

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.



Series: Neighbors

We are familiar with the basic teaching of Jesus to “love thy neighbor as thyself;” but who really is my neighbor? The person across the street, in the shared cubicle, on the same school bus... sure!! But what about the family that lives on the other side of town? The ones who just arrived as refugees? Or the one who stands on the corner with a sign? Do we really love these neighbors? And can we really love them without knowing them; their stories, their pain, and their needs?

Message description:

We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves. But can we really love someone if we do not know them? If your neighbor is anyone who has a need, how can we love if we do not know the need? As we consider the call of Christ to go and be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth, this week challenges us to consider the hard history of West Louisville. Why did it develop the way that it did? How does that impact our city and how well we know our neighbors still today?

Key Scriptures

1 John 4:7-21

Additional sources for independent study:

- Video on the 9th Street Divide (19min): <https://youtu.be/rnDuCGOoVlc>
- Video on the history of Walnut Street (7min): <https://youtu.be/OVgtVhdgl94>
- Bridging the Divide: an interview with Walt and Shae Smith (32min): <https://youtu.be/zH4PX1PCunE>
- West of 9th photography blog by Walt and Shae Smith: <https://www.westofninth.com/about>
- Frazier Museum: West of 9th Curator Tour (15min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cssTkDbYShE>
- WLKY highlights West of 9th Exhibit (3min): https://youtu.be/Fml_4UfgaBI

Questions Related to This Week's Message:

1. Who did you get to know this week in your neighborhood whom you previously didn't know?
2. What neighborhoods in Louisville were you taught to avoid? What reasons were you given (some good reasons, some maybe not)?
3. What surprised and/or challenged you about Lauren's story?
4. Have you ever been to West Louisville? What was your experience?
5. What did you learn about the history of West Louisville that you didn't know before?

Going Deeper:

"Jesus stands at the door knocking (Rev. 3:20). In total reality, he comes in the form of the beggar, of the dissolute human child in ragged clothes, asking for help. He confronts you in every person that you meet. As long as there are people, Christ will walk the earth as your neighbor, as the one through whom God calls you, speaks to you, makes demands on you. That is the great seriousness and great blessedness of the Advent message. Christ is standing at the door; he lives in the form of a human being among us."

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *God Is In the Manger*

"We have literally no time to ask ourselves whether so-and-so is our neighbor or not. We must get into action and obey - we must behave like a neighbor to [them]," and be willing to admit that perhaps "[we ourselves] are the neighbor" being asked to receive love from an enemy. - *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Read Luke 16:19-31

- What do you make of Jesus' direct words in this passage?
- How does this relate to the parable of the Good Samaritan, and specifically the lawyer's question?
- Biblical scholar Mitzi Smith writes (regarding the parable of the Good Samaritan), "Jesus' response to the lawyer's question redirects his concern from eternal life to this life. Our concern should be saving lives in our lifetimes. What we do now impacts where we find ourselves in the afterlife. The story of Lazarus and the rich man makes this point (Luke 16:19-31). When the Samaritan carried, clothed, housed, fed, and financially supported his neighbor, he turned abstract self-righteous piety into neighbor-love. Neighbor-love is clothed in tangible acts of restitution... The most vulnerable among us live in precarious situations and are subjected to and surrounded by violence. Neighbor-love is transgressive of the borders we erect to avoid risky relationships with others or to create... neighborhoods populated with folks like us."
 - o What is the difference between piety and neighbor love here?
 - o Do you think her distinction is helpful or not? Is it necessary?
- Regarding the Bonhoeffer quotes above, what speaks to you about opportunities we have to serve Christ every day?

Choose one of the videos/blog posted for further study and discuss:

- What did you learn or hear differently?
- What shocked or surprised you?
- Where did you hear a message of hope (throughout the video or blog)?
- How are you challenged to be a better neighbor in light of this information?