

Love in Chaos

Session 4: Love Your Neighbor

SESSION GOALS

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

Main Idea: If we want to obey the commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves, we must make the effort to get to know them personally.

Head Change: To know that loving our neighbors requires spending time with them.

Heart Change: To feel eager to know and care for the people around us.

Life Change: To engage with our neighbors—the people who are around us—in an authentic and personal way every day.

OPEN

Does your church have a moment in its service when you're encouraged to turn to your neighbors, shake hands, and say hello to one another? Do you enjoy that part of the service or dread it? Why?

While good-intentioned, these moments in a church service (traditionally called the "passing of the peace") can sometimes feel forced or downright awkward. Still, it can be an opportunity to get to know the people around you and express love to them. And that's what this session is all about.

The second half of the great commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. But we can't love them if we don't know them. And we can't get to know them unless we make the effort, as awkward as it may feel. In this session, Bob will help us see the connection between getting to know our neighbors and loving them.

REVIEW

Bob said Jesus “was adjacent to the people near him,” and we should follow Jesus’s example. So, a good place for us to start is to identify the people we’re regularly around. **Who are the people in your life that you encounter regularly, like neighbors, coworkers, or acquaintances in your recreational activities? Do you know their names?**

Bob taught that there’s a difference between being near someone—being physically close—and being adjacent to them, or attentive, engaged, and invested. **In your mind, what does it practically look like to be adjacent to people instead of just being near them? How can we make ourselves more adjacent to the people around us?**

We often view Jesus’s commands in Scripture metaphorically. And sometimes he does use metaphors. But Bob argued that Jesus’s command to love our neighbors isn’t metaphorical—he really intends for us to love our neighbors. **How might we interpret Jesus’s command to love our neighbors in a way that excuses us from actually engaging with our neighbors?**

Bob talked about our tendency to want to go to the ends of the earth to share the love of Jesus but not the end of the street. **Why do you think we are sometimes more willing to cross an ocean to tell others about Jesus than our own street?**

What can make it difficult to love our neighbors? To talk to them about Jesus? What could it look like to overcome that struggles?

One of the practical ways Bob has engaged his neighborhood is by organizing a New Year’s Day parade every year. And while you don’t have to organize your own parade, Bob did encourage each of us to do something practical for our neighbors. **What practical things could you do that will help you get to know the people you live next to? In what ways could you practically serve your neighbors?**

Bob told the story about him, his friend, and their trip to Yosemite. Bob said his friend “didn’t see [Bob] as an interruption to his life.” **In what ways do you see other people as an interruption to your life? What could you**

Horizontal lines for writing.

do to view others as people to love and serve instead of interruptions?

Bob called Timothy, the apostle Paul’s protégé, “a guy who takes a genuine interest in the welfare of the people around him.” **Can the same words be said of you? Why, or why not? What could it look like to take a genuine interest in the welfare of the people around you? What might change about your relationships?**

Bob encouraged us to “be a shipwreck diver” instead of snorkelers in conversation. In other words, as we interact with others we should be curious and ask meaningful questions. **What kinds of questions create deeper conversations with others?**

Some of our neighbors may feel stuck in a rut of shame. Bob encouraged us to remind them that even “on their very worst day with their biggest screw-up, Jesus calls them beloved.” **What difference has it made in your life to remember that, even at your worst, Jesus loves you?**

If we’re honest, we sometimes enter relationships with an agenda. We seek to build consensus or to change people’s minds about something. And it’s not as if we should never do those things, but Bob encouraged us to get in closer proximity with our neighbors and show them the kingdom of God first—to invite them in! **What could it look like for you to love your neighbors with no strings attached? In what ways might a “no strings attached” approach bear more fruit for the kingdom than entering relationships with an agenda?**

What can you begin doing today to build loving relationships with your neighbors?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

This session corresponds directly with a part of Scripture the Christian Standard Bible labels “the primary commands.” Recorded in Matthew’s Gospel, the passage describes a scene in which Jesus is tested by an expert in the law. Read Matthew 22:34–40.

In verse 36, an expert in the law tests Jesus by asking, “Which commandment in the law is greatest?” **What was the motivation behind this man’s question? How did Jesus respond to being tested?**

Jesus answers the lawyer with two commands: love God and love your neighbor. Clearly, Jesus was concerned not only about the letter of the law (rigid obedience) but the spirit of the law (loving obedience), which would have been shocking to his Jewish audience. **In what ways is “loving obedience” different than “rigid obedience”? Can you give an example or two? Why is it good news that God commands us not just to obey but to love?**

While Jesus’s answer is broken into two parts, there’s one thing that binds them both: love. If we love God, we will love the people around us and the way we love people reveals our love for God. **In what ways does our love for God spill over into a love for our neighbors? What do you think it looks like to love God “with all your heart, soul, and mind”? How can our love for our neighbors reveal our ultimate love of God?**

Jesus’s command isn’t simply for us to love our neighbors, but to love our neighbors “as ourselves.” **What would you say it means to love someone as you love yourself? In what ways do we love ourselves? How do you distinguish between loving yourself and selfishness?**

There will be times when we don’t feel like loving our neighbors. There will even be days we feel apathetic about our relationship with God. To love both God and others, we have to discipline ourselves to act in love, even when we don’t feel like it. **In what ways can we minimize love by thinking it is just a feeling? Do you think it is still loving to care for others when we don’t have a “loving feeling”? Why or why not?**

Jesus closes this interaction by saying that “all the law and the prophets”—all the Scriptures—“depend on these

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two commands.” In Jesus’s eyes, love is the greatest thing we can give ourselves to. **If love is so important to Jesus, what can you do to prioritize it in your life? What changes could you make to ensure that others know you for your love?**

LAST WORD

We often think of love as an intense feeling of deep affection. But love is more than a feeling; it’s something that must be enacted. Without some level of action, love is little more than a fleeting feeling. God’s love is not just a feeling, but a deep commitment to seek the best for others. Consider the lengths he went to reconcile us to himself!

If we seek to obey the greatest commandments—love of God and love of our neighbors—then we need to care for others with our curiosity, generosity, time, and attention, even when we don’t feel like it. And, as Bob said, that’ll mean “getting adjacent” to them. So, which of your neighbors will you begin with? Go love your neighbors as yourself.

Start today.

DEEPER WALK

Introduction: Are there neighbors in your community that you haven’t met yet? Make time to go introduce yourself this week. Learn their names, ask them a question or two, and encourage them to have a nice day. Begin the process of building a relationship.

Pray: After meeting your neighbor, commit to praying for them every day for a week. In your prayers, ask God to help you obey his command to love your neighbors as yourself. Pray that he’ll warm your heart toward them and alert you to opportunities to serve them.

Serve: Exercise your love for God by serving one of your neighbors this week. When a need or opportunity arises, whether providing a meal for them, lending them a tool, or listening to them talk about their day, be quick to serve their needs.
