

## **LeaderLessons 2018: Who Is My Neighbor?**

**#6** July, 2018

*We are glad that the Baptist State Convention of NC has adopted "Who is my neighbor?" as the theme for the convention's annual meeting this November. We believe this is evidence that God wants to remind us in A.D. 2018 of how important Christian neighborliness is to fulfilling the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Evan Blackerby, who serves as Senior Consultant for the Collegiate Partnerships Team at our state convention, wrote this LeaderLesson on how to go about being a good neighbor. Read, learn, share, and then practice these ways to care for those who come across our paths day by day – the neighbors around us.*

### **3 Ways to be a Good Neighbor**

Evan Blackerby

A few years ago, my family moved into a suburban neighborhood in central North Carolina. We loved the tree-lined streets, the warmth of the old homes and the idea that our kids would grow up in a picturesque neighborhood.

However, the real reason we moved to our neighborhood was to show our neighbors the love and compassion of Jesus. We moved hoping that God would be glorified and the neighbors might eventually become brothers and sisters in Christ.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus says that we are to "Go.... make disciples...." We often don't think of "going" right outside our front doors. Have you ever seen your neighborhood, apartment complex or wherever you live as a mission field? If not, it's easy to start. Here are three things that you can do this week to be a good neighbor and to be on mission in your neighborhood.

#### ***Walk***

When we moved into our neighborhood, one of our first commitments was to walk around the block every day just before or after dinnertime. We got to know more neighbors by doing this than by doing anything else. Pick a spot to walk regularly. If you live on a busy road, find a local park or high school track that people walk around. If you are unable to walk, you don't have to. You just need to get out and get among the "rhythms" of your neighborhood.

Pray for God to see where you live with new eyes. You might be surprised at what you find. You might notice people only go outside at certain times. You might run into people who clearly need to be prayed for. You might discover a hidden need. You may end up inviting someone to grab coffee. Whatever you find, continue praying and make it a regular part of your schedule.

#### ***Eat***

I eat every day and so do my neighbors. It seems obvious, but we started inviting neighbors over for a meal. Sometimes we would have big neighborhood breakfasts on Saturdays where each family would bring a side and we would cook the pancakes. This is a great way to naturally get to know folks in a deeper way. Good food and good

conversations go hand in hand. It's easy to invite others over for a meal or to go out to eat at local food spot if you don't feel like having them over. Pray that God leads the conversation and your time together.

### ***Welcome interruptions***

A mentor once told me that "Jesus always made time for interruptions." Interruptions are often opportunities in disguise. Does it feel like an interruption to help a neighbor move a couch? Or does it feel like an interruption to share a cup of sugar or an egg? This isn't rocket science, but if you fill up your calendar to the brim, you won't be open to interruptions (aka opportunities). That's where mission in the neighborhood lives — the unexpected conversations, meals and happenings. Don't miss the opportunities because you're too busy.

There's one more thing you can do to love your neighbors. You must love Jesus to love your neighbors. If you don't love Jesus, your neighbors will just be another task on your to-do list.

After all, the Great Commission of going and making disciples is linked to the Great Commandment, found in Luke 10:27. "And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.'"

You won't do it exactly like we do it in our neck of the woods, but no matter how you do it, if you aren't the missionary to the people in your neighborhood, who will be?

