

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**“Love Your Neighbor” Series Intro**  
**Pastor Scott Parr – July 3, 2016**

**The end goal is this: that we would really know and love our neighbors and let God use us to reach them.**

**The most brilliant plan ever – includes love your neighbor**

**Literal neighbors – Luke 10:25ff (quick summary)**

- What’s at stake: If you don’t know your neighbors, you don’t trust them, you don’t feel safe, and you aren’t fully living into what God is calling you to. If you do know and love your neighbors, you have amazing potential to change individual lives, to change the community, and to enjoy actually knowing and caring for people in community.
- Ned Flanders and Homer Simpson clip. The point: “If everyone was like my neighbor Ned, the world would be more like heaven. As in that clip, the goal is Kingdom of God; earth would be a little more like heaven – love, help people know Jesus.

**Handout – A grid of the 8 closest neighbors to your home. How many do you know?**

- Most of us don’t know our neighbors, most of us usually feel too busy, most of us don’t have the time or the energy. And so at best we exchange a polite little wave. At worst, we fear our neighbors or make judgments against them. It’s normal to look at your neighbors with suspicion until you get to know them.
- What if instead of guessing about what’s going on with our neighbors, we really got to know them? What if instead of looking with fear or suspicion, we could look with compassion and care because we know the stories and the needs of our neighbors? What if we took God seriously on his call to LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS – and we started intentionally loving them like God does.

**Today - The Power of Hospitality:**

- **Hospitality defined:** 1. The friendly reception and treatment of guests or strangers.
- **3 elements of hospitality to look at today:** knowing names, inviting, eating together.

**Real Love is Knows Your Name**

- Isaiah 43:1 ESV But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.
- Over and over again in scripture, we see God calling people by name, specifically. Not just “earthling #1...”
- What if God was not personal?
  - But God is personal – God loves us by name:
- Story of 1<sup>st</sup> grader, lesson of God calling Samuel’s name - when asked to listen to God in Sunday school lesson at WCPC – What did you hear? (Big smile – “My name!”) Me: “Did you like that?” Him: “Yeah!”
- God knows your name and he loves you.
- And so how can you love your neighbors unless you know their names?
  - Our new name given by the Lord in Revelation – Rev. 2:17
    - Real love knows your name

**Story of when I called Amanda by name and she said “you know my name! I’m special!”**

**Work at knowing your neighbors’ names - it takes work and humility but it’s worth it –**

- No excuses, no “I’m not good with names.”
- No “Hey there...buckaroo”

- Use mnemonic devices, repeat it right away, write it down, “Shawn who doesn’t shave much.”

**RIGHT NOW – WE’LL do our MEET and GREET TIME – and I want to go to someone who you don’t know their name and practice that.**

- In the next 2 weeks, use your Block map to learn and write down your neighbors’ names.
- Real Love Knows Your Name, so we are going to work hard at getting to know names.

### **Invitations are Irresistible**

- Doesn’t it feel great to get an invitation? “You’re invited”
- Jesus invites us: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...” Matthew 11:28
  - So in this and in many other instances, Jesus was an inviter. He modeled for us the power of invitation.
  - What would it look like for you to invite someone to something. Maybe it’s to dinner. Maybe it’s to a playdate with kids. Maybe it’s to a garage sale. Maybe it’s to a neighborhood cleanup day. Maybe it’s to a block party **(story of my invitation last year to our block party)**.
    - People came – about 18 people. One guy said, “you got twice as many people here as the last time someone tried.” I said, “when was that?” He said, “13 years ago!”
    - Other people later recognized me and it at least initiated conversation.
    - **We have a guide to throwing a block party for you on the usher’s stand.**
- So relationships are built when we invite people. **But we also build relationships when we accept the invitations and hospitality of others.** When Jesus sends his disciples, his strategy is that they would receive hospitality from others: In **Luke 10:5-9**, Jesus sends out 72 disciples to go share the good news of the Kingdom of God: **5 “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ 6 If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. 8 “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. 9 Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’**
- So Jesus taught his disciples – here’s how you’re going to reach people with the good news – if peaceful people are willing to open their homes to you, share there. If they are resistant, move on.
  - You don’t have to agonize how to get the Gospel to OLD MAN WILSON past his Shotgun, pit bull, and angry atheism! You can go, “hmm... Karen seemed really thankful that I said I’d pray for that thing she was struggling with. Maybe she’s ready for more of God in her life.
- Invitation is irresistible, and take any opportunity you have to say yes to the invitations of people of peace in your neighborhood.
  - When you say to a neighbor, “hey, would you come over for dinner on Friday night?” Doesn’t that say a lot? Isn’t that hard to say no to?

**And then, you really start to know someone. Someone says, “Hey – do you know that guy?” You say “yeah, that’s Jeremy.” You know their name, you know THEM. But then you say, “Yeah, I’ve had dinner at his house.” You really are starting to know someone then.**

- And that leads us to our final point – the power of eating together.

### **Breaking Bread Builds Relationships**

- In scripture, when it says “breaking bread,” that can mean communion/Lord’s supper/eucharist – but that can also just mean sharing a meal together. And breaking bread together builds relationships.
- Story of my church staff in California spending thousands on Lencioni’s training, professional development, Billy Graham’s nephew – all paled to when we played golf, sat down at lunch and said, “Marsha, what’s your story? Have you ever been married?”...

- And we became closer that day than ever before
- Because breaking bread together builds relationships
- You see this all the time **in scripture – eating together means you really know someone.** People all the time were giving Jesus a hard time – why is he eating with those sinners? Does he know who he's eating with? Because eating with someone is a sign that you're friends, that you accept them.
- But Jesus ate with sinners and people who saw this KNEW it was a big deal: **Mark 2:14** And as he passed by, he saw Levi (Matthew) the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."
- So he's eating with these people – not just the church potluck – but with the people on the block with the bad reputation – and he's like "of course I'm eating with them." Because they need me – I'm here for them. If people are willing to admit they aren't all right, I have what they need.

• And so Jesus has shown us the tremendous power of invitation and the deep significance of eating a meal together.

- **So who might God be calling you to invite to dinner?** You don't have to start with the people with the worst reputation on the block. But you might get there eventually if God is calling. Maybe it's just the closest neighbor – invite them for dinner and see what God does as that relationship builds.
  - So this week:
    - Put your block map on your fridge and learn your neighbors' names – because real love knows names.
    - And pray for a way to invite your neighbors to eat with you – because invitations are irresistible and breaking bread builds relationships.
    - And as you start to love your neighbor in these ways, you're going to bring a little bit of heaven to your block.
- Lastly, If you have never put your faith in Jesus Christ, he is giving you this very personal invitation in **Revelation 3:20** Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. **This verse sums up what God sent his Son Jesus to do - You are invited by Jesus into a relationship with God through him. His death on the cross was to pay for all of our sins and make us forgiven. We can be right with God again when we acknowledge – Jesus, you did that for me, because I, too, am a sinner.**
  - Your job is simple – just open the door. Just say, "I believe in you. I accept you." And he says, I'll come into your life and we'll eat together – do you know what that's saying? He'll have a real relationship with you. Because breaking bread builds relationships. It's a metaphor – Jesus isn't saying that he's going to show up to your house with Taco Bell. He's saying – you're now welcome at the huge wedding banquet of heaven – the celebration that lasts forever in life with me.