



**NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS**  
LOVE GOD AND YOUR NEIGHBOR



**Neighborhood Group  
Leader Training**

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# Session One: Neighborhood Group Vision



## A. Where we are going:

Imagine the potential of connected groups where people learn to make Jesus king, develop as spiritual leaders, discover God's love and display it to their neighbors. **Imagine reaching our world for Christ one neighbor at a time.** Imagine saturating our community and beyond with Jesus. Many in our community are disconnected from God, their neighbors, and even themselves. Nexus means a place of connection or a connected group. When we connect with Christ and others, and develop authentic Christian community, we will make disciples who will transform. People will experience: personal restoration, thriving marriages, families strengthened to pass their faith to the next generation. There will be a workplace and school witness for Christ. People will discover and experience their calling to advance God's kingdom. Neighborhoods will be transformed communities for Christ! We believe that God has given us a large enough church community that we can saturate the community around us and beyond with Jesus in the next ten years.

## B. How we will get there:

**To love God and our neighbors, and saturate our community with Jesus requires Christ-centered Neighborhood Groups. *What is a Neighborhood Group?***

Neighborhood Groups are established by connecting people in relationship where they live, work, study, and play. The groups generally meet weekly, and are the primary place where we learn how to be Christ's disciples. Group participants will discover God's love and learn to: love God, and love their neighbors within and beyond the group where they live, work, study, and play. The goal is to make Jesus king in every realm of our lives: personal, marriage, family, community, career, and calling. Bible learning will develop Christ-like character. People will be encouraged to befriend and build relationships with their neighbors in the group and beyond. We will discover how to share Christ's love in tangible ways. All groups begin as sermon-based. If a group subsequently seeks a different format approval should be requested from the NG overseer(s). Each year all of the groups will spend a few weeks focusing on the same resource.

We encourage groups to form based on geographic proximity, as they can be more effective at loving neighbors where they live.

### **C. What it will look like when we get there:**

Our desire is for every person who is part of the Calvary Nexus community to participate in a neighborhood group. At the end of ten years (2026), we see over 200 Christ-centered Neighborhood Groups [NG] saturating every neighborhood of our community. The groups will be a place where we grow in Christ, and over 500 leaders will be developed who will be able to guide 1000s of people on the journey of a lifetime as they learn to make Jesus king in every realm of life. These groups will magnify Jesus and experience God's presence during the week, and as we gather to worship as a large community of faith on the weekends. We will demonstrate the love of God as we befriend and build relationships with our neighbors where we live, work, study, and play. We will offer to pray for, serve, and invite them to experience Christ with us.

### **D. What is a Neighborhood Group?**

**Each Neighborhood Group [NG] has a two-fold purpose (core values):** We want to help people discover their *next step* as they learn to:

**1. Love God:** We discover God's love and the gospel of Jesus, and learn to respond with love for God. The goal is to make Jesus king in every realm of life: personal, marriage, family, community, career, and calling. Bible learning in a group context will help develop love for God and Christ-like character.

**2. Love your neighbor:** We demonstrate our love for God by our love for others. Group participants will learn to display tangible acts of love for one another. These may include, but not be limited to: compassion, empathy, prayer, meals, recreation, hospital visits, helping with needs, and supporting a missionary.

We demonstrate the love of God to our neighbors as we befriend, build relationships, pray for, serve, and invite them to experience Christ with us. We simplify church life (ministry, programs, etc), and life generally, to create margin to invest in relationships with neighbors where we live, work, study and play.

### **E. How do Neighborhood Groups Work? [Methods]:**

#### **1. NG Leaders receive pre-launch training and post-launch coaching support.**

Various recommended tools and resources are provided to prepare them to love God, and love their neighbors. Coaches generally support five leaders, and are overseen primarily by core pastors. We will host one or two gatherings each year for all leaders and assistants to be encouraged, reminded of the vision, and consider new ideas together.

**2. Each NG is established with a vision to multiply.** Generally, when groups reach sixteen [16] regular participants it is time to multiply. A new neighborhood group is established to share God's love with new neighbors.

**3. Each leader will be encouraged to develop an apprentice.** Every NG will have an assistant who is being equipped to lead, and every assistant will be encouraged to develop a prospective leader.

**4. NGs are the primary place where we learn how to be Christ's disciples.** The goal is to make Jesus king in every realm of our lives: personal, marriage, family, community, career, and calling. Bible learning will develop Christ-like character. People will be encouraged to befriend and build relationships with their neighbors where they live, work, study, and play. We will discover how to share Christ's love in tangible ways. All groups begin as sermon-based. If a group subsequently seeks a different format approval should be requested from the NG overseer(s). Each year all of the groups will spend a few weeks focusing on the same resource.

**5. NGs are established by connecting people in relationship** where they live, work, study, and play.



## Session Two: Love God



For anyone who has ever been a parent, you know that part of your job is to create standards for your children by which they must live by. One of the most difficult things as a parent is determining what these standards are. You want to guide your child to life and joy so they can grow up to be a highly functioning member of society. In the law of Moses, God gave to children of Israel 613 commandments.

In Matthew 22:34-40, we see some of the Pharisees come to Jesus to ask Him which of these the greatest commandment. Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all of your soul, and with all your strength." In the next session, we will unpack what Jesus says after this, but for now I want us to focus on this verse and the implications. Out of all 613 commandments, Jesus says the absolute most important is that we would love God.

Think back to where we started. If your kids came up to you and asked what the most important standard was, would you even think to answer that it was that they loved you with all their heart, soul, and strength? Why would Jesus respond that this is the most important? Perhaps it is because love is the deepest and most powerful motivator a human heart can experience. God knows that if we prioritize our love for Him obedience to other commandments will be a natural byproduct.

**Because of this reality, a Neighborhood Group's first core value is to love God.** In this session, we are going to explore together how a Neighborhood Group leader can use their influence to help everyone in the group to grow in their love of God. Jonathan Edwards said, "What we need is a change in our affections. We need to change not what we feel nor even what we know but what we love." The next logical question is, "How do we grow in our love for God?" Let's explore together how a Neighborhood Group leader can help his or her Neighborhood Group to do this.

### **A. Gospel: responding to God's love for us**

We cannot even begin to talk about loving God until we spend time realizing His love for us and responding to that love. The apostle John explains this, "We love Him because He first loved us." - 1 John 4:19. The Bible teaches that all of humanity has a major problem called sin that has separated us from God and the life He originally intended for us (Romans 3:23). All of creation is groaning looking for restoration. In other words, we

know deep down inside that something has gone terribly wrong (Romans 8:22). Jesus lived a perfect sinless life and died on the cross in our place for our sins (1 John 2:2, Romans 5:6-11). Furthermore, the Scriptures teach that this forgiveness and restoration to God (justification) is available as a free gift if only we place our faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9). This gift is not by our own efforts or obedience (works), but only by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, a true saving faith will produce works (Ephesians 2:10). In addition to being forgiven by God in Christ Jesus, the Bible also teaches that God declares us as righteous, because the righteousness of Jesus has been given to us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

As a Neighborhood Group leader seeking to help your group grow in their love for God, you want to make sure you are regularly sharing the gospel and pointing your group to the gospel. A common misperception is that only non-Christians need to hear the Gospel. The Christian and the non-Christian alike needs to hear the gospel proclaimed (Romans 1:15). In addition, a correct interpretation and teaching of Scripture should always point in some way to the good news of Jesus (John 5:39).

**Here are some ways you can help to create a gospel centered Neighborhood Group:**

1. Seek to know the spiritual state of each member in your Neighborhood Group (Proverbs 27:23). Is everyone in your group a Christian? Are there people in your group that have a performance based relationship with God? Look for opportunities to pursue gospel conversations and be sensitive not to embarrass someone in front of the whole group.
2. Seek to grow in your own understanding of the Gospel and preach the Gospel to yourself every day. Paul Tripp says, "No one is more influential in your life than you are. Because no one talks to you more than you do." If your heart is not gospel centered, it will be very difficult to have a gospel-centered Neighborhood Group.
3. Look for Gospel applications as you learn the Bible with your group. As mentioned before, Jesus says that all of Scripture points to Him and His redemptive work in the Gospel.
4. Encourage and model to your group to remind each other of the Gospel in every day conversations. For example: you may have a mom sharing in the group that she feels like she is failing God because she has a struggle making time to learn the Bible or pray. Instead of merely offering her a lecture about priorities, remind her that God is pleased with her in Jesus, not depending on her performance. Remind her that her Gospel identity is that she is victorious in Christ, cleansed white as snow.
5. Pray for your group that they would grow in their understanding and trust in God's love for them as revealed in the Gospel (Ephesians 1:15-23, 2 Peter 3:18).

## **B. Discipleship: making Jesus King in every realm**

Once we have responded to the Gospel and committed to a gospel centered Christian walk, it is important that we grow as disciples. Essentially, we express our love to Jesus as we follow Him in obedience, with an attitude of dependence, as His disciples. With a Gospel centered heart, we recognize that we do not obey so that God will love us, but because He already does love us. Jesus tells us that if we truly love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). Walking in obedience to Jesus is evidence that we are His disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). A disciple is someone who seeks first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:10, 33). The Kingdom of God in the Scriptures is most clearly defined as the *rule* of God. Therefore, growing as a disciple (and thus expressing our love to God) means that we are continually seeking to make Jesus the King of every realm of our lives. All of our life can be categorized into one of the following 6 realms: personal, marriage, family, career, calling & community. The second way you can help your group love God is by creating and fostering a culture of making Jesus King in every realm.

Another great way to help those in your group grow as disciples is to encourage mentor relationships. Mentoring tends to be most effective when a person asks to be mentored rather than vice-versa. However, it is also good for more mature believers to initiate relationships with newer believers in order to pour into them. Keep the initial conversation casual avoiding awkward questions such as, "Would you like to be my disciple?" It can also be effective for a believer to compile a "team" of mentors. These may be people who are stronger in certain areas such as marriage, finance, leadership, etc. This can happen organically and intentionally within your group. If a particular person in your group is seeking to grow in a certain area it may be helpful for you to help connect them with a good mentor.

### **Here are some ways you can influence and inspire your Neighborhood Group to make Jesus King in every realm:**

1. Make time for people in the group to share how they are making Jesus King in every realm. Encourage them to share victories as well as struggles in this area so the group can join them in prayer, accountability and celebration. Also, make sure as the NG leader to participate in this exercise for your own spiritual growth and to be an example to the group.
2. Observe your group and note which realms are easiest and which are hardest for people to make Jesus King. Think of creative ways to lead your group through these challenges. For example, if many are struggling with their children, consider going through a study on parenting. Allow the group to also pour into each other. You may have an empty nester that can mentor a young parent (or lead the whole parenting study). God will bring people with different strengths to the group. Finally, be sensitive to different life stages that people are in. It may be really difficult for the single and empty nester if you are going through a 20 week series on parenting.

### **C. Bible Learning + Other Spiritual Disciplines: growing in love for God + developing Christlike character**

The third and final way that a Neighborhood Group can help its people grow in their love of God and Christlike character is to practice Bible learning + other spiritual disciplines.

Richard Foster explains the role of spiritual disciplines, "A farmer is helpless to grow grain; all he can do is provide the right conditions for the growing of grain. He cultivates the ground, he plants the seed, he waters the plants, and then the natural forces of the earth take over and up comes the grain... This is the way it is with the Spiritual Disciplines - they are a way of sowing to the Spirit... By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done." Like any other discipline (such as exercising or sticking to a budget), Bible learning and other spiritual disciplines can bring great benefits to our lives and the lives of those around us. Discipline can also be hard work and it can be easy to grow weary when we don't see immediate results.

Bible learning is arguably the most important spiritual discipline. The Bible is God's primary revelation of truth to His people. God also speaks through people (1 Corinthians 12:10) and creation (Romans 1:20). However, His word is the ultimate authority, the "Supreme Court," as to what is true about God and man. In addition, learning God's word and applying it to our lives is how we grow in our faith (Romans 10:17). Because of this reality, Neighborhood Groups place a high priority on Bible learning.

**Neighborhood Groups are initiated using a sermon-based curriculum that is provided each week to leaders and participants. This format helps the groups to learn the Bible together, and grow together as they discover and apply biblical truth from the passage. This format also unites and aligns all the groups and the whole church as we grow in our love for God.**

Bible learning + other spiritual disciplines should be practiced corporately and individually. Certain disciplines can be more effective in either the corporate or individual setting. Some will work great in both, such as prayer and Bible learning. The following are some of the most commonly practiced spiritual disciplines throughout Christian history: Bible Learning, Prayer, Fasting, Giving, Confession/Repentance, Service, Solitude & Worship. This is by no means an exhaustive list. For a more detailed study on the spiritual disciplines, explore *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard J. Foster, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald S. Whitney & *The Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard.

**Here are some ways you can help to incorporate Bible learning + other spiritual disciplines into your Neighborhood Group corporately and individually:**

1. Make it a goal to devote time to Bible learning each time you gather together (whether this is going through a resource, a book of the Bible or discussing the sermon from the previous Sunday).

2. Seek to incorporate multiple spiritual disciplines into your time together. Feel free to be creative. If multiple people in your group are wanting to see family members or neighbors come to the Lord, commit as a group to a day of prayer and fasting. Encourage people in the group to text each other during the day to share their experience. Mix it up and have fun. Invite a worship leader over, or put on a worship CD and have a night of worship together.
3. Spend time as a group talking about how people in the group are practicing the spiritual disciplines individually. Where has God grown them? Which spiritual disciplines is God calling them to grow in? Does anyone need help or not understand?



## Session Three: Love Your Neighbor (within your group)



Let's go back to our discussion about the Greatest Commandment. In Matthew 22:34-40 some of the Pharisees asked Jesus which of the 613 commandments was the most important. We discovered together that He quoted Deuteronomy 6:5, the most important commandment is that we would love God with all of our heart, soul, and strength. In our last session we talked about how this truth shapes the first of the two core values of a Neighborhood Group: love God. Jesus didn't stop there though. He added a second (or a bonus) commandment. Quoting Leviticus 19:18, Jesus comments, "And *the second is* like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:38-40).

**The second core value of a Neighborhood Group is to love your neighbor.** In this session we will discuss the subject of how to create a Neighborhood Group that strives to love our neighbor within our group. The principles will also transcend our Neighborhood Group and apply to how we relate to all believers (Galatians 6:10).

Biblically, we see that God shows us we have two types of neighbors: neighbors who have trusted Jesus & neighbors who haven't trusted Jesus yet (1 Corinthians 5:12-13, 2 Corinthians 6:2). In the next session we will explore how we can love our neighbor outside of our group. Before we jump into some practical ways you can love your neighbor within your group, it is important that we make a few observations about Jesus' words regarding this second commandment:

1. **Loving your neighbor should be a natural byproduct of loving God.** Jesus says that the commandment to love our neighbor is *like* the first commandment to love God. This greek word for *like* (homoios) speaks of similarity and of correspondence. In other words loving God and loving our neighbor goes hand in hand. In this vein, the apostle John shares with us, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20).
2. **Who is my neighbor?** In Luke 10:25-37 a lawyer is having a conversation with Jesus about eternal life. Jesus asks the lawyer to sum up the law of Moses and he correctly answers that it is summed up in loving God and loving your neighbor. We are then told that wanting to justify himself, he asks Jesus who his neighbor is. This word for neighbor used was a very common word in the Greek: plesion.

Culturally, the understanding of this word held similar connotations to our use of the word *countryman*. In other words, when a 1st Century Jew would interpret the law of Moses, they would understand this verse to mean that they are to love other fellow Jews: *people just like them*. This is why it is a bit controversial when Jesus answers his question by telling a parable about a Samaritan who helped a man from Jerusalem. To Jesus, our neighbor is not only people like us, but also people who we may not like at all or be naturally drawn to. Larry Pierce, a Greek scholar, gives us the following contextual definition to this Greek word for neighbor, “according to Christ, any other man irrespective of nation or religion with whom we live or whom we chance to meet.” Therefore, a Neighborhood Group defines a neighbor as anyone we come into contact with where we live, work, study and play.

3. **How much should I love my neighbor?** Next, it is interesting to note the degree to which Jesus says we need to love our neighbor. First, we observe that Jesus uses the Greek word *agapeo* for love. Greek, unlike English, has multiple words to describe the idea of love. Some of these words define a friendly love while others speak of a more erotic sexual love. Culturally, *agapeo* was used to define a mother’s love for her baby as well as God’s perfect love for us. It is the only Greek word for love which speak of love in an unconditional sense. This is the way Jesus is calling us to love our neighbors. Secondly, Jesus says we are to love our neighbor in the same way we love ourselves. Take a moment to consider how much you love yourself! What would it look like to love our neighbors where we live, work, study, and play like this?
4. **All of God’s word is summed up in these two commandments.** Finally, Jesus says that all of the law and prophets hangs on these two ideas of loving God and your neighbor. **Loving God and our neighbor is the essence of Christianity.**

### **What are some of the ways you can love your neighbor within your group?**

**A. Empathy:** Empathy is the idea of trying to put yourself in someone else’s shoes. We seek to understand how they are feeling, thus entering into their sorrow, joy, or whatever emotion they may be experiencing. Empathy is in many ways the front door into loving your neighbor. How can we truly love our neighbor as ourselves if we don’t seek to understand their struggles and victories from their perspective? One of the biggest obstacles to loving our neighbor is self. Model this to your group and encourage those in your group to grow in this. Ask yourself probing questions such as, “How does this experience feel to this person and how would I feel if I was going through what they are going through?” Too often we look at another person’s experiences through our lens. The following words of Paul the apostle prove very helpful, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15).

**B. Compassion:** Where empathy is seeking to enter an experience from another’s perspective, compassion is seeking to provide a sense of relief to a person, especially someone who is struggling. It has been said that compassion is love in action. In a

neighborhood group, this could be spending time listening to someone, babysitting their kids, helping them clean their home, or pitching in to cover an expense.

**C. Prayer:** As Christians, we have the ability to come to God Who has no limit in power or resources. In a neighborhood group, seek to make time to share prayer requests and praise reports on a regular basis. Pray together and commit to praying for each other throughout the week. This is one of the most loving things we can do for one another. It will also bind the neighborhood group in a greater unity. The joy of answered prayers will only be multiplied. Be careful though that prayer does not become an “easy out” from bearing one another’s burdens. “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?” (James 2:15-16).

**D. Meals:** Sharing meals together and providing meals for one another can be a great way to love one another. A good challenge for a Neighborhood Group Leader to give to his or her group is to seek to share a table with one neighbor from within your group and again with a neighbor outside of your group once per week. This is a great chance to bond and strengthen relationships. In addition, there are various seasons where it can be a huge help to provide another individual or family with meals. These seasons include but are not limited to: a new baby, illness, moving, and receiving a foster placement. It is very nice to not have to worry about meals during these stretching times. It may be a good idea to have someone other than the leader in charge of a meals ministry within your group. This person can also help to coordinate refreshments for when the neighborhood group meets together. Encourage them to organize a rotation and not to do it all themselves.

**E. Recreation:** Have fun together with the people in your neighborhood group. This can be especially helpful for men who tend to connect in “shoulder to shoulder” activities as opposed to “face to face.” Play a game or ice breaker during your group. Plan a camping or fishing trip together. Schedule a time to watch a sports game together or go see a movie. Recreation is a great way to strengthen relationships.

**F. Hospital Visits:** When someone in your group (or one of their family members) has to go to the hospital, offer to go visit them. Also encourage the people in your group to do the same. Find out visitor information (room number, visiting hours) and communicate to others in your neighborhood group (or delegate this to someone else in the group). It is a nice feeling when you are ill and in the hospital and friends call you or visit you.

**G. Supporting a Missionary:** Some neighborhood groups will collectively decide to support or “adopt” a missionary as a group. Designate someone in the group to stay in contact with the missionary to find out prayer requests and needs. Spend time praying for the missionary and seek to meet any needs as the Lord would lead. Make a video of the group encouraging the missionary or make an audio or video call to the missionary if that is possible. There may even be a door opened for some in your neighborhood

group to plan a missions trip to visit and help the missionary your group supports. If the missionary comes into town, find someone in your neighborhood group who may be able to host them. Many missionaries can feel forgotten and discouraged as they can become out of sight and out of mind. This is a great way your group can show love and be encouraged as they make a Kingdom impact around the world.

**H. “One Another”.** The word of God is filled with commandments to “one another.”

Here are some different verses that address this idea:

- Be at **peace** with one another (Mark 9:50).
- Be of the **same mind** with one another (Romans 12:16, 15:5).
- **Accept** one another (Romans 15:7).
- **Bear** with one another (Ephesians 4:2).
- Be **kind, tender-hearted, forgiving** to 1 another (Ephesians 4:32).
- **Confess** your sins to one another (James 5:16).
- **Serve** one another (Galatians 5:13).
- Be **devoted** to one another (Romans 12:10).
- Give **preference** to one another (Romans 12:10).
- **Submit** to one another (Ep 5:21).
- **Bear the burdens** of one another (Galatians 6:2).
- Speak **truth** to one another (Ephesians 4:25).
- **Build up** one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- **Motivate** one another to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24).
- **Pray** for one another (James 5:16).
- Be **hospitable** to one another (1 Peter 4:9).

## Session Four: Love Your Neighbor (outside of your group)



In the last session we explored what it looks like to love our neighbor within our group. We saw that Jesus explains in Matthew 22:34-40 that we are called to love God and love our neighbor. First, loving our neighbor should be a natural byproduct of loving God. Second, our neighbor is anyone we may come into contact with where we live, work, study or play. Third, God calls us to love our neighbor with an unconditional love. Finally, all of God's word is summed up in these two commandments. In this session we will discover how to love our neighbor outside of our group.

In order for a Neighborhood Group to love their neighbor outside of their group it is important for those in the group to develop a missional-incarnational impulse. Mission can be defined as being sent. Incarnation can be defined as dwelling amongst or living life together. Therefore, a missional-incarnational impulse is an impulse towards being sent to our neighbors to build relationships and show them the love of Jesus.

Jesus engaged and befriended sinners, but He did not engage in their sin (Matthew 11:19, 9:9-11). He is the perfect example of how we should love our neighbor while still honoring God in thought and deed. Jesus in His High Priestly Prayer reveals God's will and heart for how God's people are to conduct themselves in their neighborhoods:

**"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of this world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." - John 17:15-18**

Jesus is presenting two truths that we must hold in a biblical tension: (1) We are called to be set apart to God & (2) We are to live on mission to our neighbors. We are to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. We need to spend time with neighbors within our group who can strengthen our faith *and* we need to invest time with neighbors outside of our group. We need to learn the Bible, repent of sin, and grow in holiness. We also need to get to know our neighbors and show them God's love. Isolating from our neighbors is just as unbiblical as allowing those neighbors to influence us into sin. Where do you fall on this spectrum? Jesus was perfectly balanced and He calls us to balance love for God and love for neighbors.

In the beginning of this session we spoke about how a Neighborhood Group has a missional-incarnational impulse which flows from the sample of Christ. It is important to

explore just how Jesus was sent and how that example should affect us. John 1:14 in *The Message* translation captures the essence of how Jesus was sent, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.” Jesus became like us as He became flesh and blood (incarnation) and then came to us as He moved into our proverbial neighborhood (mission). A Neighborhood Group looks to Jesus as our ultimate example on how we should live our lives. In addition, it is important for us to note that Jesus spent time loving people who were nothing like him culturally or religiously: tax collectors (Matthew 9:10, Mark 2:13-17), Samaritans (John 4), prostitutes (Luke 7:36-50). Jesus was looked down upon by the religious elite because he loved these sorts of neighbors (Matthew 9:11). Jesus loved sinners while also never sinning (Hebrews 4:15). The same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead now lives within us so we now have the power to live on mission as Jesus did (Romans 8:11). Now we will consider some practical ways we can love our neighbors outside of our group where we live, work, study and play.

**How to Love Your Neighbor:** First, you want to grow personally in loving your neighbors where you live, work, study and play. As the Neighborhood Group leader, you will set the tone for your group. If you aren’t loving your neighbors, chances are that those in your group will also struggle in this area. Second, God wants to use you to influence those in your Neighborhood Group to love their neighbors. Here are some ideas, but this list is in no way exhaustive. Encourage and model innovation in your group in how to better love your neighbors.

**A. Create margin + be Intentional.** Two of the largest obstacles to loving your neighbors are busyness and distractions. It seems that we have an endless list of distractions and important stuff competing for our time. Loving our neighbor is not just one more activity we can add to our endless list. If we are going to do so effectively, we will need to create margin and be intentional. Take a look at your weekly schedule and commitments and prayerfully simplify your life. Maybe this means that you step back from a church commitment. We should never be so busy with church activities that we aren’t able to love our neighbors. If you have a family, call a family meeting to discuss and pray about your collective commitments. Look for time wasters such as entertainment and social media and minimize them if you are spending too much time on them. In addition, we must be intentional and consistent. Try to go to the same parks, grocery stores and coffee houses. Meet the people there and get to know them. Instead of spending time in your home with your family, sit out front or play a sport and invite your neighbors to join. As you create margin and are intentional, you will begin to foster relationships with your neighbors where you live, work, study and play.

**B. Befriend + build Relationships.** As the relationships with your neighbors are initiated, seek to befriend + build relationships. Keep in mind that relationships take time. Seek to be sensitive to how people relate and what pace of relational development they are comfortable with. Some people are face to face while others are shoulder to shoulder. Face to face people like spending time talking. Ask them, “How are you doing?” Or, ask them to share their story with you. Be a patient and good listener. Face to face people tend to relate best over a meal or coffee. Others are

shoulder to shoulder people. They would rather do something together than just sit and talk. This could include playing a game together, watching a movie or working in the yard. In addition different people are comfortable with different paces of relational development. Some people are ready to plan a family BBQ after meeting you once while others will need to get to know you for a full year before they would ever be willing to step foot in your home. Be sensitive to these dynamics and enjoy the process.

Remember that your goal is to love your neighbor. Leading your neighbor to Christ may be a byproduct of this, but be careful not to treat loving your neighbor as a project or a program. Make a decision to invest in the relationship regardless of whether your neighbor is open to the Gospel. Jesus didn't say we should only love our neighbors if they accept Him. We should befriend them and love them regardless of how they may respond to God's invitation.

**C. Pray [with and for them].** It will become very clear to your neighbors as they get to know you that you are a follower of Christ. Be sensitive to opportunities to let your neighbors know about your relationship with Jesus. One of the best ways to do this is to offer to pray with and for your neighbors. As your neighbors share various struggles with you, ask them if you can pray for them. Some may be more comfortable with you praying for them later when you are apart and others may want you to pray with them on the spot. Be sensitive to them and don't be pushy or judgmental about this.

**D. Serve.** Serving our neighbors is a tangible way to show the love of Christ. Look for ways you can serve and/or serve with your neighbors. It can also be a good ice breaker to put yourself in the place of need, asking to borrow flour or sugar for example. Ask your neighbors if there is anything you can do to help them and be willing to ask for help too. As you get to know your neighbors you will become aware of various needs they may have: babysitting, help with their yard, financial needs, or just having someone who will listen to them. Be aware that receiving help can be a very humbling experience for some people. In addition, seek ways that your Neighborhood Group can serve together in various ways. Maybe you decide to buy groceries for a single mom, paint a school or visit an assisted living facility.

**E. Invite Them to Experience Christ With You.** Look for open doors that God will give you to invite your neighbors to experience Christ with you. This may mean that you invite them to your Neighborhood Group, have a spiritual conversation, invite them to a church service or share the Gospel with them. Seek to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and it won't be forced. Generally speaking, people in our post-Christian culture want to see the authenticity of Christ in you before they will be open to hearing about Christ from you. Be bold, but remember that faith is a process for many people. Preach the Gospel in word and in your actions. Be comforted in the fact that you don't need to have a seminary degree to be able to share Jesus with someone and that the Holy Spirit will give you the right words to say (Matthew 10:19).

**F. Spend time in your Neighborhood Group Sharing Stories and Praying for Neighbors.** Set aside time during your Neighborhood Group meeting time to share stories about how you are loving your neighbors. Remember to be sensitive to avoid

sharing information that would embolden them when they attend the group some day, Lord willing. Sharing these stories will inspire and create accountability. Share the names of neighbors you sense God is calling you to love where you live, work, study and play.

Pray for these neighbors as a group and individually. Praying for our neighbors not only moves the heart of God but also changes our hearts towards our neighbors.

Conclusion: Consider challenging your group to "The Table Rule". Commit to sharing a table 1-2X/wk: first with a neighbor within your group and second with a neighbor outside of your group. Model this to your group and encourage them to do the same.

This will create a deeper community with your neighbors in your group and will provide opportunities to love your neighbor outside of your group where you live, work, study, and play.

## Session Five: Foundations [what to do in your first meeting and beyond...]



Now that we have explored in great detail the core values of a Neighborhood Group, it is important that we discuss the specific details of how a Neighborhood Group is launched. Investing time in building a solid foundation for your Neighborhood Group will greatly benefit you and those in the group for your first meeting and beyond.

### **A. Determine the Focus of the Group [Geographic/Affinity/Hybrid]**

Before you form your Neighborhood Group, it is important to determine how the group will be formed. A **geographic based Neighborhood Group** forms with people who live in geographic proximity to each other. This can be an especially effective way to collectively love and reach your neighbors where you live. Because the group is formed by geographic proximity, it will most likely end up naturally being intergenerational.

There is a certain benefit of multiple generations interacting and learning from each other. An **affinity based Neighborhood Group** forms with people who find themselves in a common life situation or passion. Examples of an affinity based Neighborhood Group would be: young mom's group, couples with adult children group, singles group, or a men's basketball group. People tend to feel comfortable connecting and sharing life with people they share a life stage or interest with. A **hybrid Neighborhood Group** shares elements from an affinity based group and a geographic based group. Your group may focus on young marrieds, but then you invite a young single you have been neighboring in order for the group to pour into this person. Or perhaps in this same situation, you decide to invite a couple who lives near you that has been married for 35 years. Many groups that meet based on affinity that want to move towards being based on geography will function as a hybrid Neighborhood Group for a season.

We believe that a geographic based Neighborhood Group tends to be the best way to form a group. First, it provides a specific neighborhood focus as the group collectively seeks to love the same neighbors where they live. Second, although people naturally like to gather with people just like them, this isn't always the best thing for us.

Intergenerational relationships are incredibly enriching for the young and old alike.

However, Neighborhood Group leaders are empowered to form their group based on their own calling and convictions. God can and will use many different expressions of Neighborhood Groups.

## **B. The Pre-Launch Neighborhood Group Gathering**

Before you officially launch your Neighborhood Group, organize a pre-launch Neighborhood Group gathering. This should be at a convenient time for everyone (such as a weekend) and there should be food! Either plan to serve a meal or organize a potluck where everyone brings a dish, drink or desert. There should be no real agenda for this meeting besides building relationships and getting to know one another. It is probably best to focus on a core group of believers in the beginning. At the end of the meeting or after the meeting, follow up with everyone to see if they would like to be a part of the Neighborhood Group. Seek a commitment to regularly attend for three months or more if desired.

## **C. How to Prepare for Your First Neighborhood Group Meeting**

Now that you have compiled the beginnings of your core group, it is time to plan and host your first official meeting. Here are some tips to ensure you will have a successful first meeting:

**i. Communication.** Call and/or e-mail everyone in your group 1-2 times before the meeting reminding them of the logistics and that you are looking forward to getting together with them. Don't be afraid of seeming pesky or pushy. People usually appreciate these thoughtful reminders. Be sure everyone knows the address of where you are meeting.

**ii. Chow.** Plan to provide or have someone bring refreshments (drinks and snacks). Try to be sensitive to dietary restrictions, but also realize that you won't be able to accommodate everyone's needs all of the time. In the beginning you can oversee this area and make sure it happens. However, in the long term you will want to have someone take the point for coordinating refreshments. We will talk more about roles and developing leaders in the next session.

**iii. Childcare.** Find out if there are any members in the group who need help with childcare and seek to create a plan to help. There are a few different options for providing childcare depending on your situation. Some Neighborhood Groups will seek to integrate children into the group. This can be great with older children and may prove challenging with younger children. Another option is to create a rotation where different members of the group take turns watching the children each week. Other groups may decide to hire a babysitter. An additional solution would be if there are older children who may be able to help keep an eye on the younger children. In the a geographic based Neighborhood Group, kids can be at one home and the group can meet at a nearby home. Finally, some groups may decide to have everyone be responsible for their own childcare.

**iv. Cleaning.** Make sure the meeting space is clean and prepared for the meeting. The home should be clean, but it doesn't need to be perfect. Plan to have enough seats set up in a circle so everyone can see one another during the meeting. Background music can add a nice component of an attractive atmosphere. Try to have all of this done before the meeting starts so you can focus on greeting guests as they arrive.

**v. Contract Time.** Determine before your first meeting a contract start and end time for the group. Communicate these times to the group and do your best to honor these times. Generally speaking 90 minutes is a good length for a Neighborhood Group.

#### **D. What to Do in Your First Neighborhood Group Meeting**

During your first Neighborhood Group meeting, your goal should be to set aside time for the group to get to know each other and to communicate the vision of a Neighborhood Group. Have everyone sit down together and open your time in prayer. Go around the room and allow everyone to formally introduce themselves. Ask everyone to answer some basic questions so you can get to know them. Some good things to ask is to share about their family, what they are hoping to get out of the group, and how long they have been coming to the church. Set aside some time at the end of the group to communicate the vision of the Neighborhood Group. Share anything that is on your heart as the leader and talk about the core values of a Neighborhood Group: (1) Love God & (2) Love Your Neighbor. Explain what the group will look like each week and your hopes for the group. After the meeting, follow up with anyone who was not able to make it to let them know they were missed. Let them know what the meeting was like, and that you hope to see them next time.

#### **E. How to Prepare for Future Neighborhood Group Meetings**

All Neighborhood Groups will start off going through the scripture based study guide provided by Calvary Nexus. We ask this because we believe a scripture based approach to a Neighborhood Group is the most effective way to make disciples. A scripture based approach also relieves you from having to identify and prepare a study. Once a group has been using the sermon based curriculum for 3 months, you can speak with your coach about going through a different study. We recommend that Neighborhood Groups adopt the sermon based approach as their default method of learning the Bible.

This scripture based study guide will be based on the sermon and passage of scripture studied the previous Sunday. It will allow the group to dig deeper into the text and apply it to their lives. There will also be a section in the study guide equipping the group to love their neighbors where they live, work, study and play. Even if you end up going through a different study in your group, Neighborhood Group leaders will still go through this section each week. As a Neighborhood Group Leader, your main role in leading the group is to be a facilitator. This means you are to try and foster discussion and interaction and not preach an hour long lecture. Try to get everyone involved. Some people will have a tendency to dominate the group. Set the tone in the first meetings that you want everyone to have an opportunity to share. If someone continually dominates the discussion, it may be wise to follow up with them individually to address this in love.



## Session Six: Leadership & Multiplication



Try to think of a great experience you recently had at a restaurant. Although there may be multiple factors that contributed to this positive experience, there was most likely one factor that connected all of the factors together: leadership. There was probably a leader or a group of leaders that used their influence to create and implement a culture, train the staff to reflect the values of the organization, and create an amazing menu with quality ingredients. John Maxwell profoundly observes, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” This truth is no different in a Neighborhood Group. If you want to have a thriving Neighborhood Group in which people learn to love God and their neighbor, you cannot afford to ignore leadership. One of the simplest ways to define leadership is that it is *influence*. To be an effective Neighborhood group leader you must (1) be qualified to be a leader, (2) continue to be developed as a leader & (3) intentionally develop others as leaders.

### A. Qualifications [qualifying to be a leader]

In order to be an effective leader, it is important that you are first qualified to be a leader. Just like joining a sports team or applying for a new job, you want to make sure you are prepared and qualified before you start the process. If you have any doubts whether you are ready and qualified, spend time with a pastor or coach to allow them to assess and create an action plan to prepare you if needed. There is nothing shameful in taking time to make sure you are prepared and qualified. The following list defines the qualifications of a Neighborhood Group Leader:

**i. Demonstrated faith in Christ.** A Neighborhood Group leader must be a Christian. In addition, it is ideal if the potential leader has been walking with Jesus for at least 12 months.

**ii. Committed to Calvary Nexus as Their Home Church.** A Neighborhood Group leader must be committed to Calvary Nexus as their home church and regularly attend weekend services.

**iii. In Agreement with Theology and Philosophy of Ministry of Calvary Nexus.** A Neighborhood Group leader must agree with the theology and philosophy of ministry of Calvary Nexus. If there are minor disagreements, please take the time to talk about these with your coach or a Calvary Nexus pastor. Remember, you are representing Calvary Nexus as a Neighborhood Group leader. We require all Neighborhood Group

leaders to first read *What We Believe and Why* by Pastor Bruce Zachary ([resources.calvarynexus.org](https://resources.calvarynexus.org)) and then sign our statement of faith (<https://calvarynexus.wufoo.com/forms/ministry-statement-of-faith-agreement/>).

**iv. Teachable Spirit and Submission to Pastoral Leadership.** Neighborhood Group leaders must be willing to come under the pastoral leadership at Calvary Nexus and have a teachable spirit. Rogue leaders are lonely and ineffective leaders.

**v. Spiritual, Social + Emotional Well-Being.** A Neighborhood Group leader must be an overall healthy person spiritually, socially and emotionally. You are called to be an example to those you lead and must be healthy enough to lead effectively.

**vi. Facilitator, not a Lecturer.** A Neighborhood Group leaders job is to seek to facilitate discussion within the group, not give an hour long lecture.

**vii. A Shepherd's Heart.** Shepherd is a metaphor often used within Scripture to speak of a leader who seeks to care for the spiritual well being of those entrusted to them. A Neighborhood Group leader should seek to know the spiritual state of those they lead and use their influence to help everyone in the group to grow spiritually (Matthew 18:12, Proverbs 27:23).

**viii. A Growing Love for God and Neighbors.** Neighborhood Groups need leaders who will model a growing love for God and their neighbors where they live, work, study, and play.

## **B. Coaching [developing yourself as a leader]**

When you become a Neighborhood Group leader you will be assigned a Neighborhood Development Coach to help you to continue to grow and develop as a leader. You will meet with your Neighborhood Development Coach once every two months. In your time together your coach will seek to help you cultivate the values of a Neighborhood Group within your group, help you to love your Neighbor, and help you to be an overall better leader and in any other way that you need help. Your coach will also be a great resource for you to contact if you are going through any struggles in your group or as a leader when you need help. These meetings can be flexible and are meant to be a support to you. In addition to meeting with your coach, it is wise to find additional ways to develop as a leader such as studying the Bible, reading helpful books, getting mentored, etc. The most effective leaders are continually seeking to be developed and learn something new.

## **C. Multiply [developing others as leaders]**

If you want to have an exponential influence as a leader, it is wise to devote time to developing other leaders. In addition, replication leadership cultures prevent burnout as more leaders are present to help carry the load. The feeling of leading a thriving Neighborhood Group is extremely rewarding. Imagine the joy you would experience in visiting a thriving Neighborhood Group of a leader you helped to develop and raise up. Here are 4 ways that you can develop leaders within your Neighborhood Group:

**i. Develop and Assistant Leader.** Every Neighborhood Group will have an assistant who is being equipped to lead, and every assistant will develop a prospective leader.

Empower your assistant to help lead the group, make decisions about the group and facilitate the group meetings. Regularly meet with your assistant leader to develop them as your Neighborhood Development Coach develops you.

**ii. A Simple Way to Develop a Leader.** Try the following leadership development method within your group: (1) I do you watch, (2) I do you help, (3) you do I help, (4) you do I watch, and (5) you do and someone else watches. Effective leaders are always seeking honest feedback so they can continue to grow regardless of how long they have been leading. Create opportunities for people to grow as leaders by helping to oversee or support: teaching, prayer, organizing social gatherings, refreshments or meals, service to the group or neighbors.

**iii. Establish your Neighborhood Group With a Vision to Multiply.** Generally, when groups reach sixteen [16] regular participants it is time to multiply. A new Neighborhood Group is established to share God's love with new neighbors. By connecting people in a neighborhood they are most effective in befriending and reaching their neighbors where they live, work, study, and play.

**iv. Empower and Mobilize Your Neighborhood Group to Love Their Neighbor.**

Spend time in your group talking and praying about how you can more effectively love your neighbors where you live, work, study, and play. Consider organizing and mobilizing the group to share the love of Christ in the community such as: helping a neighbor with yard work, visiting an assisted living community together, volunteering together for a local organization, etc. Encourage the group to discover and develop their likely individual preference(s) of loving their neighbor:

**Stay:** these people like to stay and listen as their neighbors speak with them.

**Play:** these people like to play and recreate with neighbors.

**Pray:** these people like to pray with (or for) their neighbors.

**Say:** these people like to share the gospel with neighbors.