

# Who's next?



#### ORIGINAL STUDY GUIDE:

Use this tool to not only accelerate your own spiritual growth but also to make an impact in someone else's life! Take two; pass one on or start a small group within your community of friends by setting a weekly time and place to meet for a Bible study.

WEEK 2:  
Won't You Be My Neighbor?

## From...

1968 until 2001, an ordained minister known to millions of children as "Mr. Rogers" wowed television audiences by the sheer simplicity of his daily PBS broadcasts. Each of the 998 programs began the same way, with Fred Rogers walking home, changing his shoes, and donning a zippered cardigan while singing his theme song, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" Each episode sought to help children overcome common fears or insecurities while teaching them to love themselves and love others. During both Gulf Wars (the second one coming after his death in 2003), PBS ran a message from Rogers assuring his audience that all children "in the neighborhood" would be well cared for. Even in times of national crisis, Rogers' message of "loving your neighbor" never changed!

## Be Honest.

1. What was your favorite television show as a child? Why did you like it so much?

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# Say What?

Once while Jesus was traveling from town to town, He was approached by a man who was considered an expert in religious law. The expert, intent on testing Jesus, asked Him, *“What should I do to inherit eternal life?”* After a brief discussion, both men agreed that the answer was contained in two key Old Testament verses: *“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind”* and *“love your neighbor as yourself.”* Suddenly struck by the magnitude of these directives, however, the expert responded with one final question: *“Who is my neighbor?”*

## Read Luke 10:30-37 [NLT]:

30 Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. 31 “By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. 32 A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. 33 “Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. 34 Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’ 36 “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked. 37 The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.” Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

WEEK 2: *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*

# Say What?

2. What happened to the Jewish man while he traveled?

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3. How did the first two men respond to the plight of the wounded Jewish traveler?

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4. How did the Samaritan respond to the plight of the wounded Jewish traveler?

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5. What did Jesus tell the expert in religious law to do?

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# So What?

6. Both Jesus and the religious law expert agreed that loving God and loving your neighbor were essential for eternal life. Yet scripture tells us that the expert pressed the issue, asking “*who is my neighbor*” in order “*to justify his actions*” (v. 29). What did asking this question reveal about his motives?

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7. Jesus ended his illustration by asking which character had been a neighbor to the wounded traveler. Why is asking, “*To whom can I be a neighbor?*” a better question than asking, “*Who is my neighbor?*”

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8. What do you think it means to love your neighbor as yourself? What does it mean **to be** a neighbor to others?

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WEEK 2: Won't You Be My Neighbor?

# Now What?

Jesus' illustration was not intended to answer the question, “*Who is my neighbor?*” If it had been, He would have concluded by telling the expert in religious law to “*love those who show love to you.*” After all, the Samaritan was the “*neighbor*” in the story. Instead, Jesus concluded by telling him, “*Go home and do the same*” – go home and BE a neighbor to the people God has placed in your path! Jesus refused to allow the selfishness of others to subvert the truth of scripture. What He taught that day is a lesson that still needs to be learned. God isn't just calling us to **love our neighbors**; He's calling us **to be neighbors** to the wounded travelers in our lives!

## Transparency Time:

Sunday school answers are for sissies!

Be honest! We ALL have struggles.

Honor your small group partners by sharing openly and honestly about yourself and by keeping everything that is shared by others in complete confidence.

Remember: “What's SAID in small group, STAYS in small group!”

# Now What?

9. Have you ever deliberately avoided showing love to someone whom God had placed in your path? Explain what happened.

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10. What is the hardest thing about loving your neighbor? What is the hardest thing about being a neighbor to those around you?

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11. What is one practical step that you will take this week in order to be a neighbor to someone that God has placed in your path?

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## Further Reading:

Day 1:  
Luke 10

Day 2:  
Matthew 5

Day 3:  
Romans 13-14

Day 4:  
Galatians 5-6

Day 5:  
James 1-2

Day 6:  
1 John 1-3

Day 7:  
1 John 4-5

WEEK 2: Won't You Be My Neighbor?

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# Notes:

## More to the story:

Jews and Samaritans hated one another. Samaritans claimed they were direct descendants from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (Joseph's sons) and the true worshipers of God, while Jews claimed that the Samaritan people had descended from foreigners who intermarried with the surviving Jews after the Assyrian conquest of the northern tribe of Israel in 721 B.C. Jews referred to Samaritans as dogs and refused to have anything to do with them.

2. The Jewish man was attacked by bandits, beaten, stripped, and left for dead, while he journeyed from Jerusalem to Jericho.
3. The first man, a Jewish priest, deliberately crossed to the other side of the street to avoid helping him. The second man, a temple assistant (also Jewish clergy), got a better look and then did the same!
4. The Samaritan was the only one of the three bystanders that was willing to help the wounded Jewish traveler. He soothed and bandaged his wounds, paid for his stay at an inn, and agreed to pay for his ongoing treatment until he recovered.
5. Jesus told the expert in religious law to be like the Samaritan, to show love to others the way the Samaritan had shown love to the wounded Jewish traveler.
6. Suddenly confronted with his own spiritual deficiencies when it came to keeping the Law, the religious expert's response was designed to lower the bar. By asking "who is my neighbor," he was basically asking, "Who do I **have to love**?" He was looking at love as something he **had** to do rather than something he **got** to do. A raw but brutally honest translation of "who is my neighbor" might be "how little do I have to do to get to Heaven?"
7. Asking "who is my neighbor" is a very self-centered question. Asking "to whom can I be a neighbor" is a very selfless question. God is calling each of us to be a neighbor to others, to be conduits of His love and mercy. Our focus should not be on how others can serve us or on how little we have to do to serve them; our focus should be on how we can inundate the people God has placed in our paths with compassion, mercy, and reckless abandon!
8. Loving your neighbor as yourself means placing a premium on the needs and desires of others just as we place a premium on our own wants and needs. It means continually striving to do what is best for others just as we continually strive to do what is best for ourselves. Being a neighbor means being inclusive, not exclusive. It means striving to eliminate the relational distance between you and the people God has placed in your path!