

Welcome to the Neighborhood

Week 2 – August 29, 2021

Scripture: Luke 5:27-30 and Genesis 12:2-3

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: We all have barriers that prevent us from growing in our relationships with neighbors. Name one barrier. How can God turn this barrier into an opportunity for blessing?

Read Luke 5:27-30 and Genesis 12:2-3 together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Discuss the following context:

This quote from the book "Placed For a Purpose" frames our discussion today. How does it challenge us to shift our perspective and break through the barriers that often hold us back?

"How we engage - or don't engage - with those who live next door is largely framed by the greater narrative in which we see ourselves. - God's redemption story. Paul reminds us in Ephesians that at one time we were separated from Christ. God has invited us to be part of His redemptive work right where we live, and it starts with how we see people. When we're tempted to think 'Who is noticing me?', having the eyes of Christ instead leads us to consider 'Who is unnoticed?'"

Share your thoughts about following questions:

1. Read **Luke 5:27-30** and discuss the barriers the people may have felt or expressed about Jesus and Levi.
 - a. How did Levi and Jesus take what may have been a barrier (fence) and turn it into a blessing (table)?
 - b. What frustrations and barriers did the Pharisees have with Jesus?
 - c. How do we let barriers in life prevent us from engaging with the world around us, our neighbors, or in every day life?
 - d. What are the barriers of time, culture or fear that often cause us to hold back?
2. Consider this BLESS challenge for your neighbor. Discuss each letter and how we can overcome the barriers of time, culture or fear. Be reminded of the blessing that we read in Genesis 12:2-3.
 - a. **Begin** with prayer. (First for ourselves - that God would show us our barriers, break them down, and show us the opportunities for blessing; discover your personal vision). *We want you to ask, 'God how do you want me to bless the people in the places you've sent me to?'*
 - b. **Listen** to others. (Start with *seeing* them; refer back to how Jesus *saw* Levi). *Don't talk, but listen to people, their struggles, their pains, their dreams.*
 - c. **Eat** with others. (Shared meals build relationships and denote friendship.) *You can't just check this off. It's not quick but it is worth it.*
 - d. **Serve** others. (If we are in genuine relationship, we begin to know the needs of our neighbors.) *If you listen with people and eat with people they will tell you how to love them and you'll know how to serve them.*
 - e. Tell your **Stories**. (By establishing a relationship, and investing in others, opportunities will arise to share your story of God's influence in your life.)

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today about your neighborhood. Pray about how you can use the BLESS challenge at your workplace, in your neighborhood, as you go throughout your week. Pray for open doors of possibility to bless others.