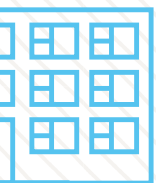




LOVE YOUR

# NEIGHBOR

A FIELD GUIDE FOR ADOPTING  
YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD



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AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

PHILADELPHIA

# God

## IS LOVE

*1 JOHN 4:8 NIV*



**L**ove is why you are here. Love is what keeps you here. When John wanted to choose one word to describe God, he chose love. Love is not only an action God performs. Love is who God is. God is love.

If we are the children of God, it makes total sense that we will be people who love. Later in the same passage John says that, when we love one another, “God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (1 John 4:12b).

This is where we enter the story. If the world is going to see God, to know God’s love, it is up to us. Go into all the world and make disciples, Jesus said, but he didn’t leave us step-by-step directions. So where do we start?

We start with love.

This is a field guide to living every day in that mission. Start with those in your sphere of influence—your job, your neighborhood, your friends, your extended family—and let God love through you. This is intended as a primer that you can digest in 30 minutes or less; you have the rest of your life to put it into practice. It’s based on the simple structure of “prayer, care and share.”

The idea for this tool came in support of the “What if the Church Loves Kansas City?” project, directed by Matt Adams. He and his leadership team boldly challenge churches across Kansas City to love well and often. The hope is that churches will form triads of partnership. Pastors will exchange speaking stages. Churches will pray together, worship together and serve together. The ministry project in 2018 is for congregation members to adopt their neighborhoods. How will this work? Keep reading.



1

You

WERE MADE  
FOR THIS

*By this everyone will know that you are  
my disciples, if you love one another.*

JOHN 13:35 NIV



**T**he stories of the Bible are packed with potency! An expert in the law wanted to test Jesus in an attempt to trap him into saying something incriminating. *Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?*

I love the way Jesus boiled all the law and prophets down to two great commandments: loving God and loving your neighbor. He had a way of taking the complex and making it simple. We tend to do the opposite—just like the legal expert who asked, “Who is my neighbor?”

Jesus went on to tell the parable we call “The Good Samaritan.” It’s a great story about loving those who enter our sphere of influence with the love of God. There are many directions this story can take us. I think about race relations. I identify with the busy schedules of the religious characters. I wonder how the Samaritan knew how much money to give the hotel owner, and was that really the best place to leave the guy?

And I forget all about loving my neighbor. I just made this simple point of Jesus very complex. Jesus doesn’t tell us *who* our neighbor is, but *how* to neighbor. The *who* is...whoever needs you.

## Your Neighbor

What if Jesus meant to love your actual neighbor?

Yes, the one whose furry friend leaves deposits in your yard. Yes, the one who is loud and thoughtless at times (she thinks the same about you, by the way). And the one who drives into your yard and leaves a rut. (Oh, wait, I was the one who did that!)

Loving your actual neighbor is messy and very personal. You can't love your neighbor as yourself from a distance. It requires involvement, investment. I love the way *The Message* translates John 1:14, *The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood*. Jesus modeled incarnational living for us. He lived in love, and he calls us to follow his example.

What if we all did that? How would love change our world?

For one thing, we wouldn't need mass evangelism tactics or institutional church strategies. It's not a marketing pitch. It's just God's love flowing through us. Many non-Christians already know a disciple of Jesus. If every disciple is committed to a simple lifestyle of love—love for God and love for their neighbor, the story of Jesus would become personal and real. Maybe folks would listen. Everyone longs to love and be loved.

## Connecting as Jesus Did

If we define *neighbor* as those with whom we live, work, study and play, our sphere of influence would be manageable. In each of our neighborhoods, people would wake up with someone praying for them by name, loving them as Jesus loves them—and loving them enough to share the story of Jesus.

Could it be that simple? I'm convinced Jesus meant it to be.

It is not just the *message* of Jesus that leads to life. The *methods* of Jesus are also compelling. What do we see Jesus do? What did Jesus talk about? He found common points of interest and engaged people in conversations that mattered. We can do the same. With Jesus, anyone is welcome—the child, the know-it-all, the widow,



the needy, the one with a past. His message and methods work together; they shouldn't be separated.

Isn't this what it means to be a disciple: to follow Jesus, to do his work in his way? A disciple reproduces and even multiplies his faith by living on mission every day. A disciple makes disciples who make disciples until the whole world knows.

It starts with loving God and loving your neighbor.

You are hard-wired for this. Loving isn't something you need to go to school to do. It comes naturally. The Holy Spirit of Jesus, who lives within every believer, will prepare the way. Let the Spirit live and work through you.

The key characteristic of a disciple is not knowledge, but obedience. "*Knowledge*" *puffs up but love builds up* (1 Corinthians 8:1, RSV). Don't equate discipleship with knowledge. Disciples imitate their leader.

In what ways are you practicing the methods of Jesus?

2

MAKING  
AND  
BEING A

Friend

*I have called you friends.*

JESUS, IN JOHN 15:15 NIV





our neighborhood may have fences, or lawns that adjoin. You might live in an apartment, with people above and below you. You could live on a farm, so your nearest neighbor is a quarter-mile away. There are many unique ways we share this big green-and-blue ball we call earth.

Sometimes our “neighbors” are those who share that geography with us, but we can also expand our definition to include those within our *sphere of influence*.

The Bible uses the Greek word *oikos*. The basic translation is “house,” but there is another meaning. *Oikos* can also describe a group of connected people—your immediate household, your extended family, but possibly also neighbors, coworkers, and friends. To put it another way, your *oikos* includes those with whom you have regular contact. We could call this our sphere of influence.

After casting a mob of demons out of one man, Jesus told him to go back to his *oikos* and tell the story (Luke 8:39). The apostle Paul told his jailer that trusting Christ would bring salvation to him and his *oikos* (Acts 16:31). And this is repeated often in Scripture. A government official (John 4:53), a synagogue leader (Acts 18:8), and a tax collector (Luke 19:9) each come to faith in Jesus—and the blessings extend to each man’s *oikos*. Whatever that sphere of influence was, we can see that salvation spread quickly through the social circle. While the restored demoniac wanted to travel with Jesus and the disciples, Jesus sent him back to his friends and family. They would know better than anyone the transformation that took place. That was the man’s best place of ministry.

## Creating Community

Nowadays, people are tempted to live in a singular, separated, individual way, in cocoons of our own making. There is terror on the news and in our schools, so we have deadbolts and fences. Electronic devices compete for our private attention every waking moment, but even online chats turn into arguments. We over-medicate to numb ourselves from life's accumulated losses. We are lonely, even while surrounded by people.

This is the state of humanity—desperate for community, but clueless about creating it.

The Bible reminds us that community is often the best arena for the Good News of Jesus. Faith tends to fill a household, overflowing to a whole sphere of influence. Jesus can still “move into a neighborhood”—through you.

How will this happen?

It starts with the simple connections that create community. Be present for your neighbors—for all those with whom you work, live, study, or play. Be a friend, a loving, caring, listening friend.

Are there people you see regularly? Maybe they are the parents of the other players on your son's soccer team. You sit with them every couple of days in the summer. What about the barista at your favorite coffee shop? Do you often see the same checkout lady at the department store? Could you learn their names? Could you start a conversation? Could you be available if God wants to touch their lives through you? How could God use you to carry his love?

## Who Is in Your Oikos?

Much of this connecting can happen naturally, once you open the door. But it wouldn't hurt to do some thinking about it. Who does your *oikos* include? Ask God to bring to mind people in your sphere of influence. Write down their names and pray for them by name. As you pray, consider what God has in store for those people.

Is there a group to which you feel called? Or is God sending you to an individual? How is the Spirit prompting you?

Perhaps God has placed you where you live, work, study or play for a specific purpose you haven't considered yet. You may be the only believer in someone's life, or you may be part of a tag team, sharing God's message over a period of years.

In our marketing-savvy world, we sometimes turn the Good News into a sales pitch, and our friends into targets. Steer clear of that. God places these people on your heart because he loves them and wants a relationship with them. Your mission is to share that love with them.

So presence is more important than perfection. Be genuinely interested in the life of these friends, before you try to interest them in your pursuits. Listen. Ask open-ended questions. Reserve judgment. Invest. Lean into their concerns. Don't have an agenda except for God's agenda. Have the patience to see what God will do.

And then be ready for whatever happens.

## Adopting Your Neighborhood

One of my neighbors, Lorenzo, who is a follower of Jesus, was thinking of moving away from our community when a piercing question came into his mind. He believed it came from Jesus. *Are you going to move before ever investing in your neighbors?*

Tears came to Lorenzo's eyes as he realized he'd lived in his neighborhood for years but rarely reached out to his neighbors with God's love. Within the next two weeks, he and his wife, Kassie, were intentional in sharing God's love in natural ways. They took a meal to a person fighting cancer. They took cookies to a new couple that had recently moved in. They ended up praying for another couple and even got to share their faith in Jesus with another—all because they began living intentionally.

Now they've adopted their neighborhood as the mission field to which God's assigned them.

## The Prayer, Care, and Share Lifestyle

Some of us have been taught that following Jesus equals going to church on Sunday, as if that is our highest calling. We think discipleship means joining a Bible study group. If we use our spiritual gift in the church, we reach the zenith of spirituality. Or so we've heard.

But the life God wants for us is so much more.

We might learn something from the practice of dieting. In an effort to become healthy, some people will go on a crash diet. Paleo, South Beach, Mediterranean, DASH—you can count calories,

add protein, work out, or whatever, and chances are that you will lose weight.

But then what? Will you make long-term changes to your lifestyle, or will you revert to long-standing patterns? We all know that the best way to stay healthy is to address our lifestyle choices. Eat smaller meals more often. Drink plenty of water. Get adequate sleep. Exercise early and often. Cut back on sugar. There are many who lose twenty pounds on a diet and then put on thirty when they get back to their normal routine—because they’ve never committed to changing their lifestyle.

Adopting your neighborhood is a lifestyle. It’s a mindset. For many believers, it’s a paradigm shift. It’s not a list of religious things to do; it’s a commitment to loving God and loving others in every area of your life. It is spiritually healthy living.

In the next few chapters we discuss this community-creating, neighborhood-adopting lifestyle. We call it “prayer, care and share.” You’ll see numerous stories, best practices and illustrations, but please don’t view them as tactics to learn. Prayer, care and share is a way of living that positions us to be available to God and available to others. It can become as natural as breathing.

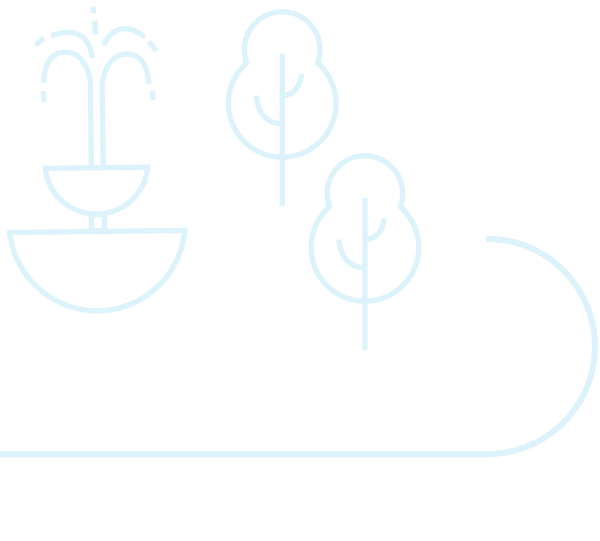
Prayer, care and share go together symbiotically. The three elements are not linear, but they wrap around one another, each one feeding into the others and drawing from them. Let’s look at each one individually, but we’ll be sure to put them back together at the end.

3

# Prayer

*Love the Lord your God with all your  
heart, all your soul, and all your mind.*

MATTHEW 22:37 NLT





ou can't give away what you don't have. There was a reason Jesus started with "love God" before he got to "love your neighbor."

Jesus wants to walk with you in an intimate, moment-by-moment, relationship. He bought you back, redeeming your life so you could be a friend of the Father. If you could grasp the depth of God's love, the width of his forgiveness, and the good thoughts he has for you—you would be blown away!

Our hearts can't comprehend the truth that we are the beloved of God or, as the psalmist says, "the apple of his eye." He chose us even while we were in sin, and Jesus endured unspeakable suffering to save us. Jesus has forgiveness for our sin and grace for our shame.

God is for you not against you. His thoughts toward you are always loving and kind. Even if there is discipline and correction in your future, it is out of love and to free you from the bondage of sin. It is for freedom you are set free.

Now that is good news!

## Praying the Scriptures

If you haven't explored the way God loves, spend the next month or so in the Scriptures, deepening your understanding of who God is and what God does. Then let that growing knowledge fuel your love for God. As I dig into the Word, I often pray, "God, I want to know you better and love you more."

Take time daily in God's Word, the Bible. I read slowly and often spend time reviewing verses or paragraphs multiple times. This is a great way to start your day. Usually I sit quietly in a listening posture,

sometimes closing my eyes to block out anything that would interfere. Then I roll the Scripture through my mind, slowing taking in its truth and praying that God would integrate it into my soul.

I often journal about how a particular Bible passage relates to my life, considering not only what it says to me but also what I should do with it. I invite the Holy Spirit to enter into this exercise to lead me. Daily I ask the Lord to cleanse me and to filter out anything selfish or sinful.

One of my favorite ways to use Scripture is to pray it back to God, inserting my life and its situations into the verses. This feels like I'm talking to God with divinely inspired direction.

Most mornings I listen to a worship song or two on YouTube and sing along. Praise is a great response to the challenges of my day. When I express dependence toward God, hope fills my heart. I often sense the Spirit is near, filling my soul with love. These times in the morning give me a kingdom perspective for the rest of my day.

We take time daily to fill our bodies with food. Shouldn't we daily feed our soul?

## This Is How to Pray

Check out how Jesus taught his disciples to pray in what we call "The Lord's Prayer." Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,  
may your name be kept holy.  
May your Kingdom come soon.  
May your will be done on earth,

as it is in heaven.

Give us today the food we need,

and forgive us our sins,

as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

And don't let us yield to temptation,

but rescue us from the evil one.

*MATTHEW 6:9-13 NLT*

This prayer is intended as a guide for us. Jesus started with praise and moved to a kingdom focus. He prayed for daily needs. He reminds us to pray for cleansing and right standing with God and others. He finishes by praying for victory.

Think about your prayers. Are they well rounded? Do they follow this pattern? Do you make room for praise daily? Is there a kingdom focus or do you only ask for your needs to be met? Do you pray for victory over temptation and rescue from sin?

What if you set out to pray like Jesus? Would you set aside time to pray for the kingdom? If so, for what or whom would you pray?

Why not start with your part of the mission? In what ways could you be a partner with Jesus in seeing the kingdom come to your neighborhood? Where is he already at work?

## Pray for Your Neighbors by Name

Years ago, Chris Cooper, the founder of [blesseveryhome.com](http://blesseveryhome.com), encouraged me to pray for my neighbors by name and to become a light to my neighborhood. I took his challenge to heart and God took me up on my prayers.

I'm a diehard Kansas University Jayhawk basketball fan. And I noticed a guy who lived just two houses away who often wore a KU sweatshirt. His name was Keven. We became friends, often talking about our team, in each other's driveway.

Well, for various reasons our family unplugged from cable. That made it difficult for me to keep up with the KU games. When I shared my lament with Keven, he invited me to watch the games at his house. I was glad to accept his invitation.

So when KU played its in-state rival, the Kansas State Wildcats, I was watching the game with Keven in his downstairs den. We talked basketball, but also chatted about our families and our jobs. We had a great time. It was even better when Kansas was leading at halftime.

While we grabbed some snacks and drinks, the conversation went deeper. Keven had a relative who talked about his faith. Knowing I was a pastor, Keven wanted to check those statements with me. I didn't want to get in the middle of his family's business, so I asked a different question: *Do you want to know what the Bible says about the way back to God?*

"Sure do," he said.

I started by honestly admitting that I'd wondered about these things for some time. I have peace in my heart today, but only after searching out truth. I was willing to share my story if he was interested.

He was.

I shared about the love that Jesus had for him. I told him about the need for Jesus to pay for the sin of this crazy, mixed-up world in which we live. I shared the story of Easter and the resurrection of Jesus.

I told Keven I was living with faith and confidence today not because of what I've done but because of what Jesus did for me. I explained how I received God's forgiveness and the grace in which I now live.

I didn't go fast. I made room for questions. I was a friend telling another friend where to find an oasis of peace and purpose for living. I relaxed, believing this conversation would go wherever Keven and the Spirit wanted. I didn't have a personal agenda, nor did I feel like I had to lead him to a salvation prayer. I was willing to take one step at a time.

He kept asking good questions. I could tell he was interested. I asked him if it made sense to him. I asked him if this kind of faith was something he wanted. He said he did.

He said he believed in Jesus. I asked if he was willing to ask Jesus to lead his life and forgive his sins and he said yes.

We prayed in his basement that day and Keven accepted the grace of God. And all of this happened before halftime. I don't remember who won the basketball game, but I know Kevin's life changed for eternity.

I love the way God restores and redeems.

As it turns out, his wife had been praying for him and sharing her faith with him for some time. All of that came to fruition in that basement TV room. I just happened to be there at the right time.

Pray for your neighbors by name daily and watch God go to work! When our prayers intertwine with our caring and sharing, God sets divine appointments. So don't be afraid to invite people to Jesus. God may have created that opportunity for you.

4

# Prayer Walking

YOUR  
NEIGHBORHOOD

*Watch and pray.*

*MATTHEW 26:41 NIV*

**J**esus and Paul both said to “watch and pray” (Matthew 26:41; Colossians 4:2). This suggests a dual focus. Prayer doesn’t remove us from the world, but equips us to encounter it. We ask God to do his part, and we seek the insight we need to do our part.

One of the best ways I’ve found to “watch and pray” is to walk and pray. Take a stroll around your neighborhood, in conversation with God. Let the walk fuel your prayer, and let the prayer inform your walk.

Prayer-walking is a way of praying onsite with insight.

As you walk and pray, invite God to speak to you about your neighbors. Don’t feel the need to fill up every minute. Make yourself available to God and to your neighbors. Don’t be surprised if, while you are praying, someone comes up and starts a conversation with you. And if you have the chance to be the conversation starter, by all means speak up.

## “God Things”

One evening as I passed a certain house, I noticed all sorts of grotesque Halloween decorations. *This family took it over the top*, I thought. Immediately, in my spirit, I heard what I thought might be a prompting from God to pray for them. So I did.

And even though I didn’t know the family or anything about their spiritual condition, I continued to pray for them each time I passed that home, and at other times as well.

Late one Friday afternoon, a person I didn’t know dropped by my office. She wanted to talk to a pastor and, somehow, she found

her way to my office. Did I have time to talk? Well, I was trying to wrap up my work and head home, but I've learned to treat seeming intrusions as possible "God things." And I was curious.

As she shared her story of spiritual need, I realized that she lived in the very house I'd been praying for. I talked to her about God's love and how he often works with us in difficult times. She had some familiarity with Christianity, but it had been years since she had connected with God. I asked her if this might be a good time to reach out.

She hesitated.

"I think God has been reaching out to you," I offered. Then I told her that I'd been praying for her for more than a month. As I described my prayer-walk and the Spirit's prompting, her jaw dropped. She had found her way to my office, wondering what to do next! Coincidence? I don't think so.

Before she left that day, we prayed together. She joined me in confessing our need for God and inviting him to lead us. We both cried, sensing the presence of God and the care of the Good Shepherd who is continually seeking his lost sheep.

That woman has since become a great friend and faithful prayer partner. And now, each time I walk past, I thank God that her house was on my route.

As you make prayer-walking part of your routine, you may encounter "God things" as well. Not every encounter will be this dramatic, but "watch and pray" as you walk and pray. I find it rare that if a person prayer-walks for thirty days they don't see something miraculous happen.



## Best Practices

Listen to the Spirit as you walk. In grade school I had a teacher who used to say, *Put on your listening ears*. I would say the same thing when you prayer-walk.

Keep your eyes open to what is happening in your neighborhood. Where do you see people gathered? Is someone starting a project? Are there signs of neglect somewhere?

As much as possible, pray for your neighbors by name as you walk. For more information on that, you may want to sign up at [blesseveryhome.com](http://blesseveryhome.com).

Keep some words in your mind that might prompt you to look behind the scenes. For example, ask yourself about these words: *pain, parties, pennies, and power*? Do you see anything that relates to those words for which you should pray? Here's another set of words: *hurts, habits, hope, and history*.

Who are the “persons of peace” in your neighborhood? They are people with the gift of gathering. They are often the ones who know everyone else in the neighborhood. If you want to entertain friends at your home, they would know how to go about it. They might even offer to be the host.

Walk at the same time every day, if possible. You are more likely to meet people because you may see them again and again.

In the conversations that arise along the way, be honest and caring. People can sense what you're about. Don't preach. Ask questions, as long as any answer is okay. Give them room, and they may open up to you. Give God room, and you will get to see God work in the hearts of your neighbors.

5

# Care

*Whatever you did for one of the  
least of these brothers and sisters of  
mine, you did for me.*

MATTHEW 25:40 NIV



**J**esus urged his followers to care for the hungry, the homeless, those who are sick or in prison. Surprisingly, he suggested that our loving service to these needy people would be a gift to him. This theme bounces through the Scriptures. Love for God means love for others (1 John 4:8). Love is the highest calling for the Christian, our identifying trait (1 Corinthians 13:13; John 13:35).

As we care for others, showing them God's love, we often see them open up to a relationship with God. Care builds a bridge over which conversations can cross. Care builds trust, and trust allows people to talk about the things that matter most. As the saying goes, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

## Relationship-building

Several years ago, my next-door neighbor broke his foot stepping awkwardly off his steps. When I heard about it, I felt prompted to mow his lawn. He really appreciated it. It made such a big impression that, when his foot was healed and winter came, he used his new snow-blower to clear our driveway multiple times.

I didn't mow his lawn in order to get my driveway cleared. I did it because the Spirit prompted me to show love in this way. I'm sure you've done similar things. The more we follow divine nudges and care for others in little ways, the more the Lord shines his love through us. These little things matter. Being a good neighbor is rarer than you realize. Simple acts of generosity can break through the isolation of our communities and establish real relationships.

Those relationships can be mutually beneficial. My neighbor and I do good things for each other. And as you follow the Spirit's leading to care for others, you might find opportunities to let others care for you. That's what friendships are about.

Look at it this way: When you receive care, it takes you out of a position of power and into a place of dependency. You are no longer in control. Because the other person has willingly chosen to serve you, the relationship grows stronger. As a result, there is often opportunity to talk about the deeper things of life.

## Love in Action

Listen for the Spirit's leading. In your sphere of influence, you'll find many needs, and you can't meet them all. But if you pay attention, God will guide you with laser-like precision to show his love in specific ways to certain people around you.

Do not seek to manipulate people through the care you give. Do not smother them with your attention. This is not about you and your accomplishments. You are the hands and feet of Jesus, loving and serving others.

6

# Share

*And how can they hear about him  
unless someone tells them?*

*ROMANS 10:14 NLT*



**E**ugene lived about eight houses up the street. We saw each other at church, but he wanted more of a conversation. He sensed he was missing something, but he didn't know what.

We scheduled lunch.

As we talked about our families, he mentioned his wife's faith. He saw a vibrancy there that was attractive. He was also intrigued by what he saw in me, but he had doubts about God. The personal nature of his faith seemed to be missing. He considered making a commitment, but he wasn't sure he should. What if the others around him were just manufacturing their feelings and fooling themselves?

We were meeting at Zio's, an Italian restaurant, known for its lasagna. We talked for a long time, long after the dishes were cleared away. I decided it might help if I asked some questions. Had he ever asked Jesus to forgive him and lead him? He said no. Did he ever pray? He said sometimes, but he wasn't sure it went anywhere. Did he want to know the path that led to God, as the Bible described it? He said he did.

Zio's is also known for the brown paper that covers its tables. They give you a couple of crayons when you sit down. I grabbed one and drew a picture: God on one side, humans on the other, with a gaping cavern in between called sin. Then I drew a bridge in the shape of the cross. "Jesus is the bridge," I explained.

I went on: "Jesus came to earth to lead us back to the Father. To complete his mission, he took on our sin and died on the cross to satisfy the penalty of sin. Because the life inside him was greater than the power of sin, death and the devil, death could not hold him and he rose from the dead. Now he offers us his victory."

After a pause, I asked, “Is this something you want?”

He wasn’t sure.

I gave him the crayon and asked, “If you were to put yourself on this diagram, where would you be?”

He thought for a time and said, “I’d be right here,” marking a place on the bridge but not across it. “I think I believe in Jesus, but I have a lot of doubts about so many things.”

“Doubts don’t discourage God,” I said. “He doesn’t think any less of you because you doubt. Doubts are the starting place for most of us.” I shared some of the doubts I’d had and offered to talk through Eugene’s issues with him. “I’m interested and I’ll walk with you, but I have another question for you. Is any one of those doubts big enough to keep you from the love that Jesus has for you, if this is true?”

Eugene was clearly thinking about this, so I went on: “I’m going to ask you to doubt your doubts. What if your doubts are deceiving you? What if the story of Jesus is true? What are you missing out on? You know, whatever you believe, it is going to require faith. You can have faith in your doubts or you can have faith in Jesus. So I guess my ultimate question is, ‘Do you want to live the rest of your life doubting or would you rather place your faith in Jesus and receive his love?’”

I let the question hang in the air. The silence seemed endless, but I was determined not to answer for him. I would be with him no matter what he answered. Either answer was a further piece of clarity for his spiritual journey.

Finally he said, “I want to receive Jesus. We can talk about my doubts later.”

We prayed right there at the table with the crayon drawings on brown paper, and Eugene began a personal relationship with Jesus. The light came on in his eyes when he invited Jesus to lead him. His smile was big and real. He could hardly wait to tell his wife.

Later, it was my privilege to lead a small community group in his home. I got to watch him grow and claim his faith. He grew daily as a disciple. The funny thing about his doubts is that they didn't seem so big anymore, and we never had to talk about them.

## How to Share

Jesus told his disciples they were salt and light in their world. Everywhere we go, we bring light and flavor to our world. It's as if the world has the sin virus and we have the antidote. Will you share it? We can't relegate sharing the Good News to the pastor, a TV evangelist, or grandma. If our world is going to find Jesus, we each have a role to play.

Here are some tips about sharing with those who need to hear:

- Be open and transparent about your failings and your seeking. You don't have to have it all together.
- Aim at a dialog. I think about these life-giving conversations like tennis. If the other person stops sending the conversation back, stop talking.
- Be a good listener. Be interested before you attempt to be interesting. Don't rush.



- Ask good, open-ended questions. If you want to be better at sharing your faith, spend time preparing good questions.
- Look for a moment of illumination. Trust that the Spirit is working within the other person. See how the other person might be moving from A to B in their spiritual journey.
- Don't feel like you have to fill up every empty moment. Let God work in the silence.
- Embrace awkwardness with grace. There is no way to avoid awkwardness. It will happen; expect it. Don't feel you are failing. Smile, relax, God is in control, so you don't have to be.

Remember you are introducing one good friend to another good friend. And you are certain that, once they know each other, they will love the relationship.

It may sound contradictory to say, after providing all these tips, but there is no formula to this. Let the Spirit lead you.

## Leading to Prayer

When we share with someone, what exactly are we sharing? The gospel, the good news that God loves this person and longs for a relationship with him or her. It makes sense to begin that relationship with a conversation—a prayer. So often, after I've shared with people and I sense they're responding well, I ask if they'd like to talk with God about it. Since many haven't prayed in a long time, if ever, I try to help them realize that talking with God can be simple and natural. You can use three of the first words every child learns to say.

**Sorry** I'm sorry, I'm sorry I sinned. I realize I need a Savior. I can't save myself.

**Thank you** Thank you for loving me from the beginning. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sin. Thank you for offering me forgiveness. I receive it.

**Please** Please lead my life in the way you want me to go. Help me be the person you want me to be.

If they are afraid they will say it wrong, I offer to say it one line at a time and ask them to pray after me. If this is acceptable, I always clarify that God already knows what's in their heart, but it often helps us to put it into words. Often I add, "Make this your prayer. Don't say anything you don't mean. If at any point you want to go off on your own, that would be great."

Don't feel you need to pray a scripted prayer. If they don't want to pray out loud, don't force it. Let it be personal and real for them.

Think of coming to Jesus more like a spiritual journey than a one-time event. People usually take baby steps. If your presence with them is that of a friend, they are more open to your spiritual guidance. People fear a salesman, but they love the shelter of a friend.

Use Scripture to give them assurance of God's favor and forgiveness. Have verses like 1 John 1:9; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:16; Romans 10:9; and Psalm 103:8-14 at the ready.

After someone makes a decision to follow Christ, stay in touch. Be available personally to provide guidance or answer questions, but also try to connect the person with a small group and a church. Be aware that these are baby steps as well. Someone who has made

a personal commitment of faith might still balk at joining a larger group, but continue to surround that person with prayer and care as they grow.



7

LET

Tech

HELP

*I have become all things to all men, that  
I might by all means save some.*

*1 CORINTHIANS 9:22 RSV*

**C**hris Cooper has an amazing vision—lights shining for Christ in every neighborhood in America. He aims to provide the best of technology in support of the prayer/care/share lifestyle.

The [blesseveryhome.com](http://blesseveryhome.com) website is his life's work. There you can sign up to pray for your neighbors by name. You can sign up for ten, twenty-five, or even more. You will receive five names in your inbox every day (or whatever days you designate). You can pray from a map or a list.

You can also see where other “lights” are in your neighborhood—other believers who care about reaching others. You can exchange notes and pray together for your friends and neighbors.

## Everyone a Hero

I think this was the secret of the book of Acts. Regular people were the heroes. Their lives were changed and they shared their faith. People gathered in each other's homes to talk about life. The Spirit surrounded their efforts, and the common believer was filled with divine thoughts and spiritual energy. People used their gifts and God used their words to transform others.

If every neighborhood had a home where people met to share faith, it would change the perception of faith in our country. We would have lasting change. A movement of God would come that is organic and unstoppable. This is what's happening around the world, why not here?

I've committed myself to Jesus's message and his methods. I want to recover the dynamic of the early disciples' faith and activity.

I want to love God and love people. I want to see God's love poured out in my neighborhood.

Will you join in?

You were made for this. You are uniquely gifted and prepared to be who you are, living where you live, doing what you do. As my friend Rob says, "You don't have to leave your zip code to be on mission for Jesus. You don't have to cross oceans, jungles or deserts." Yes, you may have to reach a hand across a fence or mow someone's lawn or say a word about Jesus to a needy neighbor in the supermarket, but you can do this.

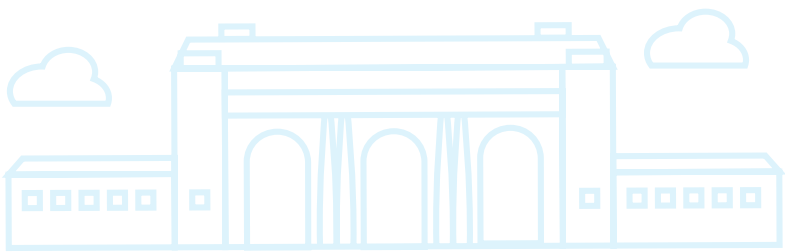
Let Jesus be the center of your story and share your story with your friends.



CONNECT

WITH

Love KC



*Therefore encourage one  
another and build each other up.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11 NIV



ou are not alone in your effort to adopt your neighborhood with the prayer, care, and share lifestyle. At Love KC, our mission is to mobilize prayer and mission in Kansas City. We want to support and strengthen those engaged in living on mission every day in their neighborhoods. You can find us at **Lovekc.net**.

Among other activities, Love KC is working to rally the city to pray together by publishing a weekly Scripture passage superimposed on an iconic Kansas City picture. Imagine the chorus we could raise in heaven if we all prayed the same Scripture together each week!

The other priority, and the goal of this Field Guide, is to encourage and support the adoption of every neighborhood in the greater Kansas City metro area. We work toward the day when everyone who wakes up in KC will have someone praying for him or her by name, receiving care as the Spirit leads, and hearing someone share the Good News of Jesus.

We connect the “lights” of Kansas City for mutual encouragement, growth in best practices, inspiration, and support. We network leaders and churches to support the growing number of those who are adopting neighborhoods. We regularly produce tools and post them on our website. We point people toward the latest stories and encourage peer to peer learning.

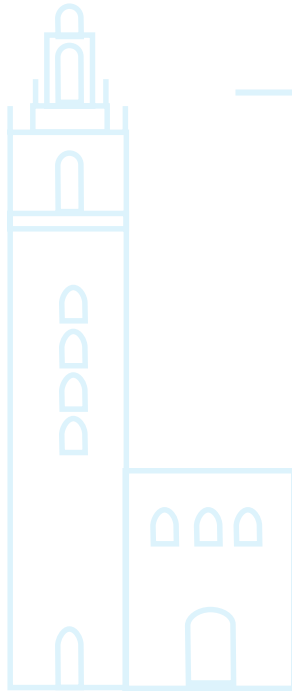
We’d love to come alongside you as you follow God’s leading to adopt your neighborhood with this prayer, care and share approach.

***Gary Kendall, Director, Love KC***

***Gary.Kendall@thesendingproject.org***



# RESOURCES



*Your kingdom come, your will be  
done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

*MATTHEW 6:10 NIV*

### **Blesseveryhome.com**

You can use technology to help you pray, care, and share in your neighborhood.

### **Bless Every Home Pocket Guide**

Simple rhythms of life to bless your neighbor.

[https://static1.squarespace.com/  
static/56972cc7fd5d08f12476d9f0/t/57fd0b30e58c62379e  
7920d1/1476201268200/BlessPocketGuide\\_WITC\\_Web.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56972cc7fd5d08f12476d9f0/t/57fd0b30e58c62379e7920d1/1476201268200/BlessPocketGuide_WITC_Web.pdf)

### **Bridge Illustration**

<https://youtu.be/CN3rp7ltsoo>

### **Lovekc.net**

Learn best practices and connect with other “lights” in Kansas City through Love KC. You can also join the Missional Prayer Force.

### **Gospel Fluency by Jeff Vanderstelt**

Speaking the truths of Jesus into the everyday stuff of life.

### **lamsecond.com**

Testimonies from people from all walks of life to encourage your faith and share with your friends.

### **Jesus Film**

It tells the story of Jesus and is available on DVD in 17+ languages.

## **Life Conversation Guide App**

The Three Circles Illustration with Scriptures and questions

## **LookInside.bible**

A website that responds to questions about the Bible in a welcoming, winsome way.

## **Three Circles Illustration**

A video description of the gospel in a minute-and-a-half.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYU-a2wlbxc>

## **What if the Church Loves Kansas City**

The place to learn the heart and the logistics for What if the Church 2018: [www.whatifthechurch.org](http://www.whatifthechurch.org)

## **yesHEis App**

A live chat is always available to answer questions. Many relevant subjects and videos

# Author

Gary Kendall is the founding pastor of Indian Creek Community Church in Olathe, Kansas. Gary, his wife Belinda, and a group of 27 adults planted Indian Creek in September of 1985. In 2004, Gary partnered with Robin Wood to start the Church Multiplication Association (CMA), which helped with more than eighty church plants in the next eight years, before folding the network into Healthy Growing Churches. Along with his daughter, Kristen Levitt, Gary relaunched Project Partner, an international ministry to China, in 2007. Gary and Belinda transitioned out of the Indian Creek Community Church in 2017 and launched Love KC, a ministry of The Sending Project in partnership with Citywide Prayer. He has also written two books: *The Path to Power*, a discipleship study with Jim Davey; and *Backwards*, a book on spiritual formation.

## Love KC

Love KC is the result of much prayer and many hours of seeking God's heart for the city. It was born out of the heart of long-time network leaders in Kansas City: Gary Schmitz (Citywide Prayer), Eric Rochester (American Bible Society/The Sending Project), and Gary and Belinda Kendall (Love KC). It is part of a larger initiative to Saturate KC with God's Word, missional prayer, and the gospel of Jesus, through a ministry partnership with The Sending Project and Citywide Prayer Movement.

