



“Cheat Sheet”

Over the last couple of years, we’ve worked with a number of pastors who have had a desire to raise the value of literal neighboring in their churches. We’ve learned that there are a few common denominators among the churches that have been successful in creating a culture of neighboring. This “cheat sheet” outlines those best practices and summarizes much of what we have learned since writing the book.

Frequently Asked Questions

These are the 5 questions that most often surface when people are encouraged and challenged to engage their actual neighbors:

1. Jesus teaches that the command to “love your neighbor” is much bigger than just loving our literal neighbors. Isn’t the focus on our actual neighbors too narrow?

Clearly, the relationships that we have with our coworkers, the parents on our kids’ sports teams, and people that we encounter on the other side of the world are in fact "neighboring relationships." However, that doesn’t somehow make the person who lives across the street less of a neighbor. Often we live as if this is the case. You might be tempted to expand the focus of this initiative beyond literal neighbors. This can actually give people a loophole to avoid action and ends up diluting the power of this initiative. Most of us have good intentions about reaching out to others, but lack a clear process to do so. A singular focus on literal neighboring gives everyone a clear goal and a unified vision.

2. Why is there such a big emphasis on the Block Map?

Because it really works! The Block Map is a very simple tool that encourages people to take the next small step with those who live around them. For most, the next step is to learn all of the names of their immediate neighbors. When this happens, relationships often evolve organically. If churches are successful in getting believers to learn and use the names of their neighbors, the outcomes will be powerful and long lasting. The Block Map creates a mini-parish for everyone in your church has proven to be a powerful visual that helps people move beyond good intentions towards action.

3. Is this actually going to help people come to know Jesus?

Yes! Most believers lack significant relationships with people who do not know God. Neighboring is the antidote for the “Christian bubble.” Especially when it’s done with the right posture. We share what we love and are passionate about with our friends. When believers form real relationships with the people who live near them, conversations about God and Jesus often follow. Along the way, it’s important to remember that people who don’t yet know God are not potential projects, they are potential friends. There is a big difference between the two!

4. We already have a lot of programs in our church. How can I possibly add one more?

This isn't a stand-alone program that is going to compete with the vision of your church. In fact, raising the value of neighboring will actually enhance what your church is already doing. As the networks and social circles of your people expand, so too will the reach of your church. If you are successful in getting your people to be intentional with those their neighbors, it will create a framework that will bring life to everything else that you are doing.

5. Most of our people don't live in single-family suburban homes...will this work in my setting?

The beauty of neighboring is that it works for everyone, because everyone has neighbors. Literal neighboring works in gated communities and it works in the urban core. Yes, the dynamics are different for the person living in an apartment building versus the family that is living on a 5 acre piece of property. Thus, it is important for each leader to contextualize this message for their unique community.

Best Practices

This is a proven process for starting and sustaining a neighboring movement

PHASE ONE: LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Everything rises and falls on leadership. This is especially true for churches that have a desire to make neighboring a part of their DNA. It would be hard to over-state the importance of the lead pastor and the staff making a commitment to engage their own neighborhoods. The only leadership that is sustainable is leadership by example.

Step One = From the Top Down

The lead pastor and a few key leaders should start by doing the Block Map exercise and making a commitment to learn, retain, and use the names of their immediate neighbors. Ideally, this would be done among a group of 3-5 people at least 3 months before rolling it out with your entire staff. Check in regularly and process how well you are doing in learning names and taking the next step.

Step Two = Staff Challenge

Use 30 minutes in a staff meeting to cast the vision for literal neighboring. The Lead Pastor and key staff members should share some of what they have learned since doing the block map exercise. This 10 minute video is a tool designed to introduce ministry leaders to literal neighboring:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gz4Bagg-vw>

Give each staff member a block map fridge magnet and ask them to make a commitment to learn, retain, and use their neighbors names. Take a few minutes in your staff meetings over the next few months to do the block map exercise and share about successes and failures.

*** Phase one is critical. Pastors and staffs who engage their literal neighbors almost always see long-term results in their church. Senior leadership teams that fail to learn their neighbors' names seldom see long-term results.

PHASE TWO: LAUNCHING A NEIGHBORING INITIATIVE IN YOUR CHURCH

Step One = Art of Neighboring Sermon Series (3 weeks)

Week 1: Taking the Great Commandment Seriously

Week 2: The Time Barrier

Week 3: The Fear Factor

Free Sermon Outlines, Sample Sermons, Powerpoint Graphics, & other resources can be found on the resource page of artofneighboring.com. Feel free to download these and adapt them to fit your context.

Step Two = Small Group Study

This 6 week small group study can be used as a follow up 6 or 12 months after the sermon series or in conjunction with the in. It's designed to equip each small group member to take the next small step in their neighborhood. For churches that do not have small groups, this study is perfect for a beta test of the small group model.

PHASE THREE: FOLLOWING UP

If you want to make neighboring part of the DNA of your church, you should do these 3 things in after the sermon series:

Block Map Pop Quizzes

A couple of months after the initial sermon series, take 2 minutes of the announcement time to do a "block map pop quiz." Include the block map image in the bulletin and simply ask everyone to fill it in with the names of their neighbors. Then ask them to raise their hands if they have learned a name since you last talked about literal neighboring. You will be shocked at how many people have made progress. Doing a pop quiz every three months during the first year and twice a year during the second year will go a long way in communicating that this is a priority for you and your church.

Stories

Following the sermon series, capture the neighboring stories that emerge and share them from the front (either through videos or live interviews). It's best if these stories are from lay people, and are about doing little things that end up making a big difference – these are often the types of stories that make others think to themselves, "Hey, even I could do that." Also, the primary teachers should sprinkle their own neighboring stories throughout their sermons in order to keep this value in front of the church.

"This Counts"

It is important for the primary teacher(s) to be intentional and relentless in communicating that, "What we do in our front yards counts! It's real ministry...just like serving as an elder, in the children's ministry, or in the food bank." When you verbalized this you are affirming and validating the neighboring efforts that your people have made and are going to make in the future.

*** All of resources mentioned in Phase Two are available for free at: artofneighboring.com

*****For a discounted rate on book and block map fridge magnet orders, email us at info@artofneighboring.com**