

# SESSION 6 – Influencing Others to Christ

## Sharing About Exercises (25/20 MIN)

Keep in mind that in order to have time for everyone to share, each person should plan on around two minutes. The goal here is for you to share with the group how your exercise from last week went, and possibly something you learned about God, or yourself (it is not a teaching time).

## Opening Prayer (1/1 MIN)

## Premise of this Session (2/2 MIN)

The global Christian family, as diverse as it is, is unified around the Great Commandment that Jesus gave us: to love God, neighbor, and self. The love of one another (in particular) signifies to the watching world that we are Jesus' disciples. Therefore, our impact on the world around us is instigated and accomplished by love.

The cross of Jesus launched a new way to be human and a new community of love. His forgiveness of sinners started a new economy of benevolence and grace. The primary vocation of the disciple is to imagine a world of healing, peace, love and grace and act as if it is already so.

This challenged the native operating software for humanity before Jesus, which assumed that competition, earning and spending, winning and losing, was how the world was ordered and developed. But that age is passing away, and a new era has dawned. Praise the Lord!

## Key Scripture Passage (2/2 MIN)

Matt 22:37-40 (NIV) <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

## Commentary (to be read aloud in the meeting) (10/10 MIN)

Dr. Suess said: "To the world you may be one person; but to one person you may be the world." Who is that one person for me?

- Perhaps it is the neighbor who has no family or friends nearby, is old and has a multitude of physical ailments, and is difficult to talk to and understand.
- Perhaps it is a high school classmate that I have not connected with in awhile who recently posted heartbreaking news on Facebook about a cancer diagnosis.
- Perhaps it is a business associate who lost his wife of 40 years after a brief, but devastating illness and is absolutely broken.
- Perhaps it is a cousin whom I rarely see, at a funeral, who is, for a moment, open to talking about significant life issues.

Jesus said that we are to love others like we love ourselves. How would I want to be loved if I were one of the people mentioned above? It might be a listening ear. It might be a card with thoughtful and caring words. It might be a telephone call just to check in. It might be thought-provoking questions. It might be a meal. It might be merely asking how they are doing and really meaning it. Whatever love would look like, it for sure would involve action. We all have good intentions. However, love that is not expressed is not love.

An "expert in the law," wanting to justify himself, in the context of the Great Commandment, asked Jesus: "Who is my neighbor?" In answer to his question, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), where He compares and contrasts a Jewish priest, a Levite and a Samaritan. The priest and the Levite were Jews. The Jews hated the Samaritans. The Levites were members of the Hebrew tribe who served as assistants to the priests in the worship in the temple.

The story is about a traveler (implicitly understood to be Jewish) who is stripped of his clothing, beaten and left for dead alongside the road. The priest and the Levite come by and both avoid the man. Finally, a Samaritan comes by and stops to help. It seems logical to assume that if anyone would care for a person in

such a situation, the priest and the Levite should certainly be at the top of the list. And, since the Jews hated the Samaritans, it would also seem likely that the Samaritan might feel justified in ignoring the Jewish man lying on the roadside. It appears that one point Jesus was making is that merely being religious does not fulfill the Great Commandment to love my neighbor as myself. And that *anyone* has the potential to love his or her neighbor. In the passage, it says that the “neighbor” is the one who shows mercy.

We might understand “neighbor” to be anyone who is in our sphere of influence. That might mean my literal neighbor, someone sitting next to me on an airplane, relatives, co-workers, a “friend” on Facebook, or basically anyone with whom I come into contact with.

We are called to extend the same mercy which we have received from God through Christ to people in our sphere of influence. We do this by acknowledging and affirming and showing kindness to others. To accomplish this, it likely means slowing down and paying more attention to what is going on around us. It means listening for the still small voice of the Holy Spirit prompting us to take action. It will probably inconvenience us. It certainly means sharing the good news of the Gospel, when the time is right. It will likely mean taking small risks in stepping out in faith, and it means putting others’ needs before our own.

If we want to influence others to Christ, it will mean that we, like the Samaritan, intentionally show mercy to people in a world that is spiritually dying around us.

Who are you becoming?

### Discussion Questions ( 25 / 10 MIN )

1. **What are some ways** that you were loved into the kingdom?
2. **What does it look like** to you to practically love your neighbor as yourself?
3. **Discuss** the statement that “love that is not expressed is not love.” In what ways does love in this context differ from the world’s idea of love?
4. **Who** is a “neighbor” that you’re struggling to love well?
5. **How have you experienced** someone’s heart softening to the gospel due to loving them well? (Or, the opposite, how have you seen someone’s heart grow hard to the gospel because they were not loved well?)

### Spiritual Formation Exercises ( 15 / 14 MIN )

Please pick one exercise (or make up an exercise) that you want to do for the coming week.

1. **List of relationships.** Make a list of people in your life (coworkers, friends from church, neighbors, family, etc). Pray over your relationships, asking God who He is inviting you to intentionally show His love to in this season. Take action.
2. **Prayer Walk.** Go on a prayer walk in your neighborhood, workplace, or another place you frequent. Invite God to use His followers (including you!) in these spaces to influence others and love well.
3. **Worship.** Go to [whoamibecoming.org](http://whoamibecoming.org) > Session 6 > Worship Exercise. Listen to the video.
4. **Reach Out.** Think of a person in your life who is difficult to love. Look for a way to reach out to them in love this week.
5. **Memorize/Meditate/Pray.** Memorize Matt 22:37-40 and meditate on it and pray through it this week.

### Prayer Time ( 10 / 1 MIN )

### Online Resources for this Session

Visit [whoamibecoming.org](http://whoamibecoming.org) and click on **Session 6** tab for: **Session 6 Intro** video, the **Going Deeper** commentary, **Sermon Video** and **Boots on the Ground**, a sermon by Andy Owen about having a missional mindset.