

New to Neighboring

A Guide to
Forming Friendships
with Your Neighbors

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Hi, I'm New Here

If you're new to neighboring, you're in the right place. A lot of us would love to get to know our neighbors, but we don't have a clue where to start. Whether it's needing a little encouragement or some practical ideas

for those initial (seemingly) small steps, here's a little of both. You are on your way to beginning one of the most enriching experiences of your life: seeing, serving, knowing and loving your literal next-door neighbors.



Jesus said the most important thing we could do with our lives would be to love God and love our neighbor.

But how can we love our neighbors if we don't even know them?



Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:37-40

Start Making Excuses

Typically, when we think about making excuses, we see them as a bad thing. Sometimes they're our lame attempts to give ourselves a pass and justify our mistakes. We hear, "Stop making excuses and start taking responsibility." But excuses aren't always bad; sometimes they give us permission to move toward something good. Sometimes an excuse is exactly what we need.

Let's face it: Neighboring can feel kind of awkward at first. Our social anxieties and insecurities convince us that if we take the initiative with our neighbors they might think we're weird and we wouldn't want to bother anybody, so we just continue doing what we've always done: leave our neighbors alone.

For many of us, there is a cultural story of isolation and independence that is prevalent in our neighborhoods and it's hard to break out of it.

We need an excuse. Not a story or a cop-out but more like a license. We need to give our neighbors and ourselves permission to step out of the cultural story and into a bigger story; ultimately it's God's story.

Whether it's a dinner party, a holiday event, a table discussion or a simple act of kindness we need to make it okay to know our neighbors again. And we have to start somewhere.

Where to Begin

Taking initiative is one of the simplest, most powerful things you can do as a neighbor. It doesn't have to be anything mind-blowing.

Consider these suggestions:

- Pray for your neighbors, for your neighborhood, and for yourself as you neighbor.
- Wave to neighbors as you walk and drive through your neighborhood. Say "hello" to your neighbors as you're walking, driving, or in your yard.
- Print (from Google Maps) or draw a map of your neighborhood, then write names on the map of who lives where.
- If you see someone moving into your neighborhood, drop off a simple welcome basket (Google "Housewarming Basket" for easy ideas).
- Introduce yourself to neighbors and learn their names. Jot down names and facts in a note on your phone to help you remember them.
- Reintroduce yourself to a neighbor whose name you've forgotten or to someone you've lived by for a while. It might feel awkward or "too late" to ask, but it's a powerful step to take and worth it to reestablish a relationship with them.
- If you have neighbors who are from a different country or who have names that are difficult for you to pronounce, ask them to help you say their names correctly and then use their names next time you see them.
- If you see a neighbor outside when you get home, instead of pulling into your driveway and going straight inside or into your garage and closing the door, try coming out, saying "hi," and asking a question that could lead to a short touchpoint.
- Engage on your neighborhood's social media pages or create one.