

Neighboring: The Grace to Receive

sermon series: *Won't You Be My Neighbor*, pt. 5

I Kings 17:7-16 John 4:1-15

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Thought Questions¹

1. Read I Kings 17:7-16 - Why didn't God just provide for Elijah directly? How do you think it felt to have to ask the widow for help? How do you think the widow felt? This must have been difficult for both of them and God chose this as a way of showing how He was stretching out to those outside of the boundaries of the Jewish people. Jesus refers to this moment in Luke 4:26. It would have been difficult for both of them to make sense of this moment but they both grew to understand more about God and what He is like.
2. Read John 4. What insights can you make about how Jesus developed a relationship with the woman?
3. What are your neighbors knowledgeable and/or passionate about? How could you enter into their world and allow them to serve you? Our neighbors have a lot to offer and are often willing to offer it if we will humble ourselves and ask. We want to learn how to watch for ways to humble ourselves and give people the joy of serving us.
4. Are you good at allowing other people to care for you? What makes it hard? How often do you ask for help from someone outside of your immediate family?

Something to think about:

1. Many Christians (and Americans in general) have a tendency toward "paternalism," the idea that WE have something to offer because we are Christians, but THEY do not because they are not Christians. Paternalism puts one party in the position of power and the other in the position of need. Real relationship requires give and take – nobody with all the power and nobody with all the need. It steals a person's dignity to force them to always be in the position of need and never receive help from them. We should try to maintain balance as much as possible. If we are always the one in power, we should ask for help. If we are always the one in need, we should realize we have a lot to give to others.
2. The authors of *The Art of Neighboring* comment: "The art of receiving is not complicated. It comes down to being aware of our own needs. It's about opening our eyes, then being vulnerable enough to ask and receive."² What current needs do you have that a neighbor might be able to help you with?

Moving Forward

1. Do the Block Map - Write the names of your neighbors by listing out the names of the adults and children of the 8 closest houses or apartment units next to you and pay attention to the blank spaces. Take a second and identify each of the neighbors and decide if they are a stranger, acquaintance, or relationship.
2. Identify one neighbor that you are going to pray for over the next week.
3. Share one small "next step" that you feel God is calling you to take in the next 7 days. Options might be:
 - Learn a specific neighbor's name
 - Invite a couple over for dinner
 - Ask a neighbor for advice on how to take care of your lawn because their's is nicer.

¹ Most of these thought questions and action steps come from the book, *The Art of Neighboring* by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon. I plan to glean insights from their book throughout this sermon series and share them with you . . . and take them to heart myself! :)

² Pathak and Runyon, *The Art of Neighboring*, page 128.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?



YOU ARE HERE

