



ICC SUMMER STUDY 2020
June 10, 2020

Session Two: WE ARE PRAYERFUL.
(content from this session is adapted from *Jesus Next Door* by Dave Clayton)

Why Is This Summer Series So Important?

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

We need to constant reminders of this...

Our church's mission is not dependent on the

- place (building)
- programs (organized ministry)
- people (specific groups)
- personalities (specific leaders)

Our church's mission is dependent only on:

- God's **power**
- God's **purpose** in our lives

... which do not **change!** In every season, we are called to be **missional** people!

The Importance of Missional Living

Colossians 4:2-6

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.”

- Three Rhythms of Missional Living:
 - Identify (v.2)
 - Invest (vv. 5-6)
 - Invite (vv. 3-4)

What’s Most Important?

When asked to pinpoint what mattered most to God, Jesus did not beat around the bush or speak in code.

Matthew 22:37-39

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The Most Important Commandment: Live a Life of Love

- With God
- With Others

More Than a Command

- For most, the question is not “What we should do?” but “**How** should we do this?”
- Even though Jesus’ words are crystal clear, most followers of Jesus will be quick to admit that they struggle to live them out.
- Many people do not know how to do this practically. Knowing you need to do something but not knowing how to do it can lead to lost of frustration. With God’s help and some practical ideas, we can begin to live more intentionally with Jesus each day.
- This invitation from Jesus (Mt. 22) is not only a command but an **invitation** to experience the Good Life God intends for each of us. As you follow the way of Jesus, not only will it bless your neighbors - it will bring you great joy as well.
- We to experience the profound joy of living on mission with Jesus each day.

Love Your Neighbor

- In our busy culture, there are two easy mistakes to make with the people God has placed around us every day:
 - **Overlook** them
 - **Undervalue** them
- We need to see our neighbors with new eyes – God's eyes.
- Your neighbors are so valuable to God. Like you, they are people crafted in his wonderful image. Therefore, **learning to love your neighbors well really matters.**
- Although meeting the needs of our neighbors through service is certainly a good thing, God desires to open the door for a **lasting relationship** that will go far beyond a one-time act of service.
- We need to look for will more regularly (daily) opportunities to reflect the goodness of Jesus to those around you in simple and profound ways.

An Important Question: Who Is Your Neighbor?

- The first step in learning to love your neighbor is learning to **identify** your neighbors.
- On the most basic level, this seems pretty straightforward. It starts by asking yourself: Who are the people who live near me? But it does not end there.
- Luke 10
- In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus expands our understanding of who qualifies as our neighbor.
- Jesus reminds us that our neighbor is also **any person encountered in our daily path who needs to be touched by the love of God.**
 - Thus, your neighbor is not just the person next door, but also your coworkers, the nurse who helps you with medication, the barista at the coffee shop, the regulars you see at the gym, the person you see on your lunch break, etc.

Your Three Spheres of Influence

It is important to understand that you have three natural spheres of influence with “neighbors” to love in each one as God has loved us:



SPHERE ONE: PAYING ATTENTION IN THE PLACE YOU LIVE

Our starting place: identifying natural ways you can love and serve the people who live near you. Use these questions to help you identify ways you can love and serve the people who live near you. Keep in mind there may be things you need to give in order to initiate a relationship, and some relationships may start by you asking for help from someone else.

Key Questions to Better Identify the People Who Live Near You

Questions

Take a pen and/or journal and take time to fill in responses and names below.

- **Do you know your neighbors names?**
 - If not, how can you introduce yourself?

Scripture Principles

Learn Their Names (John 1:48 – How do you know me?) The desire to be known is one of the deepest longings of the human heart. It might feel like a small gesture, but taking the time to learn a person’s name can leave an eternal impression. What would it be like if you took the time to learn then names of those you encounter on a regular basis? What’s holding you back? Do you pray for them by name? How can you take more time and space in your daily routine to truly notice the people around you?

- **Who in your neighborhood recently had a baby?**
 - Can you naturally offer something to that family?
 - If yes and you already know them can you take them a meal?
 - If you don't know them, could you take a small gift and a card to their door and introduce yourself?
Think flowers or small stuff animal – something simple.

- **Who has a pet?**
 - Do you like animals?
 - Is there a way you could help your neighbors with pet care from time to time?

- **Who has kids?**
 - Are there appropriate ways to interact with or invest in your neighbors's kids?

- **Who is elderly or disabled?**
 - What might they need help with?
 - Think yard work, house chores, caring for a pet, etc.

Pay attention to the people God puts in your path. (Colossians 4:2) Your day is likely filled with divine appointments! Will you notice them? Next door neighbors, woman next to you at work, college student who serves you coffee, frustrated stranger in lane next to you, roommate who needs your undivided attention.

Be a good neighbor (Luke 10:29). Often our biggest challenge is not a lack of understanding, but a lack of obedience. Jesus told this sorry to show us that our neighbor is not just the person living next door to us; it is any person we encounter in our daily path who needs to be touched by the love of God through us.

- **Who is around your age or in a similar life stage?**
 - Can you invite them into your space or home to connect with you?

Search for the Missing (Luke 15:4). When a child goes missing, normal people go looking. Our Father's pursuit comes in all shapes and sizes. Finding us ensnared by sin and false beliefs, putting us on his shoulders and carrying us home. Searching for us, gently removing everything from the house and shining a light into every dark corner of our past and when he finds us, gently dusting us off and holding us close. Waiting for us like a patient father until we come to our senses. Ask God to use you to help bring one of his missing children home. Can you imagine if everyone found someone? Those who have been found take great joy in finding other people, which is good news because God wants to use us in someone else's redemption story!

- **Are there single moms or dads around you?**
 - How might they need help from time to time?
 - Can you pick up a few things at the grocery store for them, help with yard work, or help with any other physical needs?

Serve Others With Humility (John 13:14). We are called to take the path of humility, serving not because of pay or recognition but that we know we are made to do it.

- **Are you already close with someone in your neighborhood?**
 - Who might be going through a tough time and needs some outside support?
 - How can you help?

Share Your Story (Acts 1:8). You may not have a pulpit to preach from, but I still have a story to tell. You don't have to have a special degree to be an eyewitness; you simply need to have seen, heard, or experienced something. What is your story? How can you share it?

- **Do your neighbors know each other?**
 - What can you do to bring them all together?
 - Is there a natural opportunity to get people together (throw a back to school cookout, gather people to go trick or treating together, invite people over to watch a big sporting event, etc)

The Importance of Presence (John 1:14). If our family moved out of our neighborhood tomorrow, would our neighbors miss us? How would life get better for my neighbors if Jesus were their neighbor? If you had to rank yourself as a neighbor, what score would give yourself on a scale from one to ten? Why?

- **Are there other followers of Jesus in your neighborhood**
 - If so, how can you partner with them to look for and meet needs around you?
 - What would happen if you started gathering together regularly to pray for your neighbors?

Pray with Belief (Mark 11:24). Do we believe Jesus is telling the truth when it comes to how God responds to our faith-filled prayers? Lord's prayer: (a) Prayer is relational, not transactional (b) the purpose of prayer is about the elevation of God's glory, not our glory, increasing God's fame, not our own (c) prayer plays an important role in welcoming – even ushering in- the reality of heaven to earth. What would it look like if heaven invaded our world? This is what Jesus' prayer invites us to lean into. How might we see the kingdom of heaven tomorrow because of what we pray today?

- **What skills and passions do you have that you may be able to offer?**
 - Is there a sports league in which you can coach? Can you organize pick up games?
 - Can you teach music lessons to those who live near you?
 - Can you provide a home-cooked meal to someone?
 - Can you help with handyman projects? Think home maintenance, car repair, etc.
 - What other unique skills and passions can you use to help others with the goal of establishing a connection?

Leverage My Passion (Mark 1:17). God wants to use your passions to fulfill his purposes. He loves to use people's passions to reveal his glory.

○ **Do you know of birthdays, anniversaries, or other special events coming up?**

- How can you help someone celebrate?
- For those you know, can you ask them what might be coming up?

Go the Extra Mile (Matthew 5:41).

Some friends only help you when it is convenient, but Jesus calls us to go above and beyond to bless others lives. Have you ever noticed how serving others is rarely convenient? When it comes to going the extra mile, it is easy for us to be so focused on the price tag that we miss the prize. Obedience to Jesus often comes with inconvenience.

○ **Are there runners, walkers, or exercise groups?**

- If you like to run or walk, can you join their group?
- What other exercise groups might exist around you?

○ **Who has moved in recently?**

- How can you help welcome them to the neighborhood?

See Where God is Working

(Matthew 13:16). Jesus did not come to establish a religion; he came to unleash a mighty kingdom. If we do not have the eyes to see it, we may miss the work of God right in front of us. God is already powerfully at work in the lives of the people around you. Do you long to see it? Pray and ask God to give you his eyes, ears, and heart to

○ **Is there a neighbor with a “for sale” sign up?**

- Can you bless this neighbor before you move?
- Consider asking about their plans, taking a meal, helping with a house project, assisting in packing, etc.

Motivated by love (John 3:16-17).

Jesus came because of love. He came not only for you but for your neighbors, your coworkers, your classmates, and family members. What motivates us? How valuable is each and every person you meet? They are worth the price of God’s one and only Son. How does God’s love for each person around you shift the way you treat and respond to them?

- **Is anyone having a yard / garage sale?**
 - Can you stop by to meet or talk with them?
 - Yard sales are natural ways to connect and have a short conversation!

Never Be Too Busy (Mark 5:30-32)

- - **Is there anyone in your neighborhood who doesn't fit the same profile as the majority?**
 - Think about race, religion, economic status, disability, and social-status diversity
 - How can you help them feel loved and valued?

Reflect Jesus to Others (John 1:39)

- **Is there someone who lives around you who has served or helped you?**
 - What small gesture can you do to show your thanks?
 - Think of a thank you card, homemade cookies, etc.

Show and Tell (Luke 10:9). The kingdom of God is something that needs to be both seen and heard. Shows and Sharing, Demonstrating & Declaring. Have you ever been around someone who was so filled with the love and joy of God that you literally felt as though you were in the presence of Jesus himself? Do people in your life get a glimpse of what it could look like to be madly in love with Jesus? Before people hear a sermon, they probably need to see one. People need to see the fruit of Jesus' life displayed in all of the ordinary moments of your life before they will truly listen. What would your non-Christian friends experience if they spent a normal day with you, your family, or your community of faith?

- **Is there anyone near you in a season of grief?**
 - Have any of your neighbors recently experienced death or tragedy?
 - Has anyone lost a spouse or child?
 - Has anyone lost a job or had a dream fall by the wayside?
 - How can you be an encouragement in this season of pain? How can you help them feel seen and loved?

Love the Brokenhearted (Matthew 5:4). Jesus is never too busy for our pain. When we encounter people in a season of pain, do you have the willingness and time to allow God to use you as a source of blessing to them? Is there someone around you who needs to experience the nearness of God as they are swallowed up by a dark ocean of grief?

- **What other ideas do you have?**

SPHERE 2: PAYING ATTENTION IN THE PLACE YOU WORK OR STUDY

Use these questions to help you identify ways you can love and serve the people with whom you work or go to school. Keep in mind there may be things you need to give in order to initiate a relationship, and some relationships may start by you asking for help from someone else.

Key Questions to Better Identify the People Who Work/Study Near You

Questions

Take a pen and/or journal and take time to fill in responses and names below.

Scripture Principles

Note: Notice some new principles for this section below, but also work to take the principles from the previous section and apply them here!

- **Do you know your coworkers' names?**
 - If not, how can you introduce yourself?
- **Is there anyone you don't know well but would like to know better?**
 - Could you take them out to lunch one day or ask them to sit with you at lunch?

- **Has anyone had any painful life changes?**
 - Has there been a death in the family? Are they or someone in their family ill?
 - What is something you can do to help or bless them? Think of providing a meal, writing a card, or simply asking how they are doing.
 - Is there someone who recently got engaged or married? How can you celebrate that significant event?

Be a Peaceful Presence (Mark 4:37-38) Have you ever experienced peace of God through the presence of another person? How can we speak peace-filled words of life, encouragement, and strength? In an anxious moment, a peace-filled person is a gift from God. God desires to make us an agent of peace for the sake of someone around you today.

- **Did anyone recently have a baby?**
 - Can you naturally offer something?
 - Could you take a meal? Think either takeout or something you made.
 - Could you take a small gift and a card? (Flowers or stuffed animal)

- **Is there someone at your workplace or school who does not fit in, is different, gets bullied, etc.**
 - How can you help them feel valued and loved?

- **Is there a space in your office (or school building) where you might eat lunch with a few coworkers or classmates?**
 - How can you initiate eating lunch with them?
 - How can you initiate conversations at lunch to help people go deeper with one another?

Focus on Eternity (Mark 2:5). Jesus cares about people's physical conditions, but he is even more concerned with people's spiritual conditions. His healing power tends to work from the inside out. When it comes to the needs of those around you, do you tend to notice their spiritual needs or their physical needs first? What are some practical ways you can place your friends in the path of Jesus?

- **Is there anyone new to the office?**
 - Can you offer to take them to lunch with a group of coworkers?
 - If they are new to the area, would it be appropriate to offer to show them around or give them some tips?

- **Do you have people who report to you?**
 - How can you make sure you treat them with dignity?
 - How can you serve and bless them?

- **Are there other followers of Jesus in your workplace or school? What about people receptive to or curious about faith?**
 - How can you engage in conversation with them about faith?
 - Is it appropriate to start a small group or Bible study with them?

- **Who has upcoming events?**
 - Does someone in your office or class have upcoming doctors appointments, job interviews or tests?
 - How can you show that person you care?

- **Do you know of birthdays, anniversaries or other special events happening?**
 - How can you help someone celebrate?

- **Do any of your coworkers or classmates hang out together after work or school?**
 - How can you join in or initiate a gathering like that?

- **How can you support your coworkers or classmates outside of the normal context?**
 - Do you have a coworker who has a hobby that you can show up and support them in? Think of hobbies like music, sports, or even a coworker's children's activities.

- **For whom can you ask to pray?**
 - Can you ask people if they need prayer or talk openly about praying for them?

Lift Jesus Higher (John 3:30). No matter what do you do for a living, you exist to lift Jesus higher. Life was never intended to revolved around us; you are put in your spheres of influence to lift Jesus higher for the sake of those around you.

Be a Friend to Sinners (Luke 19:5-6). The heart of Jesus overflow with love toward every human being, regardless of their sin record. Jesus knows who we are, what we have done – both the good and the bad – and wants relationship with us (and those around us). Ask God to help you develop meaningful friendships with people who feel as though they are spiritual outsiders.

- **Is there someone who consistently goes out of their way to help or serve you?**
 - How could you acknowledge their kindness or express your thanks?
- **What other ideas do you have?**

SPHERE THREE: PAYING ATTENTION IN THE PLACE YOU PLAY

The following questions are meant to help you identify natural ways you can love and serve the people who “play” around you. Keep in mind there may be things you need to give in order to initiate a relationship, and some relationships may start by you asking for help from someone else.

Key Questions to Better Identify the People Near the Places You Play

Questions

Take a pen and/or journal and take time to fill in responses and names below.

Scripture Principles

Note: Now that you’ve seen a connection of Scripture principles & daily opportunities in the previous two spheres, it’s your turn! Fill in principles from the previous sections & Bible below!

- **Where do you frequently go?**
 - Think gyms, libraries, sporting events, music venues, restaurants, coffee shops, bars, bookstores, grocery stores, recreational sports leagues, retail stores, parks, etc.
 - How can you get to know the people you frequently see in these places?
- **Can you take opportunities to turn an insignificant encounter into something more?**
 - Think of someone bagging your groceries, making your coffee, running beside you on a treadmill, etc.
 - How can you engage and care for them? Can you ask how their day has been, or how long they have worked there?

- **Are there people you regularly see whom you can get to know better?**
 - For example, are there any people you see on a regular basis through the hobbies you enjoy? Who do you see the golf course, at the bridge club, in your sewing class, at your book club, or in your ultimate frisbee league?

- **Are there practical opportunities for you to purposefully engage people in these places you've named?**
 - Consider looking for ways to appreciate, engage with, and encourage people, even as you come and go
 - How can you make these places better for everyone?
 - How can you bless the people with whom you interact there?

- **For whom can you ask to pray?**
 - Can you ask people if they need prayer?
 - If you're praying for them, how can you talk openly and naturally about that for which you're praying on their behalf?

- **Is there someone with whom you have favor?**
 - For example, does the manager of the gym enjoy talking to you?
 - Are there simple ways you can encourage, bless, or serve those who have shown kindness to you?

- **Can you invite someone to join you in your spiritual community?**
 - If you have gotten to know someone at your local coffeeshop (or another place you frequent), can you naturally invite them into your community?
 - For example, can you invite them to eat dinner with you and your friends at church?
 - Have you invited them to join you for worship for Sunday?

- Is it appropriate to welcome them into your home to spend time with your friends, roommates, or family?
- **What other ideas do you have?**