

Session 3: Overcoming Fear— Neighboring Can be Both Messy and Powerful

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Christians can break the barrier of fear by empathizing with our neighbors.

Head Change: To know that we can have hope and peace instead of fear because God is always with us.

Heart Change: To feel confidence when worry tries to take over.

Life Change: To refrain from letting our assumptions about others keep us from engaging with them.

OPEN

Describe a time when you were afraid. What were the circumstances surrounding your fear and how did you handle it? What specifically made you afraid and why?

Fear is one of the most crippling things we deal with in life. It holds us back from making certain decisions, keeps us stuck in immaturity, and stunts our growth. In this session, we're going to learn how important it is to rely on God and live by his Word when fear creeps into our lives.

If we want to be good neighbors, we have to rid ourselves of the fear and worry that can come with meeting new people.

REVIEW

Jay started the session by talking about the relationship we have to fear and how easy it is to fear our neighbors. **What are some factors that might make someone afraid to engage with their neighbors? What kinds of fears come when meeting new people?**

We have to understand that some of our next-door neighbors are going to be different from us—they might have a different culture, religion, or dress. **In what ways have you allowed someone’s differences keep you from getting to know them? How did you conquer that fear?**

Jay summarized a quote from 1 Peter by saying, “Everyone around you is afraid, but not you. Because you know Jesus.” **How should our relationship with Jesus impact our desire to reach out to our neighbors?**

Our courage in the midst of the world’s fear should draw our neighbors to Jesus. People should desire to know about Jesus after seeing how unafraid we are. **How can an attitude of courageousness give a good impression to our neighbors of what it means to follow Christ?**

When we meet new people, we can be afraid of being judged by others, like how Jay felt about an awkward encounter with a neighbor. But sometimes we don’t engage with others because we’ve already made judgments and assumptions about them. **What did Jay’s story show us about the consequences of making assumptions about others?**

Jay didn’t let the uncomfortable situation get the best of him. He decided to push through the barrier and talk to his neighbor again. **What was the outcome of the two men reconciling after their awkward conversation? How did Jay’s dedication to loving his neighbor turn the situation into a positive one?**

Jay talked about how Jesus didn’t allow fear to fuel his actions. When people judged Jesus for hanging out with “sketchy” people, he told them that he did it so they would know the love of God, because that was most important. At the end of the session, Jay asked: When was the last time we were accused of hanging around sketchy people? **How would you answer that question?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

When we choose to follow Jesus and listen to his commands, we're also believing that he will be with us and help us conquer our fears. If Jesus has asked us to love and serve our neighbors, then we have to believe that he will give us what we need to engage with them.

In this session, Jay used 1 Peter 3:14 to help us see how having no fear can actually be beneficial to reaching people for the kingdom.

Read 1 Peter 3:8–12.

What types of actions does Peter list off that would help improve a relationship with someone else? Which of these actions do you find easier to do naturally and why? Which one is the most difficult and why?

What could it look like to display these attributes practically toward our next-door neighbors in our everyday lives?

We live in a culture that values independence, selfishness, and an attitude that says we should repay evil with evil. **How does this passage speak against our cultural norm? How is loving on our neighbor's counter-cultural?**

Verse 8 says we are to be sympathetic and to love one another. **What could it look like for you to show sympathy to one of your neighbors this week?**

Verse 9 talks about refraining from repaying evil with evil, but to repay it with a blessing. **Describe whether it is typically easy or hard for you to still be kind to a neighbor who was rude to you. What helped you to continue being kind?**

What kinds of actions could be a blessing to a neighbor who has done evil toward you?

Some neighbors may not want to hear about Jesus or accept an invitation to church—but they might respond to our compassion, love and interest in their personal lives. **How could our neighbors who are unbelievers be positively affected by this kind of treatment toward them?**

Read 1 Peter 3:13–17.

Verse 13 asks us who could be there to harm us when we are zealous to do good. **What could being eager—or zealous—to do good for our neighbors look like?**

For many of us, we might read the question posed in verse 13 and agree that doing good keeps away suffering. But in many cases, people in the world can still harm us, no matter how many good things we do for them. **How would you answer the question in verse 13? How does Peter answer it in verse 14? How can we respond in faith when we know that we could suffer for doing good?**

Based on verses 14–17, what could living without fear do for those around us? For us?

What are some ways you could address and overcome a particular fear you have about engaging with a neighbor this week? What could it look like for you to trust in God as you address that fear?

LAST WORD

God has not given us a spirit of fear, and the more we make decisions based on those fears, the more stunted we become in our own spiritual growth. The command to love our neighbor is built on a fearless attitude with the goal of showing others the love of Christ. If we push fear aside and rely on the Spirit of God to help us, we can better serve and love our neighbors.

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Take a moment and meditate on this question: If God is always with us, what do we have to fear when obeying his command to love the people next door?

DEEPER WALK

Read: Read chapter 4 of Jay and Dave's book, *The Art of Neighboring*. As you read, ask God to reveal to you the fears that may be hindering your neighboring journey.

Pray: Pray and ask God to help you push through your fears in order to engage with more of your neighbors.

Sing: Pick a few worship songs that talk about rejecting fear. Play them while you're getting ready in the morning or as you drive to work to serve as a reminder of the courage God has given us.
