him when he first started to take it seriously?**

## **Show**

Session 1: *Rediscovering the Art of Neighboring—Little Things Make a Big Difference* (9 minutes).

## **Review**

In the first session, Jay explained that the Bible defines our neighbors as everyone, even our neighbors in our neighborhood. Jay's goal is for us to understand that we can start small when it comes to neighboring by talking with those that live right next to us—the people in your apartment building, the families next door, or the couple across the street.

**After watching this session, how would you define being a good neighbor?**

Jay told a story about when he and some other pastors were asked by the mayor to create a way for neighbors to interact with each other. He realized that the request was simple and biblical. **What was his reaction and why? Why were the men so convicted?**

Sometimes, we become so consumed with our convenient relationship—like the ones we have with co-workers, college friends, and people in our small group—that we don't even think about the strangers we walk past every day. **In what ways can our love for convenience and comfort keep us from being the type of neighbors God has called us to be?**

Jay stated that his life changed because he started to take the Great Commandment in Matthew 22:34–40 seriously. **What did applying this commandment look like for him? What steps did he take to ensure he took this commandment seriously?**

Jay shared a story about how he didn't want to deal with people after a long and difficult day, but in the end it was worth it. **In what ways can being a good neighbor require us to move out of our comfort zone?**

Jay walked us through a tic-tac-toe board exercise. (If you haven't done the exercise, please take a moment to do that now.) **After drawing the board and taking his quiz, what were your results? What are some thoughts you have, whether positive or negative, about your results?**

**After seeing your results from the quiz, what are some things you can do to improve how you engage with your neighbors?**

## **Bible Exploration**

Truly understanding our call to love the people next door can be hard, especially considering the independent culture we live in today. Many of us work from home, have online friendships, and are too busy to meet new people. We're going to see how worrying about more than ourselves can put us on the track to becoming the type of neighbors God has called us to be.

Read Luke 10:25–37.

**After reading this parable, how would you describe its message in your own words? What parts of the parable can you identify with the most? Which character do you relate to?**

**How did the priest and the Levite react to the wounded man on the road? How do you see these same attitudes displayed in our culture today?**

Being a good neighbor can be uncomfortable because it can cost us and there is often risk involved. **How did the Samaritan react to the risk of taking care of the man? What did it cost him to do his good deed?**

**What do the Samaritan's actions show us about being a good neighbor? What could being a good neighbor involve?**

The Great Commandment is to love the lord God with all of your heart, mind and soul, and to love your neighbor as yourself. **What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?**

**How does knowing that we are to love our neighbors in the same way that we love and care for ourselves help you see the importance of serving others?**

**Considering the Great Commandment, how often have you loved your neighbors? How well have you loved your neighbors?**

Think about the neighbors in your own neighborhood. Consider the neighbors who have displayed burdens. **In what ways could you help out a neighbor who is struggling this week?**

**This week, how can you make yourself more available than usual to the people in your neighborhood?**

## **Last Word**

Engaging our neighbors opens up the opportunity for transformation within our communities. The more transformation we see, the larger the outreach into our world. It all starts with us when we choose to push past our own comfort zone and serve the people around us.

This week take some time to assess whether you know the people in your neighborhood and form a plan to introduce yourself to a few neighbors.

## **Deeper Walk**

**Read:** Read chapters 1, 2, and 6 of Dave and Jay's book, *The Art of Neighboring*. As you read, ask God to reveal to you a few ways you can initiate reaching out to your next-door neighbors.

**Pray:** Pray that God would open up a door of opportunity for you to engage in a conversation with a neighbor you don't know.

**Memorize:** Memorize Luke 10:27, "So he answered, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your strength and with all of your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

## ***Session 2: The Time Barrier—Margin is Key to Being a Good Neighbor***

### **Session Goals**

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

**Main Idea:** If Christians want to make space for their neighbors, then it requires flexibility and shifted priorities.

**Head Change:** To be able to prioritize what's most important in our busy schedules.

**Heart Change:** To feel love for our neighbors that leads us to create margin for them.

**Life Change:** To move past convenient relationships and pursue ones that require some sacrifice.

### **Open**

**Describe a busy time in your life. How did your schedule affect your relationships? What was most distracting? What helped you manage those distractions?**

One of the struggles we all have in common is time management. In a culture that praises being constantly on the go, there isn't much time left for us to rest, let alone worry about the family who lives next door.

We've been learning about what it means to love our neighbors well. In this session, we're going to figure out what steps to take in order to not allow time to become an excuse or a barrier for us to engage with others.

### **View**

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dave Runyon's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Dave answers the following questions.

**What does Dave say we have less of? How is it affecting us?**

**What myth does Dave talk about that we often believe about our time?**

**Why is it important to slow down and be in the moment as much as possible?**

## **Show**

Session 2: *The Time Barrier—Margin is Key to Being a Good Neighbor* (6 minutes).

## **Review**

**What is your relationship with time? Do you naturally make time for those around you or do you find yourself “fitting” people in to an overpacked schedule?**

Dave mentioned that we have more access to time-saving devices that ironically suck our time away. **What kind of relationship do you have to “time-saving” technology like smart phones, apps, or calendars? How have you found these things to be time stealers instead of time givers?**

Dave quoted John Ortberg saying, “The greatest enemy of spiritual life is hurry.” **In what ways can rushing through life be detrimental to our spiritual growth?**

Dave mentioned that our culture accepts the myth that says one day life will settle down and we can make time for others later. **When have you allowed a busy schedule to interfere with the time you were supposed to spend with someone? How did it affect the relationship?**

Dave pointed out that part of engaging with the neighborhood is being interruptible—the idea that even though we’re busy, we’re able to stop and take a moment to shift our priorities. He asked us to consider this question: Are we living in a way that makes us available to others? **How would you answer this question? What are some ways that being interruptible could help us slow down and reevaluate the way we spend our time?**

**In what ways could you create margin for God to work in your schedule? What shifts could you make in your priorities?**

Dave stated that a simple way we can create space for others is by spending time in the front yard or taking walks around the block because it makes us visible and available for conversation. **What are some other ways that you could make space in your schedule for your neighbors?**

## **Bible Exploration**

Distractions are one of the main hurdles to being a good neighbor. When we’re distracted, we can miss out on what God’s doing around us.

Read Luke 10:38–42.

**How would you summarize this story in your own words? What's the main point?**

**Do you typically identify more with Martha or with Mary in this story? Why?**

**What was the main issue that Martha had at the party? Why did Mary's actions make Martha upset? Who did Jesus commend at the end of the story and why?**

Martha's service wasn't the issue—it was the fact that her service was distracting her from being fully engaged with Jesus. **When, if at all, have you allowed serving someone to distract you from truly being *with* them?**

Martha shows us that even when we're doing really good things, we can still miss out on the "main thing." **In what ways have you experienced missing out on something due to distractions?**

Being distracted can keep us from engaging with those around us, which was what happened with Martha. The story of Mary and Martha shows us the importance of shifting our priorities for the sake of the moment. Mary's priority was to engage, while Martha prioritized making sure everything was done. **What could it look like to prioritize time spent with the people in your neighborhood?**

These verses show us how our perspective about what's important can impact the way we spend our time. **What are some ways you spend your free time? What could you do to spend some time engaging with the people in your neighborhood this week?**

## **Last Word**

Loving our neighbors can seem inconvenient sometimes, especially when there are millions of things to do. But that's why re-assessing your priorities and having margin can help us be good neighbors.

If you're asking whether all of these adjustments on behalf of people you barely know are worth it, just remember the Great Commandment. Loving and serving our neighbors is what Jesus has commanded us to do and he will give us the grace to do it.

What are some ways you can start small this week? Inviting a neighbor on a jog around the block that was already on your schedule? Or maybe picking up some groceries for a neighbor since you're already going to the pharmacy? Take some time this week to think through some ways you can include the people around you into your schedule.

## **Deeper Walk**

**Read:** Read chapter 3 of Dave and Jay's book, *The Art of Neighboring*. As you read, ask God to help you create margin in your schedule in a way that directly benefits one of your neighbors.

**Memorize:** Pick one verse from this session (Luke 10:42, for example) and memorize it this week.

**Write:** Think about your normal priorities and everything on your calendar for the next month. Write out three things you can move down the list of importance in order to engage with a neighbor this month.

### ***Session 3: Overcoming Fear—Neighboring Can be Both Messy and Powerful***

#### **Session Goals**

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

**Main Idea:** Christians can break the barrier of fear by empathizing with our neighbors.

**Head Change:** To know that we can have hope and peace instead of fear because God is always with us.

**Heart Change:** To feel confidence when worry tries to take over.

**Life Change:** To refrain from letting our assumptions about others keep us from engaging with them.

#### **Open**

**Describe a time when you were afraid. What were the circumstances surrounding your fear and how did you handle it? What specifically made you afraid and why?**

Fear is one of the most crippling things we deal with in life. It holds us back from making certain decisions, keeps us stuck in immaturity, and stunts our growth. In this session, we're going to learn how important it is to rely on God and live by his Word when fear creeps into our lives.

If we want to be good neighbors, we have to rid ourselves of the fear and worry that can come with meeting new people.

#### **View**

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Jay's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Jay answers the following questions.

**What were some of the things that Jay says are natural for us to feel regarding fear?**

**What did Jay say is the responsibility of the believer when it comes to good neighboring?**

## Show

Session 3: *Overcoming Fear—Neighboring Can be Both Messy and Powerful* (8 minutes).

## Review

Jay started the session by talking about the relationship we have to fear and how easy it is to fear our neighbors. **What are some factors that might make someone afraid to engage with their neighbors? What kinds of fears come when meeting new people?**

We have to understand that some of our next-door neighbors are going to be different from us—they might have a different culture, religion, or dress. **In what ways have you allowed someone’s differences keep you from getting to know them? How did you conquer that fear?**

Jay summarized a quote from 1 Peter by saying, “Everyone around you is afraid, but not you. Because you know Jesus.” **How should our relationship with Jesus impact our desire to reach out to our neighbors?**

Our courage in the midst of the world’s fear should draw our neighbors to Jesus. People should desire to know about Jesus after seeing how unafraid we are. **How can an attitude of courageousness give a good impression to our neighbors of what it means to follow Christ?**

When we meet new people, we can be afraid of being judged by others, like how Jay felt about an awkward encounter with a neighbor. But sometimes we don’t engage with others because we’ve already made judgments and assumptions about them. **What did Jay’s story show us about the consequences of making assumptions about others?**

Jay didn’t let the uncomfortable situation get the best of him. He decided to push through the barrier and talk to his neighbor again. **What was the outcome of the two men reconciling after their awkward conversation? How did Jay’s dedication to loving his neighbor turn the situation into a positive one?**

Jay talked about how Jesus didn’t allow fear to fuel his actions. When people judged Jesus for hanging out with “sketchy” people, he told them that he did it so they would know the love of God, because that was most important. At the end of the session, Jay asked: When was the last time we were accused of hanging around sketchy people? **How would you answer that question? What are some ways you could imitate the actions of Jesus in your neighborhood?**

## **Bible Exploration**

When we choose to follow Jesus and listen to his commands, we're also believing that he will be with us and help us conquer our fears. If Jesus has asked us to love and serve our neighbors, then we have to believe that he will give us what we need to engage with them.

In this session, Jay used 1 Peter 3:14 to help us see how having no fear can actually be beneficial to reaching people for the kingdom.

Read 1 Peter 3:8–12.

**What types of actions does Peter list off that would help improve a relationship with someone else? Which of these actions do you find easier to do naturally and why? Which one is the most difficult and why?**

**What could it look like to display these attributes practically toward our next-door neighbors in our everyday lives?**

We live in a culture that values independence, selfishness, and an attitude that says we should repay evil with evil. **How does this passage speak against our cultural norm? How is loving on our neighbor's counter-cultural?**

Verse 8 says we are to be sympathetic and to love one another. **What could it look like for you to show sympathy to one of your neighbors this week?**

Verse 9 talks about refraining from repaying evil with evil, but to repay it with a blessing. **Describe whether it is typically easy or hard for you to still be kind to a neighbor who was rude to you. What helped you to continue being kind?**

**What kinds of actions could be a blessing to a neighbor who has done evil toward you?**

Some neighbors may not want to hear about Jesus or accept an invitation to church—but they might respond to our compassion, love and interest in their personal lives. **How could our neighbors who are unbelievers be positively affected by this kind of treatment toward them?**

Read 1 Peter 3:13–17.

Verse 13 asks us who could be there to harm us when we are zealous to do good. **What could being eager—or zealous—to do good for our neighbors look like?**

For many of us, we might read the question posed in verse 13 and agree that doing good keeps away suffering. But in many cases, people in the world can still harm us, no matter how many good things we do for them. **How would you answer the question in verse**

**13? How does Peter answer it in verse 14? How can we respond in faith when we know that we could suffer for doing good?**

**Based on verses 14–17, what could living without fear do for those around us? For us?**

**What are some ways you could address and overcome a particular fear you have about engaging with a neighbor this week? What could it look like for you to trust in God as you address that fear?**

### **Last Word**

God has not given us a spirit of fear, and the more we make decisions based on those fears, the more stunted we become in our own spiritual growth. The command to love our neighbor is built on a fearless attitude with the goal of showing others the love of Christ. If we push fear aside and rely on the Spirit of God to help us, we can better serve and love our neighbors.

Take a moment and meditate on this question: If God is always with us, what do we have to fear when obeying his command to love the people next door?

### **Deeper Walk**

**Read:** Read chapter 4 of Jay and Dave’s book, *The Art of Neighboring*. As you read, ask God to reveal to you the fears that may be hindering your neighboring journey.

**Pray:** Pray and ask God to help you push through your fears in order to engage with more of your neighbors.

**Sing:** Pick a few worship songs that talk about rejecting fear. Play them while you’re getting ready in the morning or as you drive to work to serve as a reminder of the courage God has given us.

## **Session 4: *The Art of Receiving—Reciprocal Relationships Go Both Ways***

### **Session Goals**

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

**Main Idea:** Our neighboring relationships should be a two-way street in order to grow and be healthy.

**Head Change:** To understand why receiving is just as important as giving in a relationship.

**Heart Change:** To feel humility in our relationships with our neighbors.

**Life Change:** To allow our neighbors to give and sacrifice for us as we give and sacrifice for them.

### **Open**

**Describe a time when you had to ask for help and didn't want to. For what reasons did you feel this way? How does it make you feel when you're forced to ask for help and why?**

If we're honest, it's a lot easier to be on the giving end of a relationship. Helping others in need makes us feel good, and it usually solidifies the friendship when we're able to give and be kind to someone else. But part of our neighboring journey involves the ability to be humble and allow others to give back to us.

In this final session, we're going to see how the art of receiving allows others to be a good neighbor to us as we strive to do the same for them.

### **View**

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dave's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Dave answers the following questions.

**How does Dave define "the art of receiving?" Why is it important for us to be good receivers?**

**What kind of examples did Dave give us to help enter into our neighbor's world? What advice did he give for making it easy?**

## **Show**

Session 4: *The Art of Receiving—Reciprocal Relationships Go Both Ways* (7 minutes).

## **Review**

Dave told a story at the start of the session about the “lawn guy” who lives across the street from him. He wanted to learn something from his neighbor—a form of receiving that would build a foundation to their relationship. **In what ways could being on the receiving end of a relationship—asking for advice in Dave’s case—help break the ice when trying to build a bond with our neighbors?**

Dave talked about wanting to put on his “super Christian hero cape” in search of someone he could help when he first moved into his neighborhood. **What lesson did he learn from having that perspective? What did he say changed his mind from thinking in that way?**

Wanting to help our neighbors isn’t a bad thing, as Dave said—especially if we know that we have a lot to offer. But sometimes, we have to do some self-evaluation to ensure we’re not walking in pride. **What are some practical things you could do to ensure your engagement with new neighbors isn’t fueled by pride?**

Dave shared a story about going hunting with his neighbors. In the beginning, he wanted to skip the hunting conversation and the trip altogether for fear of embarrassment. He knew he’d have to receive so much help and direction, which made him feel uncomfortable. **What did Dave learn from the hunting trip that changed his life? How did the trip secure his relationships with those neighbors?**

For many of us, it’s much easier to be on the giving end of a relationship than the receiving end. **In what ways have you found receiving help, gifts, or advice uncomfortable? What about receiving from others can make us feel uncomfortable?**

Dave told us that relationships are supposed to be reciprocal in order to be healthy and thriving. **What are some of the positive aspects of being in a healthy, reciprocal relationship? Why do relationships need to be a two-way street?**

Dave gave a hypothetical example of a friend or neighbor who consistently helped through hard times but rejected help in return. **When have you experienced this kind of situation? How did it make you feel?**

## **Bible Exploration**

As we learn about the art of receiving, we must remember that receiving from others allows them to fulfill the command to be good neighbors as well. Giving our neighbors the opportunity to serve and love us is just as important as serving and loving them back.

Dave talked to us about the art of receiving by using the example of Jesus and the woman with the alabaster box.

Read Matthew 26:6–13.

**How does the author describe the perfume the woman poured on Jesus? Why do you think this fact is important?**

The woman came to anoint Jesus with her valuable possession. Instead of denying her gift, he allowed her to serve him. **How were Jesus’s actions a display of “the art of receiving” that Dave talked about?**

It can be hard receiving valuable gift from others, but it can be even harder when we know that the person is having financial issues, struggling to find extra time, or experiencing extreme health issues—we feel like more of a burden by accepting. **How would you feel if someone insisted on giving you a sacrificial gift? How do you think you’d respond in that situation?**

The disciples felt that the perfume should have been given to the poor instead of to Jesus. **Based on Dave’s explanation, why was it important for Jesus to receive the woman’s sacrifice?**

The relationship that was formed with the woman and Jesus could have been damaged if he had he chastised her for her gift. **In what ways could being on the receiving end of a relationship with your neighbor make the relationship stronger?**

**What are some practical steps you can take to reorient your perspective about receiving from others? How can you ensure that you receive from a neighbor the next time they offer their advice, their help, or a gift?**

## **Last Word**

In order to have reciprocal relationships, we have to allow our neighbors to help us, even when we don’t think we need it. If there is a single mom who has been receiving help with money, childcare, or food from her neighbor, her desire to extend the same kindness by lending her extra bag of mulch should be accepted with humility and kindness.

The art of receiving is all about being aware—we all have needs and we all need to be vulnerable to have those needs met. The next time someone offers their help, instead of trying to figure it out on your own, take a chance and say yes.

It's the end of the series, and we've covered a lot when it comes to getting to know the families within our own neighborhoods. It may seem like a big mission, but Dave and Jay taught us that we can start small—learn your neighbors' names and say hello every day. If we all commit to the small steps, then we could see transformation across our communities as we display the love of Christ.

### **Deeper Walk**

**Read:** Read chapter 8 of Jay and Dave's book, *The Art of Neighboring*. As you read, ask God to help you learn how to value receiving in the relationships you have with your neighbors.

**Pray:** Pray and ask God to help you remember that your neighbors have the right to be good toward you in the same way you try to be good toward them.

**Ask:** Pick one neighbor this week and ask them something about their life. If it's the woman who is constantly gardening, ask her how she maintains her garden. If it's a man always working on his cars, ask him what tools he recommends. Ask a question that allows you to receive valuable information from them with no expectations.