

# Loving our Neighbors

As you connect with neighbors through the ministry of your church, you are embodying exactly what the church is called to do and be. You are the tangible presence of Christ in their lives, whether you're checking someone in at a food truck, welcoming a child to a kids program, or volunteering at a community event. How can you imagine this as a missional calling, and what practices will help you live into this opportunity? You're encouraged to review this document, allowing it to shape your posture and presence as you serve.

Always begin with a prayer of expectation for what the Spirit will do in and through you!

As you serve, continue to be attuned to the Spirit—what the Spirit is saying in your heart and mind, how the Spirit may be leading you, and what the Spirit may be revealing to you. Good coaches describe this as having one ear to the Spirit while you have one ear to the conversation. "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25)."

Lord, I/we pray for an outpouring of your Spirit in this space. I/we pray that your Spirit will reveal Christ to us, that your Spirit will shape us in the character of Christ, and that your Spirit will equip us for the mission of Christ. Give us eyes to see where you are at work in our neighbors and in our neighborhood, and give us ears to listen to them and to You. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

## EXAMINE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

In North American outcome-driven culture, we tend to bring the same expectations into our spiritual spaces. In reality, the work of restoration and redemption is ultimately God's work, and we are invited to participate in it. We are simply called to practice faithful obedience. How does this change our expectations?

### From...

- What will you achieve?
- Will they come to church?
- How are my neighbors changing?
- What can I do for them?

### To...

- What will I learn about myself?  
About my neighbor? About God?
- How are they taking steps toward Jesus?
- How is God changing me? Us?
- What can I do with them?  
What do they have to offer?

## 2 KEY PRACTICES

### LISTENING

What if Christians were known as people who are fantastic listeners? How counter-culturally attractive would that be to our neighbors? When you meet a neighbor, practice listening more than you speak. You'll find that good listening is actually hard work! It is a skill that must develop over time.

### ASKING

Develop your curiosity about others. Approach every conversation with the assumption that there is something you can learn from them. Develop a list of questions you feel comfortable asking to begin a conversation.

### FINISHING WELL

When your event ends, there is still an opportunity to develop a missional mindset through reflecting on what you've learned through the experience. Take some time to journal about these questions:

- *What went well?*
- *What would you do differently next time?*
- *What did you learn about yourself?*
- *What did you learn about your neighbor(s)?*
- *Where do you sense God at work?*
- *What might God be saying to you about what comes next?*

You're encouraged to share these reflections with a small group, your outreach leader, and/or your pastor. When your congregation engages in these conversations, you are discerning where the Spirit is working and leading you. It is a wonder and a joy to discover where God is at work among you!

"The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them... Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking where they should be listening. But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too."

-DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, LIFE TOGETHER

"We would never come away from meeting them [a truly humble person] thinking they were humble...the thing we would remember from meeting a truly gospel-humble person is how much they seemed to be totally interested in us. Because the essence of gospel-humility is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less."

-TIM KELLER, THE FREEDOM OF SELF-FORGETFULNESS