

My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

Prayer of Confession:

Holy God, we pray that You would form us into the kind of people who are willing to love our neighbors, however we might define "neighbors." Help us to overcome our prejudices, our fears, our busyness, and our pride so that we can truly love others in the way that You love us. We pray in the name of Jesus, the Messiah. Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Do you have friends in your neighborhood who you are so close with that you can run in and out of their house, and they can run in and out of your house, like they live there? Believe it or not, Jesus wants us to view EVERYONE as if they were our close neighbor! Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan showed that sometimes even people who are very different from us can treat us with love—and Jesus wants to make sure we know to do the same thing for them! Think about how you can show love to a neighbor, maybe even one who seems "different" from you, this week!

MONDAY 8.24.20 **Leviticus 19:9-10; 18; 33-34**

"Leviticus" means "for the Levites" ... and the book of Leviticus was to provide written instruction for the priests and Levites of ancient Israel for the ordering of worship and daily life. As such, it contains many instructions that are hard for people today to read—largely because they involve things we don't do anymore! Leviticus, for example, provides details about how to administer ancient Israel's rituals of animal sacrifice. Modern readers are often jarred to find the juxtaposition of obscure purity rules with timeless commandments like 19:18, "love your neighbor as yourself." While Jesus affirmed that this is one of the most important commandments, we see in today's other verses that the basis of the definition of "neighbor" that Jesus elaborates on in the parable of the Good Samaritan was already there in Leviticus. Leaving gleanings for the poor is a way to love them, and treating foreigners as equally deserving of justice and good neighborly relations shows them love, too. God gives practical guidance in Leviticus for what "love your neighbor" looks like in the real world.

- What guidance do you seek in determining what "love your neighbor" looks like?
- How do you treat the poor and the foreigner?

TUESDAY 8.25.20 **Deuteronomy 18:1-8**

The Law of Moses required all priests to be descendants of Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, all the tribes received a geographical region of the Land to settle ... except the tribe of Levi. The tribe of Levi was set apart to serve in the role of priests for Israel, or to serve supporting functions in Temple maintenance and worship. As such, they had no land on which to raise crops or livestock, so they lived off specified portions of the peoples' required animal and grain sacrifices, as well as tithed contributions of wine, oil, and wool. Deuteronomy explains why priests and Levites were supposed to be highly respected individuals in Israel. They were charged with the divine responsibility of keeping God's House (the Temple). This was a divinely appointed task, and the Israelites were to honor them as God's appointed servants. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, these men appointed to do God's work seem oblivious to the broader meaning of the Levitical law. They are charged with upholding Israel's law, but clearly do not think the Samaritan is a "neighbor" God expects them to treat with love.

- How might the priest and Levite have rationalized their behavior? When, and how, do you?

WEDNESDAY 8.26.20 **Ruth 1:1-18**

The book of Ruth raises significant questions over who, exactly, should be treated as a "neighbor." Ruth is from Moab, and the Moabites were ancient enemies of Israel. Still, when a famine drove the Israelite Abimelech to Moab, his sons married Moabite women. And when those sons and their father all died, the widow, Naomi, decided to return to her home in Bethlehem. Knowing her daughters-in-law might well be rejected in her homeland, she lovingly suggests they remain behind to start new families. While Orpah takes that route, Ruth's love for Naomi keeps her firmly attached to her. She, effectively, exchanges the ethnicity and the religion of her people for Naomi's. In the remainder of the book, we see a picture of what a society that lived by the Levitical laws might look like. The foreigners are welcomed and valued; though Naomi and Ruth are poor, the landowner Boaz goes over-the-top with allowing them to take the gleanings from his land; and the elderly and easily discarded Ruth is cared for by her relatives back home. People act toward each other the way they should.

- How hard do you think it was for Ruth to stay with Naomi?
- Where might you be able to demonstrate this kind of love?

THURSDAY 8.27.20 **Luke 9:51-56**

In our study of unity and order. We spent several days last week looking at the deep division between Jews and Samaritans. Today's short passage shows us, perhaps even more clearly, the depth of emotion attached to the animosity. It is significant that this story shows up in Luke's Gospel in the chapter immediately preceding the story of the Good Samaritan—it shows us that even Jesus' disciples were ready to "call fire down from heaven" to consume the Samaritans, simply because they were unwilling to welcome Jesus and the disciples into their homes! Just as we saw last week the argument between Jews and Samaritans over the proper mountain to worship on, the reason for the Samaritans' unwillingness to receive Jesus is because they know he is headed for Jerusalem, the rival to the Samaritan center of worship! Jesus reprimands the disciples severely for their rather violent suggestion, and simply moves on to another city. The story sets the stage for the radical implication that a Samaritan might actually be a better neighbor to an injured and dying man than one of their own priests or Levites. Yet the disciples were ready to wipe out an entire village of them.

- What current examples of the disciples' attitude can you think of? Who is it hardest to love as a neighbor?

FRIDAY 8.28.20

Acts 4:1-22

After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the disciples went around in Jerusalem preaching and healing in Jesus’ name. When the priests, captain of the guard, and Sadducees got wind of their preaching, they put them in prison. We might expect Peter and John to have been terrified at the prospect of being imprisoned by the very people who had Jesus put to death, anticipating a similar potential punishment, but in today’s story we see them boldly proclaiming the same message of Jesus’ Resurrection, and of Resurrection power, to these leaders! The disciples displayed neighborly love to the crippled man who they healed, and they display love for even those who were complicit in Jesus’ crucifixion by offering them the opportunity to receive the gospel. And the “Jesus movement” - the movement of neighborly love—that the disciples were just launching, had reached enough momentum to make it impossible for those leaders to punish the disciples! “Everyone was praising God for what had happened!”

- Think about the fact that John was one of the two who wanted to rain down fire on the Samaritans, and the turnaround in his attitude. What do you attribute that to?
- Do you believe the Holy Spirit can do the same for you?

SATURDAY 8.29.20

1 Thessalonians 5:12-24

This week’s sermon message made the point that sometimes the hardest neighbor to love is the guy next door. When Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica, he wrapped up his letter by asking them to “respect those who are working with you, leading you, and instructing you. Think of them highly with love because of their work.” From the remainder of the passage, we can infer that some people were not treating these leaders and instructors with neighborly love, to the point of being disorderly. It sounds like this failure to love has resulted in the discouragement of these leaders. Paul then recommends specific actions that the Thessalonians can take that will model “neighborly love” - comfort those who have become discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone, don’t repay wrong with wrong, rejoice, give thanks, and pray. Watch for the movement of the Holy Spirit among you, and follow His lead. Sometimes, indeed, it can be hardest to be neighborly with those closest to us—and we need to behave with intentionality.

- Who is the “guy next door” you find hard to love?
- How can you demonstrate neighborly love for them?
- Are you willing to take those steps?



Daily Study Guide

August 23-29, 2020

Sermon Series: Who is My Neighbor?

Week One: “The Guy Next Door” - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, August 23: Luke 10:25-37

“A legal expert stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to gain eternal life?’ Jesus replied, ‘What is written in the Law? How do you interpret it?’ He responded, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.’ But the legal expert wanted to prove that he was right, so he said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ Jesus replied, ‘A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He encountered thieves, who stripped him naked, beat him up, and left him near death. Now it just so happened that a priest was also going down the same road. When he saw the injured man, he crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. Likewise, a Levite came by that spot, saw the injured man, and crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. A Samaritan, who was on a journey, came to where the man was. But when he saw him, he was moved with compassion. The Samaritan went to him and bandaged his wounds, tending them with oil and wine. Then he placed the wounded man on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day, he took two full days’ worth of wages and gave them to the innkeeper. He said, “Take care of him, and when I return, I will pay you back for any additional costs.” What do you think? Which one of these three was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?’ Then the legal expert said, ‘The one who demonstrated mercy toward him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’” (CEB)

Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Steve Myers
- Robin Norton
- Ted and Mary Coleman
- Michael Fink
- Stephen Rye
- Glenn Randolph
- George Crow
- Ken Mann
- Carolyn Mann
- Doug Nash
- Charlotte Ottley
- Vicki Robinson
- Delaney Digman
- Bill Reichter
- Bob Vincent
- Peggy Cruse
- Bill Cruse
- Sophia Miller
- Judy Hoffman
- Nini Schneider

Everyone affected by the COVID-19 outbreak

Our community, country and world

The Fillinger and Hearty families on the loss of Jerry Fillinger

The Hosp family on the passing of James Hosp's father

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org