

# Who Is My Neighbor?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, it's always a blessing to be here Sunday after Sunday and be reminded of who Christ! through the ministry of the Word of God that comes to us in so many different aspects.

! Through singing of songs and even through the instrumental of that song and seeing the scripture there for us to meditate on as we were listening to the music itself and through the special music that happens, through the ministry of teaching that happens in the Sunday school setting and now in church time as our children are going to be going out there. But now, to sit underneath the Word of God and to be reminded of what God has for us is a tremendous blessing. And then later on, as many of you will be going to small groups and then throughout this week we'll be coming back on Wednesday night or your conversations with individuals throughout the week in the ministry of the Word that is happening day by day is a tremendous blessing for us as a people to be able to do that freely here in the United States. Well, as I was thinking a little bit this morning and throughout this week about the message and the passage for today, something that just came to my mind is how busy life seems to be. Do you ever find yourself kind of getting caught up in the rat race, the flow of the schedule and the difficulties and complexities of life and all the things that bombard you from day to day that just continue to overwhelm? I mean, if you're a husband or a wife, there's the desire to meet one another's needs and to meet expectations and how often we as husbands joke around about that honey-do list that's waiting for us on the weekends so that we can get some of those things finished in the house that we tend to put off during the week. Or if you're a mom and you're trying to get your kids back and forth to all the activities that they're a part of, whether it be sports activities or school activities or the play or the musical or whatever it might be, the challenges of life that tend to invade the day-to-day. And of course, if you're involved in any kind of business, if you're employed in any way, you know that there's the challenges of trying to meet expectations of your boss. Then there's the difficulties that often happen in the office dynamic of trying to not step on people's toes and trying to not hurt people's feelings. And if you're a manager, to try to manage that team without causing any degree of friction in your workplace.

And that can be a challenge. And then add to that all the things that we just kind of add to our plate from day to day. The important things like watching football games that are happening today.

Or the things that happen just keeping up with the day-to-day duties of house and home and maintenance of cars and all of these things that bombard us day after day that sometimes it's just exhausting.

Have you ever stepped back and wondered, if I could just move out into the country, if I could just kind of pull away from this rat race and then everything would be simpler.

[ 3 : 44 ] And of course, those of you who grew up on a farm know the fallacy of that and all the work that comes in to being on the farm and managing the property and taking care of the animals and all that is involved with that.

And maybe you're wishing you could move into the city so everything would be simpler. But do you ever think, God, if there was just one or two things that I could concentrate on.

Just one or two things that I could devote my energy to. If you could condense the scripture down to just two commands, then my life would be really easy.

And you know where I'm going with this. Because, in fact, Jesus did do that for us. In fact, Jesus did say that all of the law and the prophets, the 66 books that we have in the scriptures, have been condensed down to two summary statements.

Two guiding principles. Two commands that God has given to us to make life simple. Or simpler. And if we align ourselves to God's perspectives, if we order our priorities so that God is pleased in these two areas, we'll be fulfilling all that God expects of us from Genesis to Revelation.

[ 5:16 ] That is a little liberating thought, isn't it? And we're going to take a look at one of those commands, the second of those commands, in Luke chapter 10 this morning.

So turn with me, if you would, to Luke chapter 10. And I want to begin to look at this little narrative, this account of Jesus' life. And I want us to understand the significance of this command, love your neighbor as yourself.

Of course, it flows after the first and great commandment, which is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. That's the first and greatest commandment.

And the secondary commandment, the one that follows soon after, is loving your neighbor as yourself. And we'll find, as we begin to do this in our life, as we begin to align ourself to his perspective in relationship to loving our neighbors as we love ourself, that then it'll make a love for God a little clearer.

There's something about loving difficult people. There's something about understanding the challenges of that employee or that distant relative, perhaps, that always seems to make trouble for you.

[ 6:43 ] There's something about that that points you to the wonder of God's love for you and for me as stinkers of people, as stubborn individuals, as self-oriented.

We begin to appreciate the magnitude of God's love for us as we apply this love for others. So look with me, if you would, at Luke chapter 10.

And I want to just kind of begin to read this together. We're going to take this just a verse at a time. And I want to help us to understand the significance, the significance of loving your neighbor as yourself.

Let me read. Luke chapter 10, verse 25. If you're a guest with us this morning, in the Pew Bible, on page 869, it says this, And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

What shall I do to inherit eternal life? Now, this is an important question that we're going to delve in today. And I want you to know that this is the ultimate question.

[ 7:56 ] This is the most significant question that anybody in this world could ever ask because it involves your future trajectory.

It involves your future destination. And so here we are. This lawyer, or this scribe, is asking this question. He stands up to put Jesus to the test.

Now, to help us get a sense of the context, where is Jesus in the flow of his ministry? Let me just describe some of these things for us. First, this is Jesus.

He's kind of in the back end, the tail end of his ministry. He's six to eight months away from the cross. He has already set his face to go to Jerusalem.

That happened in Luke chapter 9. And now, he is kind of dotting his way through Samaria and through Judea, various kinds of ministry in various places, making his way gradually to Jerusalem for that final moment that will climax in his death, in his resurrection.

[ 9 : 02 ] Now, Jesus has seen his fair share of antagonism. And this hostility from the scribes and the Pharisees continues to rise. Their difficulty with his ministry is almost in your face.

It's almost non-stop. Wherever he goes, from city to city, he knows he can be met and confronted by this group of individuals who is always challenging his statements, who's always questioning his authority, who's always raising questions about his origination and wondering whether or not he's somebody who's credible.

Jesus has already been transfigured, and on at least two occasions, he's already told his disciples that he's going to Jerusalem to die and to rise again. His Galilean ministry has come to a close, and now here Jesus is somewhere, perhaps even on his way to Jerusalem to make, he's here, and he is answering this question somewhere along the way.

In the sequence of events, we find Jesus in the flow of ministry, and he's visited Jerusalem or the surrounding area of Jerusalem three times before he actually goes to the cross.

We find that in the book of the Gospel of John as we're moving through. And here, this lawyer is putting Jesus to the test. He stands up, which was just a, was a sign of respect, and Jesus, even though this is in a public instance, is dealing with this person individually, seeking to draw out his heart.

[ 10 : 47 ] And I want us to see, first of all, that this question affects your eternity. This is a significant question, who is my neighbor, because it's a question that affects your eternity.

This lawyer says, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? This lawyer or scribe was an expert in the interpretation and the understanding of the law, the application of the Mosaic law and rabbinical traditions for the Jewish people.

As an expert, he would have given most of his life to the memorization and the study of the scripture. Certainly having the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy memorized, kind of placed in his memory bank, but perhaps many of the other Old Testament books as well.

He was the go-to man when it came to knowledge about the scripture, doctrines that the law would have expounded. He would have known the intricacies of the commands, the history of Israel and the specifics related to God's word to the prophets.

But here we find him putting Christ to the test. Look at that at the very beginning of verse 25. He stood up and put him to the test. Now, we don't know his heart and Luke doesn't tell us what's going on inside at this point, but we find that he is challenging Christ in some way, perhaps seeking to discredit his ministry or perhaps trying to verify whether or not he was the kind of religious figure that the crowds should follow.

[ 12 : 36 ] As a scribe and as an expert in the law, he would be the go-to guy to validate a ministry of a religious figure and maybe people were coming to him asking him, was Jesus somebody to be trusted?

Well, here he is standing up and asking this significant question, what does it take to inherit eternal life? This is the ultimate question and the answer to this question is imperative.

It is non-negotiable. It is not optional. That's the significance of this question. What shall I do to inherit eternal life?

the implications of the answer for this question will determine your destination for eternity. That's the significance of this question.

I want to bring it all home to us as we think about the significance of the answer to this very important question. And for such an important question, one would think that Jesus would be happy to make the answer clear.

[13:45] Well, let me tell you how it happens. Let me make it very clear what it takes. And yet, what we'll find in this continuing narrative is that Jesus is interested in drawing this lawyer out and helping to interact with him and build relationship and engage him in some level of discussion.

So Jesus defers the question back to this lawyer so that he can draw him into this discussion and so they can begin to make a connection over this very important and significant topic.

That draws us to the next aspect of this question. Not only affects your eternity, but it also is anchored in history.

In order to look towards the future, it would be important for this lawyer to look to the past. He would need to look to the law. Notice what Jesus says in verse 26.

He says to him, What is written in the law? How do you read it? Now, at face value, this is not the answer that one would expect.

[15:03] What is written in the law? Is that what it takes? To be a law keeper? That I'm a law keeper and because of doing all of the things, aligning myself to the commands that God has set in the law?

That's what it takes to be a person that's headed to the kingdom? One would not expect Jesus to move that direction. And yet, that is exactly the direction that Jesus takes.

And again, Jesus is trying to draw out this lawyer, this scribe, this expert in the law. He knows this is his area of expertise.

So he continues to draw him out and to feed on this curiosity in the hopes of helping to lead this individual, this scribe, to a right understanding of why the law was given and what the law actually says about a person's life.

What would he find? What would he discover as he looks into the perfect law of liberty? What would he find as he is understanding the expectations of God for our lives?

[16:17] I want us to recognize that in looking back, Jesus is helping to establish the fact that he is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

He is the unchanging God and his standards and his character are the same yesterday, today, and forever. You see, what the law is, is not a reflection necessarily of God's desire to box you in and to make you compliant as much as the law is an expression or a reflection of God's character himself.

The reason why God has given us the law is not so that we have some level of measuring up to his expectations, but so that we can really get a better picture of who he is.

His character comes through the law. His purity, his righteousness, his holiness, and as we compare ourselves in looking at the law, we recognize that we fall woefully short of the standard.

There is nothing that we can do to measure up to the expectations that God has given. And in this stunning reply, not what we would expect, Jesus seeks to reaffirm the significance of the law and connect it with what he has said and stated already in the past, that he has come not to abolish the law but to fulfill it, and that he will fulfill the law in himself.

[17:56] The law does have demands that must be met and they can only be met in Christ. Well, the lawyer has the right answer as we find in verse 27.

What does the lawyer say? The lawyer says, well, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

And, he says to him, you have answered correctly, do this and live. Jesus continues to engage this lawyer, continues to draw him out, he doesn't pounce on him, he doesn't try to correct him or attack him, but he leads him into this discussion, tries to help establish the standard of the law that exists, and tries to help him understand that he will never measure up to the expectations that God has for his life.

Those who know God will be transformed in how they live. Now, Jesus is going to do the work of leading this conversation that it was meant to have.

The effect now is beginning to land. As Jesus says, now do this and you will live. Now, notice in verse 29, now the force of this command is coming true in the heart and life of this lawyer.

[19:29] And how does he respond? He says, and he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, and who is my neighbor?

Who is my neighbor? He's beginning to understand how woefully short he falls to the standard of loving the people around him.

The scribes and the Pharisees in particular had a challenge. It was difficult for them to even love people within their own Jewish nationality. He knows that his love is pretty exclusive when it comes to loving his neighbor.

It's not nearly as extensive as perhaps he would have read in the law itself. Matter of fact, if we were to flip over a couple of chapters in Luke and go to Luke chapter 15, we would find that this is the issue that the scribes and the Pharisees have with Jesus primarily.

He mixes it up with tax collectors and sinners. Who is this kind of guy? In their minds, he was disqualified for ministry because of the company that he kept.

[20:47] No, their love wasn't broad like Jesus' love. They saw even in his life how their life was certainly different. In their minds, Jesus was totally disqualified because he was a friend of sinners and eats with them.

How could a religious leader be involved with such a company of individuals? Well, Jesus takes this opportunity now to dig in.

Jesus wants to now help to develop this important question. Now that he has the lawyer's attention, now that he has drawn him out and involved him in this dialogue, now that he has commended his expertise in the law, now that the beginnings of a relationship have taken place, and this lawyer is the one now asking the questions, now Jesus has a captive audience.

And now we'll find that this question is significant because it addresses your availability. And that's point number three. It addresses your availability.

Now let me read this parable for us and I'll just kind of summarize it for us and then I want to just make some observations about the kind of love that we see this good Samaritan have.

[22:07] Beginning in verse 30 it says, Now Jesus replied, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a priest was going down that road and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite when he came to the place and saw him passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan as he journeyed came to where he was and when he saw him he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds pouring on oil and wine.

Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper saying, take care of him and whatever more you spend I will repay you when I come back.

Now we know the story. We're familiar with this account. Here is this man not a specific man but some general person who's making a journey.

[ 23:18 ] Now this may have really resonated in the heart of this lawyer because it's quite possible that this story was actually given, this answer was actually given in the area around Jericho.

Because in the following account as you kind of drop down and look at Luke chapter 10 verses 38 to 42, you'll notice that Jesus finds himself in Mary and Martha's house.

They happen to live in a town of Bethany which is only a couple of miles away from Jerusalem. And on this trip it says they went their way in verse 38.

Jesus entered this village. So it's quite possible that Jesus is actually sharing this story in Jericho or in the area surrounding Jericho. So the people who were there have made that trek.

They know how treacherous this path is. It really can resonate with them because they've had that experience. They've understood the fear. They know how treacherous that road is.

[ 24:21 ] They know the dangers that lie along the path. They understand how perilous it can be. Now Jericho is about 15 to 17 miles away from Jerusalem.

It lies about 900 feet below sea level. And Jerusalem which is about 2,600 feet above sea level to now go down this 17 mile track to Jericho 900 feet below sea level.

That's a pretty significant decline. About 3,500 feet in elevation. And so this man would have been zigzagging his way through this mountainous pass fraught with robbers and it became a rather perilous journey.

Well as we find in verse 30 this man's worst fears came to pass. The robbers come. They stripped him, they beat him, they departed from him and they left him for dead.

Terrible plight for any person. A victim of bad circumstances. But here we find in verse 31 a ray of hope. He may have been saying to himself as he was observing this scene, Hallelujah!

[ 25:38 ] Here comes my helper. This priest was making his way down this road. Certainly the priest would provide some assistance. This would appear to have been the best possible news for this victim, this Jewish man.

A priest who was expected to be an example of spiritual virtue. the best, the godliest, and the most righteous man in Jerusalem and perhaps in all of Israel at large.

If anyone was moving in the direction of the kingdom, if anyone was following after the standard that God has set, certainly it would be a priest.

Now at this moment I want to just remind us what initiated this parable to begin with. What shall I do to inherit eternal life? For this man, for this lawyer, and anyone who is listening to this story, the priest would be at the top of the list of individuals who were certainly headed to the kingdom.

And yet in this story we find the priest is the one who is avoiding the very things that God has said in terms of general and comprehensive statements about how to emulate God's heart.

[ 27:00 ] He was not one who would love his neighbor as himself. Yet for all that he knew about the law's demands, he decided that he wasn't going to take the risk, he was going to pass by on the other side.

Verse 32, we find another ray of hope. How did this guy get so lucky? Not only does a priest come by, but now a Levite. Fortunately for this desperate man, another traveler appears on this road, a Levite who would have assisted the priest, who would have been exposed to the law, who would have been understanding all that God had said in terms of his expectations for his people.

He would have been on the second tier of this list of individuals who were moving into the kingdom, at least as far as the society would have thought. And yet, for all that he knew about the law, he too passed by on the other side.

Two men from the spiritual class of Israel, the best chance of this wounded victim, both ignore the opportunity to show God's love to this individual who is hurting.

Certainly, his chances are exhausted at this point. certainly, the doom of his future has been written in the books. And now, comes a Samaritan, in verse 33.

[ 28 : 33 ] But, a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was. Unclean from a Jewish perspective. If this man had been in good health, he probably would have avoided it, this Samaritan himself.

coming from a mixed race because they had intermarried with the Gentiles. So, they were pushed out of the covenant community and despised by the Jewish people.

But, this one, moved with compassion, gets personally involved. He binds his wounds, he pours on oil. He wasn't just interested in moving this man out of the way so that other travelers would not have the burden or the hurdle of this individual lying in the path.

he takes ownership of the problem and he seeks to address the issue. In Jesus' story, as he does so well, Jesus turns everything upside down.

Jesus has a way of reversing all of the expectations, this surprise ending. Who will be the hero? Well, the villain of the story is actually the hero of the story.

[ 29 : 48 ] this Samaritan rises to the top as the individual who will demonstrate the love of God as God expects. So, what does this say about our love?

And what does this say about our neighboring? Well, let me make some four quick observations. First, I want us to see that this is a simple love. It's a simple love.

Well, when I say simple, I don't mean that it's simple to do. It's very difficult to do, but it's simple to understand. It's straightforward in its approach.

It's not very complicated or difficult to realize what's going on in this narrative. It's easy for us to get what this Samaritan is about, and it's really simple for us to understand.

It didn't require somebody who was flashy, who came from some formal education. He wasn't a part of the doctrinal studies in Jerusalem.

[ 30 : 55 ] He wasn't a scholar by any right. He didn't come from a prestigious background or reputation. He wasn't even qualified as it related to his ability to care for the real physical needs of this individual.

For all we know, he didn't go through EMT training. wasn't a medic, but he was available. He was somebody who was willing to see the need, to recognize that God had sovereignly and providentially placed this individual before him, and because of availability, he was willing to act.

Interestingly to me, this is somebody that he hadn't even met before. Wasn't part of his nationality, was out of the realm of his own space, and yet he was willing to act.

So, this is a simple love. We understand what this means. The love of the Samaritan was simple in its approach.

He saw the need, he met the need with the resources that he had. Nothing complex about the problem, nothing difficult to understand about the situation.

[ 32:12 ] All it took was a willingness to step in and to provide the assistance that he could. It was a simple love, but it was also a serving love.

It was a serving love. It didn't require vast knowledge of the law. It didn't require an ability to answer the deep questions of doctrine.

You didn't have to have all the answers. You didn't have to know how to parse out the Old Testament. All he had to know was how to serve.

And in this posture of service, he was emulating the Savior. Jesus, who we know, came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

And a quick look at Jesus' life will bear out the legacy of a man, our Savior, who had the approach of serving individuals. Meeting needs, physical needs by the feeding of the 5,000.

[ 33:19 ] Delivering individuals from the bondage of their health issues and casting out demons and helping to heal those who were sick. Even in the wedding of Cana, he was willing to meet a physical need.

They were running out of refreshments and Jesus steps in to help. This is something that we can all do. If you can pick up a shovel and shovel your walk, if you can pick up a rake and rake your leaves, if you can make a meal, if you can make a phone call or deliver a text, if you can fix a car, whatever you can do is a way for you to love the person across the street.

Can you do that? Can you do that for yourself? You find that your walk is cleaned off after a snowstorm? You find that your driveway is salted because you've gone through the effort of making sure that those things are taken care of?

Well, if you can love yourself in those ways, then God is calling us to love our neighbor in the same way that we have chosen to love ourself.

That is the concept here. Can we do this? It's a serving love. Next, it's a selfless love, a selfless love.

[ 34:51 ] There's no surprise here that this man took some risks. Perhaps the robbers were still lingering in the rocks and he was willing to accept the risk, the danger, so that he could address this man's situation.

He put himself in harm's way. He was willing to serve regardless of the potential for injury. And notice he uses his own resources. We find that here. It says in verse 34, he binds up his wounds.

He pours on oil. He sets him on his own animal. He brings him to an inn. He uses his own money. He exhausts a measure of his own time.

He's willing to step in and to use his resources that are available to him to love this man who is in need. What often stands in our way, I'll personalize this, what often stands in my way of serving the people around me is my own agenda.

What often stands in my way is my schedule, my priorities, my checklist, my, the things that I think are so important to do, so often get in the way of serving the individuals who God providentially places in my path.

[ 36:17 ] Those intersection points that God does by design to give us opportunities to love the people who are in the world.

Will we be willing to set aside for a little bit our schedules so that we can meet the higher objectives? It's really surprising, you look at the life of Jesus, it never ceases to amaze me that he is never in a hurry.

He's never surprised by the detour. As a matter of fact, the one time where it says he intended to go somewhere is he intended to go to this one place in Samaria so he could meet this lady at the well.

Jesus was willing to be distracted. He was willing to set aside his agenda for the sake of accomplishing the greater objectives. The mission of love that God has given to us to do.

And so often the need on the surface that need that stares us in the face is just a superficial way to get beneath the surface and meet the deeper needs.

[ 37 : 31 ] What are those deeper needs? Someone who cares. Someone who can sympathize. Someone who will listen. Maybe someone who will pray with an individual. Someone who will point them to the Savior.

will we take the opportunities that God gives to us to meet the needs of those around us. Now finally here in this section it's our Savior's love.

It's our Savior's love. Notice with me in verse 33 what does it say? It says Now this is an amazing word.

This is the word for pity. And everywhere it is used in the New Testament except for the parables that Jesus shared it is always used to describe the attitude and the ministry in the life of Jesus.

It is always used to characterize our Savior. He was one of compassion. And at least 12 times in the New Testament Jesus uses this word either to speak of himself or to characterize himself in a parable.

[ 38 : 51 ] This is the ministry that God has called us to. It is a ministry of our Savior. So that when we show up as people of compassion, guess who gets the credit?

He does. It is a beautiful ray that points to our beautiful God. That's what 1 John says in 1 John 4, 7 and 8.

Beloved, let us love one another. For love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love.

How is our loving? God is How does it show up? Are we people of compassion? Are we people who hurt with the people around us?

I had an opportunity just yesterday evening. Someone who I was in conversation with shared with me that a little less than a year ago her son had committed suicide.

[ 39 : 58 ] Now, that was kind of an awkward moment. What do you do with that? Well, I'll tell you, the most important thing you can do is show compassion. Show sympathy.

And sometimes you don't even have to say any words. Sometimes you just shed a tear. Sometimes you just pray. Sometimes you say, you must be feeling terrible.

You sympathize with their situation and you seek in that moment to demonstrate the love of Christ and His compassion for people. And it can be as simple as that.

You don't necessarily have to have the right answers. You just have to show the right love. I can do that. I don't always have the right answers. But I can show the right service.

It can really be as simple as that. Bearing out the gospel in our communities can be as simple as just showing love and service to the people that God puts in our path.

[ 41 : 03 ] Well, that takes us to our final point that we'll close with. This is a question that appeals to you immediately. Well, it appeals to you immediately for several reasons.

One, it appeals to you immediately because this is what we are going to do this year as a church in terms of a strategic initiative in seeking to nurture and develop this area of our ministry.

How can we be better people in terms of loving God and loving one another? And by the way, this neighboring concept, this loving our neighbor as ourself, doesn't just happen in your community.

It needs to happen here too. It needs to happen with one another. As a matter of fact, a pastor alluded to this last week from John chapter 17 when he read the part of Jesus' prayer that says that they might be one as you and I are one and just as Jesus speaking with the Father so that the world might know that you have sent me.

Do you realize, do you realize that the confirmation of the gospel shows up in how we relate to one another?

[ 42 : 28 ] Do you realize it doesn't do any good for us to have a bunch of guests come and visit on a particular Sunday if they're not seeing the power of the gospel working in our community?

If they're not seeing the oneness that we have with one another? If they're not seeing the way that we relate to one another in terms of caring and loving and just enjoying each other's fellowship, that is the confirmation, that is the stamp of validation that the gospel has actually done its work, is how you and I love each other.

So, yes, we do need to be about loving our community and loving the people at the grocery store and loving the serviceman who fixes your car or whatever it takes.

Whenever God creates an intersection for your life, learning to love the people that God has put in your path, that is important. But we also need to learn how to love one another. And there's some opportunities we're creating for that.

First, we're creating that opportunity in terms of small groups. Those of you who are part of a small group, you're going to be spending the next 12 to 14 weeks, however long your small group leader wants to take, in working through a study called the art of neighboring.

[ 43 : 47 ] And I would encourage you to not only participate in that, but there's a study guide and make the most of this opportunity for us to learn what it takes to do this second command, which leads us to the trajectory of the kingdom, as we're letting the word of God transform our hearts and make us loving people.

So we're going to be doing this in small groups. We're also going to be offering this in Sunday school. Now, this is not my idea. idea. Somebody in this congregation had a great idea.

What about people who are not part of small groups? And we certainly want everyone who is a part of this congregation, whether you're a guest and you're just trying to check things out, or if you're a regular member and attender of this church, but you're not able to be part of a small group, we want you to be part of this process.

We want you to feel like you're connected to the rest of the body because we're all in this together. We all need to be moving in the same direction. So beginning next week, I'm going to be teaching this class.

We're going to be going through the same material, and I would love to have you as a part of that, and so see me afterwards, and I'll let you know where we're going to be meeting. So if you're not part of a small group, please take part in this Sunday school so that we can all be on the same page and moving in the same direction.

[ 45 : 09 ] Excuse me. Now finally, we're going to be doing this on some strategic holidays. Now, it doesn't do us any good to go send you out and say, hey, go do this.

This is great if we're not behind this as a church. So I want you to know we're behind this enough that we want to help set aside some time for you to do this.

And I know that life is busy, and so we want to designate at least four strategic weekends that you're going to be out with your community, maybe inviting them to your home for a meal, maybe having a barbecue, maybe going and enjoying a fireworks show, whatever it takes to engage your community, your neighbors, in building relationships with them.

This art of neighboring we want to take seriously, and so we're going to designate at least four weekends where we're going to not have an evening service so that you can be about ministry in your community.

We want to free up space for us to do what God is calling us to do. It's our desire, our prayer, that God will help to lead us in this process of learning to love as he has called us to love, so that we can emulate his heart and so that we can show his life in the world around us.

[ 46 : 29 ] Let's pray. God, this is a significant task. We understand that this lawyer asked the ultimate question, a question that has as its future destination eternity.

So God, as you are shaping our hearts and molding us into the image of Christ, we pray that your Holy Spirit would show up in our lives and help us to be people who are truly loving our neighbor as ourself.

We need your help, not only in terms of the enablement to do this, but the wisdom on how to do it well. Thank you for this opportunity that we have this year, and we pray that you would be pleased with our efforts and that you would equip us for this work.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.