



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

A 30-DAY DEVOTIONAL JOURNEY



DAY 1: MONDAY, MAY 14

LOVE GOD AND LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

By Gary Kendall, Director Love KC (lovekc.net)

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

MATTHEW 22:37-39

Jesus answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.”

Reflect

I wonder, what did Jesus mean by “neighbor”? Humanity in general? Or was he actually talking about the people who live close to me? And, if he was speaking of the people in my neighborhood, how would I go about loving them?

I’ve struggled with these questions because the answer is critical to get right. Jesus said all the law and prophets hang on these two great commandments: love God and love your neighbor.

I’ve come to understand that my neighbor is anyone with whom I live, work, study or play. The concept includes my next-door neighbors, but it extends beyond, to all those with whom I have community—my network.

Loving God and neighbor are connected. When I love God, God’s love flows back to me in a loving relationship. So it is natural that, in my relationships with others, God’s love continues to flow through me, reaching my network of friends and family.

I’ve found there are three simple, repeatable, things I can do to develop healthy relationships and demonstrate love for God and my neighbor. I pray, care, and share. These three actions become a lifestyle.

First, I regularly pray for my friends, neighbors, and extended family, by name. As I pray, I listen for God to speak to my heart. I don’t usually hear an audible voice in my ear, but over time I’ve come to discern God’s gentle

DAY 2: TUESDAY, MAY 15

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

By Brian Johnson, Associate Pastor, Neighborhood Impact, Westside Family Church, Lenexa, Kansas

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

LUKE 10:25-29

A teacher of the Law came up and tried to trap Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to receive eternal life?”

Jesus answered him, “What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?”

The man answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’”

“You are right,” Jesus replied; “do this and you will live.”

But the teacher of the Law wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?”

Reflect

Whenever I read this passage, I can easily put my own voice in place of that of the expert in the law. It’s all too familiar. Like many of us, this was a man who had spent his life diligently working to be perfect in every area. He was, at every turn, attempting to prove his righteousness based on his knowledge and understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Then one day he had an encounter with Jesus, and Jesus encounters rarely leave a person unchanged. It’s likely he knew the stories about Jesus that were circulating. Perhaps he was a bit jealous of the amount of attention Jesus was getting from the people. In the following conversation, the expert in the law wanted to justify his actions. I’ve often wondered if that should really say, *his inaction*.

In response to the man’s question, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan and exposes the man’s heart. Rather than walking away justified, confident

that he had fulfilled the invitation to love his neighbor as himself, the man faced a different reality. Jesus revealed that he did not love his neighbor as the Scriptures required. Instead of seeing every individual the way Jesus did, as the *Beloved*, the expert in the law most likely wanted to choose whom he would or wouldn't love. He probably preferred the easy route, "I love people who look and think exactly as I do." When your definition of *neighbor* is narrowed down to a mirror image of yourself, it's not difficult to follow through on loving them.

What we can clearly see from the passage is that the man's motivations were skewed. He was more focused on himself than on other people. Unlike the Samaritan, he was not making use of opportunities to show love to his neighbor.

Jesus reshapes the man's thinking as well as ours. To do what God desires, we cannot choose whom we love or don't love. Jesus puts the world in view and says, "Your neighbor is anyone in your path."

Respond

In our family we emphasize an expanding image of our spheres of influence. When we talk about loving our neighbors, we talk a lot about those who live next door. They are in our lives more than anyone else. Then we move outward to the people with whom we spend the next most time, those with whom we work or study. Finally, we talk about those we hang out with in our community.

We've asked Jesus to help us first see and then love well our neighbors where we live, work, study and play. Now we are also challenged to move even further and make use of opportunities to show love to anyone who crosses our path. I invite you to do likewise.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, open my eyes first to see people in my family, neighborhood, workplace or classroom. Then help me to love them the way you do.

WHAT DOES A GOOD NEIGHBOR DO?

By Matt Adams, Pastor of Community Impact, Westside Family Church, Lenexa, Kansas

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

LUKE 10:36-37; ACTS 13:44

And Jesus concluded, "In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbor toward the man attacked by the robbers?" The teacher of the Law answered, "The one who was kind to him." Jesus replied, "You go, then, and do the same."

The next Sabbath nearly everyone in the town came to hear the word of the Lord.

Reflect

Notices from the NextDoor app pop up frequently on my phone to let me know the latest news from my neighbors. I ignore many of the notices, but occasionally one will pique my interest and I'll click to dig into the details. In today's world of apps and various social media, news travels fast. Apps did not exist in the earliest days of the gospel, but the news was powerful enough to spread rapidly.

In Acts 13 Paul and Barnabas arrive in Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath, they go into the synagogue and are invited to speak. As Paul ends his message, the people beg him to come back the following week. On the following Sabbath "almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord" (NIV).

Can you imagine! A typical synagogue of 100-200 people heard Paul preach. The following week almost the whole city (approximately 20,000) came to hear the gospel message. The people of the synagogue must have spread the message in their neighborhoods and workplaces. And as a result, hundreds came to hear more about Jesus!

There are many ways to show kindness to your neighbor, but as you reflect on the Scripture passages for today, know that the greatest news you can offer is the news of Jesus. Your neighbor needs to hear this!

BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

By Pastor Gary Schmitz, Executive Director of Citywide Prayer Movement

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

GENESIS 12:1-3

The Lord said to Abram, “Leave your country, your relatives, and your father’s home, and go to a land that I am going to show you. I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse those who curse you. And through you I will bless all the nations.”

Reflect

Abraham was blessed by God to be a blessing to others. Through Abraham’s obedience to God and trust in God’s promises, he became a blessing to all people. Similarly, as we obey and trust God in our relationship with him, our lives should be a blessing to others.

Before we can bless others, we must be living a life of blessing. Then we can give to others out of our overflow. When God sees that someone gives freely out of love, God blesses them even more. The more we strive to bless others, the more God provides for us and opens more doors to accomplish his will (see Luke 6:38). This reflects the kingdom principle of sowing and reaping.

God has given everyone different talents and gifts to be used for the benefit of others. Stop and think for just a minute about the ways God has blessed you with unique talents and resources that you can use in creative ways to bless others. Are you using your blessings as God intends?

You can be a blessing to others by speaking kind words, volunteering in your community, donating to charity, giving food, sharing your testimony, praying for someone in need, listening to someone, showing people you value them.

Another wonderful Bible verse tells us that, “Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered” (Proverbs 11:25 NIV).

THE FIRST STEP IS THE HARDEST

By Mike Bickley, Lead Pastor at Olathe Bible Church, Olathe, Kansas

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

MATTHEW 28:19-20

[Jesus said:] “Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.”

Reflect

Sometimes the first step is the hardest.

Perhaps you’re facing a calculus test that covers so much it seems overwhelming. You have no idea where to start. But then it happens. You take the first step. You do your first practice calculus problem. Now you have started and are on your way. You have a foothold for conquering what was overwhelming. Maybe your retirement is so far away that opening a 401k seems ridiculous. The amount the charts show you will need looks astronomical. But then, you deposit the first \$50. The future is still nowhere near reality, but it’s also no longer just a dream. You have begun.

Once you start something, once you take tangible steps toward an objective, the overwhelming becomes doable and the astronomical becomes conceivable. But before you get moving, before you take that first step, the mountains of uncertainties, unknowns and what-ifs look impossible to overcome. They form an imaginary barrier that flashes like a neon sign saying, “This will never happen.”

Today’s reading reminds us that making disciples is our first and primary mission. But it won’t just happen. To accomplish this mission, we have to “go.” So, go. Get going. Do something. Take a step. Reach out to a lost friend. Invite your neighbors over for dinner. Follow up with that new Christian. Start a small group for seekers. Get going...today!

START WHERE YOU ARE

By Jim West, Lead Pastor, Colonial Presbyterian Church, Kansas City, Missouri

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

ACTS 1:8

[Jesus said:] “But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Reflect

If you feel overwhelmed by Acts 1:8, it is highly likely your discomfort pales in comparison to the initial reaction of the disciples who first heard these words spoken. There are two things to note:

- 1) Jesus did not charge his followers to “just do it.” He first promised them POWER unlike any power they had ever known - the power of the Holy Spirit which enabled them to witness effectively. Their testimony comes as a result of the Holy Spirit living in them.
- 2) Jesus did not say, “you *might* become witnesses.” Jesus said, “You *will* be witnesses.” If the Holy Spirit is in you as a follower of Jesus, you WILL be a witness.

We usually encounter the word “witness” in the language of law. We might imagine a person taking the stand in a courtroom swearing to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But we bear witness every day to those things we hold to be true regarding many subjects ranging from the best BBQ in Kansas City to the best fertilizer for our yards.

Our charge as Christians is to trust God and rely upon the Holy Spirit to help us bear witness to the most important, life-changing, personal and transformational truth in our lives...the good news about Jesus Christ.

The gospel can bring hope and healing to this broken world. And according to Acts 1:8, we need to start where we are—our Jerusalem. Start with your neighbors, your co-workers, and those who are in your sphere of influence.

PRAY—YOUR KINGDOM COME ON EARTH

By Pastor Gary Schmitz, Executive Director of Citywide Prayer Movement

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

MATTHEW 6:9-10

[Jesus said:]

“This, then, is how you should pray:

‘Our Father in heaven:

May your holy name be honored

May your Kingdom come;

May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Reflect

The disciples asked Jesus how to pray and he gave them a model prayer known as “The Lord’s Prayer.” It can be recited without thought or true petition of the heart, or it can guide our prayers, becoming a divine force unleashing God’s glorious blessing on earth! We can pray “Your kingdom come” without any regard for the intent of Jesus, or we may pray “Your kingdom come” and the world itself begins to change.

I want my prayers to bring change.

The word “kingdom” is translated from the Greek word *basileia*, which refers to “the reign of the king.” Our King is God himself. So, when we pray, “Your kingdom come,” we are asking God to establish his rule and his reign in a region or a territory.

There are two primary realms of God’s rule and reign. The first is personal. When we surrender our will to the reign of God in our lives, the Holy Spirit begins the powerful work of transforming us into the likeness of Christ. This is the most wonderful demonstration of God’s kingdom coming into our lives. As we commit to do God’s will and grow in Christ, he progressively conquers the various territories in our lives and we begin to experience the fullness of God and radiate God’s glory.

THE POWER OF PRAYING IN AGREEMENT

By Pastor Gary Schmitz, Executive Director of Citywide Prayer Movement

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

MATTHEW 18:19-20

[Jesus said:] “And I tell you more: whenever two of you on earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them.”

Reflect

This is one of my favorite Scriptures about the power of prayer. As Jesus walked the earth, he unlocked several amazing secrets to help us experience breakthrough in prayer.

Key in this verse is the word “agree.” In the original text, this is the Greek word *symphoneo*. From this word we get “symphony.” The secret Jesus reveals to his disciples is that when two or three or a hundred of us come into explicit agreement in prayer, and our petitions align with God’s will, our combined prayers arise before the throne of God as a wonderful symphony, a band of finely tuned instruments making a melodic sound.

When someone is leading in prayer, as they pray, I say in my heart or out loud, “Lord, I agree with this prayer.” In faith, I come into explicit agreement with the request and expect great results. Now imagine what can happen when a larger group of believers are all united saying, “Yes, Lord, I agree with this prayer!” We can be confident that God will respond.

Jesus says that praying in agreement is so powerful that his Father in heaven will grant “anything” we ask, according to God’s will. I believe individual prayer is very important and very powerful; however, Jesus tells us that when we agree in prayer we move God’s heart in a special way.

There is another piece of extraordinary information in this verse. Jesus says that he will be present when two or three believers come together in his name

LET THERE BE OPEN DOORS IN KANSAS CITY

By Troy Campbell, Pastor of New Life City Church, Kansas City, Missouri

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

REVELATION 3:8

“I know what you do; I know that you have a little power; you have followed my teaching and have been faithful to me. I have opened a door in front of you, which no one can close.”

Reflect

As I was growing up in Minnesota, a highlight of every summer was a trip to watch the Minnesota Twins play baseball in the Metrodome.

Often at the end of the game, the staff would open up multiple doors in a row for the fans to exit. Due to the air pressure used to hold up the dome, there was a vacuum effect that was strong enough to blow off one’s hat. Additionally, while the air was flowing and the people were moving through the doors, it was impossible for an individual to close those doors.

When I think of the message in our verse today, from Jesus to the church in Philadelphia, I think of a similar effect. Jesus had opened a door for the church to move forward in faith and they would not be defeated. They had suffered persecution at the hands of non-believing Jews for their faith in Christ, but they remained faithful to Jesus’s teachings.

It seems that the Philadelphian Church accomplished much, despite their size and or available resources. They persevered through great opposition and God rewarded them with great opportunity to carry out effective ministry. Like them, we should remain faithful to God’s work even when we face opposition. Those to whom we preach might reject our message, and might consider us outcasts, but they do not have the final word. If we persevere, we will not be defeated.

To be faithful to our own call to step through open doors, we must pray boldly, trust fully and obey God’s Word. As we pray about open doors, we should ask God to bring people into our path who need Jesus. Ask for “eyes to

see” the opportunity. After we pray and our faith has been strengthened, we must then obey. Today’s verse reminds us that the church in Philadelphia had “little power,” but they obeyed God’s Word and did not deny Jesus.

Our faith is strengthened when we spend time in the Scriptures, reading stories about the gospel being spread through open doors; when we listen to testimonies of victory; and when we rejoice with other Christians who faithfully walk through open doors.

With God’s help, you and I can walk through open doors, in obedience.

Respond

Identify possible “open doors” and your “steps of obedience.” Pray for God to give you at least one opportunity every day to share your faith. And hang on to your hat, because when God opens doors, no one can shut them.

Closing Prayer

Lord, please open my eyes to see and give me courage to step through open doors.

MISSING WHAT IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU

By Mike Bickley, Lead Pastor at Olathe Bible Church, Olathe, Kansas

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

JOHN 4:34-35

“My food,” Jesus said to them, “is to obey the will of the one who sent me and to finish the work he gave me to do. You have a saying, ‘Four more months and then the harvest.’ But I tell you, take a good look at the fields; the crops are now ripe and ready to be harvested!”

Reflect

My wife swears I am blind. I often stand in front of the refrigerator looking for something and can't find it. So, I call out to her. She comes over, moves one little thing, and there it is. My leftover sandwich from Subway! She says I could stand in front of the refrigerator forever, staring at it, but wouldn't see the sandwich! It never fails – I miss what I'm looking for though it's on the shelf right in front of me!

Sometimes we struggle to see the very thing that should be the most obvious. That isn't just true of a visit to the refrigerator. It is true of our mission to reach a lost and hurting world.

In John 4, Jesus teaches his disciples that the very people they want to find – those who want and need the Messiah – are everywhere, even in Samaria. This was the place where some Jewish people had mixed their religion with pagan Gentile religions. This religious “cocktail” was greatly offensive to Jews like Jesus's disciples, creating a major cultural division.

So, as the disciples travel through Samaria, they aren't looking for opportunities to see what God can do. They are just passing through. They can't see what is right in front of them – souls ready to be harvested. They are blinded by their religious expectations and prejudices. They are looking for “prepared” Jews. They cannot see that God has been working to prepare “rejected” Samaritans.

Can you see the fields that are ready for harvest where you live and work and play? Can you see God at work in people and places you may have written off? Have you already decided which of your family members and friends and team-mates and co-workers “aren’t interested” in the gospel? Could it be that the very thing you long for is right before your eyes?

Open your eyes! Look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest!

Respond

What person in your reach do you believe has the least interest in God? This week, pray for them by name. Consider engaging them by simply asking, “Do you see God at work in our world or your life in any way?”

Closing prayer

Father, open my eyes to see all the people you are already drawing to yourself. And help me not to let my expectations and prejudices get in the way of your work.

the diversity within the citywide body of Christ, and pray and help each other experience Jesus's love and compassion as his first disciples did.

Imagine a citywide Church of KC that is highly coordinated around Jesus and his mission...reaching toward its full potential. How beautiful that would be! Imagine the various denominations and ethnic groups working well together in efforts to share the love and message of Jesus. This would be an answer to Jesus's prayer. More people in the KC area would know that God the Father sent Jesus and that the Father loves them as he loves Jesus!

Yes, great things are already happening in and through the various local churches and ministries of KC, but I believe we are just seeing the tip of the iceberg. If we want our city to experience a greater realization of the love of God, then we must take Jesus's prayer for unity seriously and be a part of the answer to it.

Practically, this means churches serving together, followers of Christ focusing on Jesus and his mission more than theological differences, and intentionally spending time developing relationships with those who are different from us.

Respond

Identify a few Christ followers who are not a part of your church, and invite them to join you in praying about how you could serve the Lord together. Commit to following where the Lord leads.

Closing Prayer

Lord, may the diverse citywide Church of KC grow in love and encourage one another. Please help me to be a part of the answer to your prayer for perfect unity within the body of Christ.

BELIEVE GOD FOR 'GREATER THINGS'

By Pastor Robert Castile, Professor, Pastor, Kingston Church of the Nazarene, Kingston, Missouri

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

JOHN 14:12

[Jesus said:] “I am telling you the truth: those who believe in me will do what I do—yes, they will do even greater things, because I am going to the Father.”

Reflect

What if I told you, you were made for a great purpose, with all the tools necessary to accomplish your God-given task. Would you believe it?

By Jesus’s own admission, we can do “greater things” than he did. Whereas Jesus could only be in one place at a time, teaching about God’s kingdom to one group at a time, God’s people now spans the globe! By the power of the Holy Spirit, and with the resources available to us, we can have greater impact when we all play our part. The Spirit guides us, provides wisdom, and supplies our needs when we are called upon to do good works for God.

What is God calling you to do? Regardless of God’s calling on your life, accomplishing what God commissions you to do should be your priority. When you do that, you honor God.

According to Scripture, there are many ways to follow in Jesus’s footsteps to achieve “greater things.” One way is to be people of prayer. Prayer strengthens us to serve God and fulfill his calling on our lives. Through prayer, we can discern whom we must help and receive guidance on how we can care for their needs. God wants us to care for the needs of people, regardless of the risk, objection from others, or condemnation from the world. Doing what is right is what God requires.

People who benefit from our good works might ask, “Why did you help me?” This presents an opportunity to tell them how you’ve been empowered by God to help, and how great it is to share the hope you have with others.

PRAY CONTINUALLY

By Nancy Mitchell, Director, Caring for Kids Network

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

Pray at all times.

Reflect

Wherever trending topics are found, we see the word *mindfulness* as it applies to everyday routines and life. More than any time in history, we are continually bombarded with information and images from various sources. We can be very distracted as we try to process the information that speeds our way at astounding rates.

I sometimes feel exhausted at the end of the day by all the noise and messages that come my way. But then I am reminded that there is one thing that matters. One thing that brings clarity and peace amid the noise. God is my Father and I am his beloved child. God invites me into a dynamic, loving relationship with him. This is not a task to be accomplished at a certain point during the day. It is an invitation to a lifestyle of prayer as God's beloved child living in God's presence, and is the best invitation ever! I think this is what the apostle Paul meant when he wrote the letter to the Thessalonians instructing them to pray continually.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit is with us always and has given us the ability to hear and see what our Father is doing every day. God directs us and provides opportunities every day to express his heart to a hurting, broken world. It is our purpose and we don't want to miss it.

When we walk in continual prayer, we are also united by God's Spirit with our brothers and sisters all over the world. We may not meet face to face, but our prayers knit us together in the Spirit as we pray.

CARE IS LOVE IN ACTION

By Gary Kendall, Director Love KC (lovekc.net)

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

MATTHEW 25:35-40

[When the son of Man comes as King he will say:] “I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.’ The righteous will then answer him, ‘When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!’”

Reflect

In Jesus’s day, a leader wasn’t expected to serve. When people had power, wealth, health, ease of life and mobility, the assumption was that they were blessed by God and worthy of their possessions. They were clearly in a category above the average person.

In a similar way, there was an assumption that the least, the last, the unlovely, the orphan, the widow, and the weak were deserving of their fate or being punished by God. Not only this, but if you took actions to help the needy, it appeared you were making yourself equal to, or less than, those you were serving.

These were the prevailing thoughts back then. I wonder, *Do these sentiments prevail today?*

Jesus, speaking of himself, warns that when the Son of Man returns as King only those who have served the hungry, the thirsty, the needy, the stranger (who was likely a foreigner), and those in prison will be rewarded. Jesus himself had upended the status quo by being a servant leader. He demonstrated this kind of love in action when he was here on earth and

he calls us to follow his example. Jesus emphasized his point by saying, “Whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!” That thought alone is a game changer.

Jesus calls us not to discriminate in the way we treat others. When we adopt our neighborhoods to pray, care, and share, let’s keep this in the forefront of our minds. Let’s not decide who is worthy, who is “like me,” who is easy to serve or who might be a bonus to add to our circle of friends. Instead, let’s see Jesus in those whom we serve. Everyone is a child of God, so important to Jesus that he died for him or her. Anyone can be a trophy of God’s grace. We are who we are only by God’s grace. We have no right to judge.

I love the dignity Jesus gives to every human being. He gives each of us worth. We serve others in recognition of that truth. Let’s set aside the temptation to take the easy path and simply serve those who look like us. Sometimes we might get quicker results serving those who are comfortable with us or those with whom we already have relationship. If this happens, let God use it for his glory, but this approach should not be our only strategy. Be open to anyone God puts in your path.

Respond

Ask God today to do three things for you: 1) make you sensitive to any need you see; 2) serve others with a humble heart, as if you were serving Jesus; 3) give you strategic actions to reach those in your circle of influence. Then obey with joy and leave the results in God’s hands.

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank you that all people are equal in your sight. Help me be present in the moment with those around me, always ready to serve. To you, Jesus, goes all the credit.

BE THE HANDS AND FEET OF JESUS

By Belinda Kendall, Pastor, Associate at The Sending Project

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27

All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it.

Reflect

There's an old children's song that names different parts of the human body and tells how they're connected. The point of the song is that each part is important and serves a different purpose. In the verses that precede today's reading, the apostle Paul refers to parts of the human body and how they work together in order to explain the relationship among members of the body of Christ. He challenges Christ followers in Corinth to work together, valuing each member and the contribution each makes to building God's kingdom.

"*All of you,*" Paul says, speaking of the church collectively, "are Christ's body." Like the Corinthian church, all of us should realize that we are better together and that it will take the whole body of believers to get God's work done! Only when we coordinate and cooperate can we accomplish God's will and purpose. At times it seems that we are disconnected from one another, separated by color and culture, denomination and other differences. But we should not allow our differences to prevent us from working together to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

What if the church actually worked together to do what Jesus did? People would begin to see the love of God reaching out to them. It helps to look at what Jesus did with his hands and feet. Throughout Scripture we see Jesus reaching out and touching people! Whether it was Zacchaeus who was not well-liked, the woman at the well who was a social outcast, or the leper in need of healing, Jesus was up close and personal with those he encountered—and most often with those whom most people had no desire or intention to touch! Like Jesus, we should be ready to engage with those around us whom we know need Jesus's loving, healing touch.

KNOWN BY LOVE

By Sarah Zaske, Pastor of Spiritual Formation at Indian Creek Community Church, Olathe, Kansas

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

JOHN 13:35

“If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

Reflect

Trademarks are everywhere; each one saying something unique about the individual wearing it. Sport the swoosh and people know that you prefer the basketball court to the bowling alley. Wear a college logo and others know to whom your devotion (and possibly part of your bank account) belongs. Somehow, the green mermaid on the coffee cup has become a modern-day fashion accessory.

As Christians, we are called to wear a trademark; that trademark is love. In fact, Jesus says there is one way everyone will know we follow him; quite simply, if we have love for one another.

How does our love as Christians stand out from the rest? After all, it’s not uncommon for those we consider unbelievers to show love. In fact, philanthropy has become *en vogue* in recent years. What you may find is that while many people show love, they often do it expecting something in return: friendship love, familial love, sensual love, possibly even self-centered love. But the type of love that Jesus desires us to have is distinct – it’s agape love.

This love is selfless and sacrificial. It confounds the world because its hallmark is giving without getting. Serving without being served. Helping when it’s hard. Caring when it costs. Yet, it is this kind of love that will capture the attention of those around us and let them know that we are Jesus-followers.

This love was the foundation and the fuel of the early church. Tertullian, an early church scholar, recorded that the Roman pagans, in describing the early

church, exclaimed, “See how they love one another!” The church was busy loving, and the world was taking notice.

In the third century, a plague devastated the Roman Empire; thousands died daily. While most were fleeing and others were throwing their loved ones into the streets to avoid the plague of death, history records that the Christians relentlessly tended to the sick with no regard for their own safety, often becoming infected with the disease themselves. They laid down their lives in love – literally.

The reputation of these early Christians may be best summed up by Julian the Apostate, the last pagan emperor of Rome, who said, “These impious Galileans (*Christians*) not only feed their own, but ours also; welcoming them with their *agape*, they attract them, as children are attracted with cakes.”¹ Much to his disdain, Julian’s dying words were “*vicisi Galilaeae*,” meaning, “You Christians have conquered!”

As we reflect on the radical love of our predecessors, may our faith be stirred up for what God can do in this generation when we choose radical love, every day, regardless of the cost. As Christ’s love compels us, may we be known for our love, as they were known for their love.

Respond

Reflect on how you have shown love to those around you in the past week. What type of love were you exhibiting? Find one way to selflessly serve someone else with agape love today.

Closing Prayer

Lord, I know that I can only love because you first loved me. Today, reveal your love to me in greater ways, fill me with your love for others, and empower me to act in practical ways to love others as you love them.

1 Charles Schmidt. *The Social Results of Early Christianity*. (London: Wm. Isbister, 1889), 328.

GOD SO LOVED THAT HE GAVE

By Gary Kendall, Director Love KC (lovekc.net)

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

JOHN 3:16

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.

Reflect

Franklin Delano Roosevelt said years ago, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” This adage is so well known some people think it is Scripture. It’s hung around so long and been quoted so often because it is so true.

I see a connection between this quote and what some people have called the most memorized Scripture of all, John 3:16. Perhaps it is because loving and giving go together like caring and sharing.

Aren’t you glad God didn’t choose to love from a distance? The giving nature of love requires that it be personal to be considered love; otherwise we would choose a different word like, benevolence, generosity or kindness. Love implies personal connection.

When we set out to demonstrate love in our neighborhoods by the way we care, let’s not be afraid to get up close and personal. Of course, we should always be discreet and appropriate. Since we represent Jesus, we want to follow his example. The Spirit will give you discernment.

Love implies there will be sacrifice. If we adopt our neighborhood to pray, care, and share, we can expect there to be times that will test our commitment to love. We are tempted to put our needs first. We are inclined to cocoon in our safe home environment. Inviting others in is a risk. We don’t want to be used or taken advantage of, and there are times when we don’t know if our attempts to love and give will be misunderstood. Our time is precious and limited. We could rationalize these thoughts and feelings and conclude we should play it safe.

WEEP WITH THOSE WHO WEEP

By Sarah Zaske, Pastor of Spiritual Formation at Indian Creek Community Church, Olathe, Kansas

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

JOHN 11:35-36

Jesus wept. "See how much he loved him!" the people said.

Reflect

Sadness often wants to hide. If you feel like you are going to cry, you may retreat into another room to 'get it together' so that no one sees you sad. Maybe you isolate from relationships or social functions on days when you are feeling down. If you do cry in front of someone, chances are that you will apologize for it! Yet, the blessing of Jesus is upon those who mourn (Matt. 5:4).

While grief can be considered the *internal* feeling of sadness over suffering and pain, mourning is the *external* expression of that sadness and pain. Jesus calls us to mourn. We are to take our pain and let it be known to others. If we do this, we are given the promise of comfort.

In this passage of Scripture Jesus takes it a step further. He doesn't just tell us to mourn, but he exemplifies this! Lazarus had died, and Mary collapsed at Jesus's feet in tears. What was Jesus's response? John 11:33 notes, "Jesus saw her weeping, and he saw how the people with her were weeping also; his heart was touched, and he was deeply moved." Jesus was experiencing grief. However, today's reading records that when Jesus went to the place where Lazarus was buried, "Jesus wept." This was Jesus making his pain known.

This act is puzzling. If Jesus knew that momentarily he would miraculously raise Lazarus from the dead, why would he cry and mourn at his tomb? We may never fully know, but I believe this is the compassion and empathy of Jesus at its best. Jesus wept with those who wept, literally. In doing so, he exemplified how we should love people amid their pain. Jesus showed compassion and care to others, not just through words, but also through tears. This gives us the freedom to do the same.

Respond

Think about someone you know who is currently in a painful season of life. Reach out to them today. Don't feel the need to force words or solve their problems; instead remember that the best gift you can give them is your presence. If tears come as a result, don't hold back. Remember that tears are a powerful way to communicate the love of God to others.

Closing Prayer

Lord, I cling to the promise that those who mourn will be comforted. Help me to mourn the pain in my life and, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the community around me, bring comfort. Give me eyes to see how I can join you in comforting those around me using not just words, but also emotional expression to show the love and compassion of Jesus.

HELP OTHERS WITH THE HELP YOU RECEIVED

By Gary Kendall, Director Love KC (lovekc.net)

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

2 CORINTHIANS 1:4

He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God.

Reflect

Not everyone is hardwired to be sensitive and caring. It's fair to say, caring comes more naturally to some than others.

If you're among the "others," what can you do if you want to adopt your neighborhood with the prayer, care and share lifestyle? Are you disqualified? No.

You can start by giving to others what you have received. Has anyone encouraged you when you were down? How did they do it? What did they say? Did someone show they care by meeting some need? Could you do the same for someone else? Was there a time that someone prayed for you, gave to you, stood in for you or lightened your load? Remember how much that meant, and offer yourself to others.

Don't give yourself an out just because you don't feel caring at the moment. It is easier to act your way into a feeling than to feel your way into an action. It's amazing how many times, when you do the right thing, your feelings follow.

You didn't get where you are today on your own. You had parents, mentors, coaches, teachers, pastors, friends, family, classmates and co-workers. Which ones stood out to you? Probably the ones who cared! Go and do the same.

The Holy Spirit will join you in the effort. If you take the first step, the Spirit will be revealed through you. Let go of having to be perfect or say just the right thing. The old saying is true, "actions speak louder than words."

ON MISSION FOR JESUS!

By Mike Bickley, Lead Pastor at Olathe Bible Church, Olathe, Kansas

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

JOHN 20:21-22

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Reflect

I felt really important although I didn’t think what I was asked to do was significant. I just wanted others to find *who* I had found – Jesus. And I wanted them to find *what* I had found – a new way of living! The way Pastor Ken described the task, I believed I was the right man for the mission.

No, I wasn’t headed to the jungles of Africa. Pastor Ken had asked me, a new believer from a broken home who had just found Jesus, to help manage crowd control for the junior high ministry at church. I was being sent to a group of kids who looked happy and wealthy and well put together on the outside.

He told me that the task was important and a good fit for me. Why? Because he knew I had come from the same kind of home as did these kids. He knew I could see past the façade of perfection that was presented. I could see that their lives were not all good. He knew that I knew their struggles with abuse, drugs, loneliness, heartache, shame, guilt, anger, bitterness.

I had experienced the power of the gospel – the death, burial and resurrection of Christ – and all that came with it. And now I was God’s agent to do God’s work. I was being sent as Jesus had come to me. And in the next couple of months, I saw dozens of kids put their faith in Jesus. Watching God change them changed me.

You and I are not left here merely to enjoy life. No. Right now, we are on a mission. We are sent into the world to bring the hope and help of Jesus to the lost and broken and forgotten. As the Father had sent Jesus, now Jesus sends you and me!

TELL YOUR STORY

By Jim West, Lead Pastor, Colonial Presbyterian Church,
Kansas City, Missouri

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

MARK 5:18-19

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had had the demons begged him, “Let me go with you!” But Jesus would not let him. Instead, he told him, “Go back home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how kind he has been to you.”

Reflect

I love Jesus ... a lot. Jesus saved me; Jesus rescued me; Jesus set me free from the tyranny of my sin; Jesus empowers me; Jesus establishes my very identity; Jesus rocks! I look forward to the day when I will be with Jesus every day, all day, for all eternity.

For many believers, the greatest joy in this life is being with Jesus in worship and being in fellowship with other believers. Truth be told, those of us who are a bit older regularly long for the day when we can leave this cold earth and rest in his loving arms. This is why I relate to the Gerasene demoniac whom Jesus set free.

This guy was a tortured soul, to say the least. He was an outcast, totally isolated, and enslaved. When Jesus casts out the legion of demons that had tortured the man, all the demoniac wants to do is be with Jesus for the rest of his life. He has become a *fan* of Jesus! But note, Jesus isn't looking for fans; he is looking for witnesses. Jesus isn't looking for groupies; he's looking for ambassadors. Thus, Jesus denies the Gerasene's request to “go with” him. There will be time for that in the life to come. For now Jesus says, “Go back home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how kind he has been to you.”

To love Jesus, to truly express our gratitude for what he has accomplished in bringing us salvation and liberation, is to tell others everything the Lord has

THE BEST GOSPEL IS NOT YOUR LIFE

By Mike Bickley, Lead Pastor at Olathe Bible Church, Olathe, Kansas

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

ROMANS 10:14

But how can they call to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed?

Reflect

The gospel is not just a way to live, it is a message. It is truth that needs to be spoken and shared. It is concepts and principles grounded in the historical work of Jesus Christ. Without the message, our actions can be misconstrued as “do good” moralism.

People need to know the message of the gospel. We were lost and sinful and unable to please God. We could not earn God’s favor or make our way to him. So God sent Jesus to earth. He came to us, not only to give us an example to follow, but to offer a sacrifice for sin. Jesus was that sacrifice. He died on a cross for our sins, in our place. And then he did the amazing – he rose from the dead! He proved his power over sin and its bondage. He proved that he can give us new life. And by trusting in what he has done, by believing he did it for us, we can be saved, set free from the bondage of our sins.

It is not enough to “live” the gospel. It must be spoken. It must be shared. And when we share the message, God does the unimaginable. God takes the simple proclamation of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done and transforms hearts and souls by faith.

For people to believe, the message must be shared.

Respond

Ask God to help you be bold in spreading the gospel. If you do not feel confident sharing the gospel, ask your pastor or small group leader to help you practice and learn how to simply share the hope of Jesus.

Dotted lines for writing.

OFFER LIFE-GIVING WATER

By Jason Reiswig, President of Missions in the Amazon

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

JOHN 4:7-10

A Samaritan woman came to draw some water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink of water.” (His disciples had gone into town to buy food.) The woman answered, “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan—so how can you ask me for a drink?” (Jews will not use the same cups and bowls that Samaritans use.) Jesus answered, “If you only knew what God gives and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would ask him, and he would give you life-giving water.”

Reflect

In the Gospel of John, chapter four, Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman and asks her for a drink of water. His request was controversial on several fronts. But Jesus explains his purpose and tells her everything she’s ever done in a way that’s so loving and genuine that she fervently invites everyone to come and see the man who must be their long-awaited Savior!

As I look to emulate Jesus, I often ask myself a few questions throughout the day: Do I live in a way that sparks people’s curiosity? Does my life attract positive attention? Does it cause people to want to know me? To spend time with me? To learn from me?

Being an introvert, I could easily retreat to a life surrounded by only close friends and family. I could convince myself that I would be bothering people if I start up a conversation. But as my relationship with Jesus has grown through prayer and study, I’ve experienced how rewarding it can be to live a life of intentionality that exudes the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc.).

Once someone takes note, I simply tell my story and describe what Jesus has done for me, how he has given me peace, forgiveness and eternal life. I explain how God has given me a purpose to pursue relationships with people in order to reveal God’s love to them (without judgment).

WITNESSES

By Randy Petersen, American Bible Society

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

ACTS 1:6-8

When the apostles met together with Jesus, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time give the Kingdom back to Israel?”

Jesus said to them, “The times and occasions are set by my Father’s own authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be. But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Reflect

You can’t blame them for asking the question. The disciples had just gone through a crash course on the kingdom of God—forty days of intensive instruction with their resurrected leader. “Enough about treasures in fields and merchants with pearls, Jesus! Tell us plainly: Is this when the revolution finally begins? Is this when we take power?”

As usual, Jesus answered more than the question asked. Would there be a revolt against the Roman oppressors? Not just yet. But there would be a worldwide upheaval beginning right here in Jerusalem. These disciples might not take power by force, but they would receive it by faith.

The Jerusalem-Judea statement of Jesus could be seen as a strategic game plan, with concentric circles on a map eventually covering the whole world. But there’s an outlier. Samaria was more than just the next country over. It was the place of the outcasts, the half-breeds, the heretics. For racial and religious reasons, Jews did not have dealings with Samaritans. And yet, from the start of the Christian mission, they were an integral part of the game plan.

We need to remember this in our own outreach efforts. Who are the Samaritans for us? What people groups do we generally avoid? What groups

scare us? What people do we look down on? These are the very people to whom we will communicate the reality of our risen Lord.

“You will be *witnesses* for me,” Jesus said. That’s a courtroom word, then and now. A witness does not seek to persuade, cajole, preach, or dazzle. A witness tells the truth about what he or she has experienced.

As we seek to share God’s love with KC and the whole region, truth-telling is our task. We’re not selling time-shares here. We’re sharing reality. We don’t need to prove that we’re right and everyone else is wrong. We just need to tell the truth about Jesus and what he has done for us.

Respond

Who is in the “Samaritan” area for you? Are there individuals or groups you generally avoid? How can you show them God’s love?

Closing Prayer

Lord, fill me with the power to exude your love to those around me. Help me testify truly about what you’ve done for me.

GENTLENESS AND RESPECT

By Lydia Sheldon, American Bible Society

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

1 PETER 3:15-16

But have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honor him as Lord. Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect. Keep your conscience clear, so that when you are insulted, those who speak evil of your good conduct as followers of Christ will become ashamed of what they say.

Reflect

In a dark courtyard, Peter is terrified that people will find out he's a follower of Jesus. Not the chief priest, not the captain of the Roman guard, but a servant girl asks, then accuses Peter of being in Jesus's camp. "I do not know this man of whom you speak," Peter insists (Mark 14:71 ESV). And then, weeps bitterly. A much older Peter writes with compassion to dispersed Jesus-followers: Don't be afraid to tell people you're with Jesus. Peter knows from experience the pressure that can occur in the moment, maybe leaving you with a guilty conscience. That feeling of not knowing what to say, or of having said the wrong thing. That nervous conviction that if you align yourself with Jesus, you'll be misunderstood. That urge to defend yourself, to protect your reputation. That sinking knowledge that you were embarrassed of Jesus.

For these situations, Peter advises: "Have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honor him as Lord." Be prepared to explain, even defend, your hope of what may seem preposterous—an eternal inheritance. And, do it with gentleness and respect.

Before we get to that moment—that conversation which might happen when and where we least expect—we need to be prepared. We won't be so concerned with what people think of us if we *are* concerned with Jesus's authority. "Honor Christ the Lord as holy," Peter says (verse 15 ESV), knowing that to be convinced of Jesus's holiness and power is to be invincible.

It also precludes any need to be right. Honoring Christ the Lord as holy means we don't need to prove a point. We don't need to win, because it's not about us. With a "tender heart and a humble mind" (1 Peter 3:8 ESV), we're free to listen.

Imagine what "gentleness and respect" would look like in conversation with a co-worker, friend, or someone you're sitting next to on a plane. (God has worked through such conversations countless times!) You could start by listening. You might even spend most of the conversation doing just that... listening. You could ask questions, and listen some more. Keep in mind there's no rush to give the right answer. You could admit that you've had doubts, too. You could talk about God who "loved the world so much" that he sent Jesus to die for us (John 3:16). God's Spirit would be at work in you as you gently, respectfully, describe your hope. You have nothing to fear, and everything to offer.

Respond

What neighbor, friend, relative, or coworker needs to hear about your hope? Could you gently and respectfully open a conversation with questions about what *they* believe and let the Spirit guide you from there?

Closing Prayer

Lord, fill me with hope in you. Give me opportunity to talk about this hope. Help me to respond with gentleness and respect toward those who are curious about you.

OUT FOR A WALK

By Randy Petersen, American Bible Society

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

COLOSSIANS 4:5-6

Be wise in the way you act toward those who are not believers, making good use of every opportunity you have. Your speech should always be pleasant and interesting, and you should know how to give the right answer to everyone.

Reflect

There are times when you have to go out for a walk. Maybe you've been cooped up in your home or office all day, sneaking peeks out the window. You need that breath of fresh air, so you stroll down to the corner market for a tasty snack.

That's the feeling we find here in the last chapter of Colossians. Up till now, this epistle has been an inside job, dealing with false teaching inside the church and proper behavior toward other believers, but here Paul turns his eyes outward.

A literal rendering of the Greek for verse 5 would read, "Walk around in wisdom in front of those who are outside." The smoother modern translations clarify that this is wise *living* in the sight of those who are outside *the church*, but the outdoorsy theme continues in the following phrase. Making the most of opportunity is literally "buying up the moments," as if we're at the market when something goes on sale. Verse 6 invites us to speak with grace and flavor (literally, "prepared with salt"), and to respond properly to these outsiders, cutting through the distractions to discern what each person really needs.

This passage can guide us as we seek to share the good news of God's love with our neighbors in Kansas City. Our interactions should be "pleasant and interesting," characterized by wisdom and insight. A one-size-fits-all evangelism approach might not do the trick. We need to discern the question in the heart of each person, and respond appropriately in the moment.

DON'T JUST GO TO CHURCH, BE THE CHURCH

By Troy Campbell, Pastor of New Life City Church, Kansas City, Missouri

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

ACTS 2:46-47

Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

Reflect

The book of Acts narrates the explosion of the church. It is a documentary about the gospel of Jesus filtering out through the known world. If we could go back 2,000 years and take a snapshot of the church, it would require a panoramic view to see the widespread impact of the church in several regions within a short time.

Here's why; the activity of the early church was never confined to four walls. Followers of Jesus went beyond their comfort zones to communicate the message of hope and healing for all – the death and resurrection of Jesus.

This gospel changed the course of history because believers in Jesus lived out their faith in the market place, among their family and friends, and even in the presence of their enemies.

As we examine the church in its infancy, we discover that God used ordinary people like you and me, and we get excited because God has not changed.

So what is true about the early Christians?

The believers gathered to pray as they anticipated an extraordinary work of God. They were empowered by the arrival of the Holy Spirit. Peter and the other apostles proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus boldly and fearlessly. And when we read beyond the verses for today, we will discover that the early Christians made other disciples exponentially.

What does this mean for us today?

Dotted lines for writing.

YOU ARE EMPOWERED AND COMMISSIONED

By Gary Kendall, Director Love KC (lovekc.net)

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

LUKE 10:8-9

Whenever you go into a town and are made welcome, eat what is set before you, heal the sick in that town, and say to the people there, 'The Kingdom of God has come near you.'

Reflect

Jesus announced the coming of the kingdom of God, then told his disciples to do the same. With the kingdom comes authority to carry on Jesus's mission, healing the sick and bringing God's rule into the lives of the people we meet.

As we observe the needs of those around us, we should remember that we are empowered and commissioned to bring God's kingdom into our neighborhoods. We carry the name of Jesus. God's Spirit lives within us, and we are called to represent Jesus wherever we go.

In preparation to serve others, a good question to ask ourselves is this: what is it that God wants me to do to allow his kingdom to be present and available? Invite God to reveal himself in the moment. Allow the Spirit to keep you in step with what God wants to accomplish. If we point people to Jesus and invite the Spirit to lead and direct those encounters, people will know "the kingdom of God has come near."

As I pray for people, I keep in mind that God's timing and plan are best. So, it is always appropriate to pray, "Not my will, however, but your will be done" (Luke 22:42). We can do what Jesus did and leave the results to God. We must remember, this is not about us. We don't need a particular result to validate who we are or who Jesus is. All the glory and all the power belong to God.

We can always pray, live, and give for Jesus in any situation. We don't have to take a back seat to what the enemy is doing. We don't need to fear anyone. If we give God a chance to make his presence known, God will. We can pray for this with confidence.

PRAYING ONSITE WITH INSIGHT

By Pastor Gary Schmitz, Executive Director at Citywide Prayer Movement

Pray

Lord, thank you for the life-changing power of your Word. Help me to obey your Word, so that my ways may please you and lead others to you.

Read

JOSHUA 1:3

As I told Moses, “I have given you and all my people the entire land that you will be marching over.”

Reflect

In many communities around the world, God is helping Christians to pray as they walk through their neighborhoods and workplaces, sensing the burdens and needs of the people. This activity may be described as “prayer-walking.” As we walk, we ask God to open our hearts to see others as God sees them, and we ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the unique needs so we can pray more specifically about them.

Prayer-walking is a great way to get out into your neighborhood or into your city and become engaged with those around you. You will also get some exercise and are likely to have special encounters with Jesus, for he is always there ready to meet great needs and restore the broken.

There are several things to note as you prayer-walk in your city:

- You can walk and pray alone, but it’s better to pray with a partner. A friend and I recently went on a 45-minute prayer-walk in a poverty-stricken neighborhood. We made observations and prayed in silence. We encountered eight abandoned properties which had become homes for people in desperate need of shelter. When we returned to the church, we shared our experience of being deeply impacted as we prayed onsite with insight from God’s heart, and then we prayed for another hour. I will never forget that experience.
- Always invite the Spirit of God to walk with you, guide your steps, and inspire your prayers. Allow the Holy Spirit to help you see with God’s eyes and to pray with God’s heart for others.

- Carry Scripture with you. Pray directly from the Bible. Claim God’s promises and pray in faith that God will fulfill each one, there on location.
- Pray with purpose. Pray for specific needs of the people and places, as you walk.
- Don’t make a big show as you prayer-walk. You can pray softly. Someone once said, “You can be on scene without making one.” Your prayers are powerful whether said out loud or as a quiet whisper.

Allow God to do a deeper and deeper work in you as you pray about and surrender to God the overwhelming needs of others.

Respond

Prayer-walk your mission field (your neighborhood or workplace). Allow God to speak to you as you speak to God about those he loves.

Closing Prayer

Lord, give me courage to step out of my comfort zone and into my neighborhood and community to serve the people and pray for their vast needs.

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.