
22:39 MINISTRY

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

God calls his children to be a people who love and pursue him passionately. When a lawyer asked Jesus, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law,” Jesus responded, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment” (**Matthew 22:37-38**).

John tells us that “We love because he first loved us.” As Paul puts it in **Romans 5:5**, “God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” In other words, God has poured his own love into our hearts. Therefore, we are called to be instruments of his love to the world by loving others. Jesus continues in his response to the lawyer, “*And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (**Matthew 22:39**). This verse serves as the title of our ministry, encompassing the idea that at FBC Olive Hill must love our neighbor.

Amidst the Coronavirus pandemic, we must find unique and creative ways to love our neighbor; thus, proclaiming the love of God to our neighbors through our good works that point others to the Father's glory in Christ Jesus. How do we carry out this task to love our neighbor? By (1) finding needs, (2) building a relationship, and (3) following through with the Gospel.

FINDING NEEDS

The first step is to find the needs of your neighbors. In this fallen world, people always have needs. Yet, during this pandemic, our neighbors are looking for hope, comfort, and answers. Thankfully, we have the best answer. Our belief is that we can serve our neighbors during this critical time by meeting their temporal needs, which will lead us to an opportunity to serve their greatest need: sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Where do we begin? We must reach out to our neighbors. You could send a text message, a message on social media, or give them a call. You could even make a visit, obviously adhering to the social distancing guidelines set by our state leaders. Through these methods, have a conversation with your neighbor that might lead you to ask a question like this: “*I know that this is a scary time, is there any way that I can pray for you right now,*” or, “*We need to watch out for one another, how can I pray for you now?*”

You may also discern the needs of your neighbors through observation. As you are out and about, be watchful on behalf of your neighbors. When you see a need, prayerfully ask the Lord to give you wisdom concerning how you can meet that need.

BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP

Second, if the Lord grants you an opportunity to love your neighbor by meeting a need, do your best to build a relationship with them in order that you might continue to bless them in Christ. Below are a few creative ideas to get you started:

- Share your contact information with them and let them know that you're available.
- If they share prayer requests with you, pray for them. Be sure to always ask, "How can I pray for you?" But also, be to sure to ask them for updates so that they will be assured that you are praying for them.
- If you going out to the grocery store for supplies, send them a message or give them a call.
- Find a common interest and bond over it (i.e. TV show, sports team, or hobby).
- If you make a commitment to meet a need, always be sure to follow through with it. Don't make any promises that you can't keep.

The idea is that you find unique ways to build a relationship with your neighbor in order that you might discover an avenue to share the Gospel with them.

FOLLOW THROUGH WITH THE GOSPEL

Finally, if you're neighbor shares a need with you that you don't know how to meet, tell them that you will pray about it. If your neighbor shares with you that they don't have a church home, invite them to worship with us via our live stream. Share with them the details on how they can watch our services online or invite them over to your home to watch with you on Sunday morning. Ultimately, we must be faithful to love our neighbors in the greatest way possible: sharing the hope of the Gospel with them.

In addition to sharing the Gospel with them, look for opportunities to share your testimony of salvation. You may share what your life was like before salvation, tell them what happened in your life to bring you to salvation, and share how your life has been changed because of your salvation.

You will find that some—if not many—of your neighbors have not experienced salvation through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. After your share your testimony and present the Gospel to them, you might ask a simply question such as this: "Have you ever had a life-changing experience with Jesus?" If they have not, ask them if they'd like to commit their life to Jesus Christ now. Be diligent in calling them to repentance and faith in Jesus.

The Gospel:

- God created us. **(Genesis 1:27)**
- We sinned. **(Genesis 3:6-7)**
- The punishment of sin is separation from God and death (physical and spirit). **(Genesis 2:17; 3:9)**
- God sent Jesus—who died, was buried, and rose again. **(John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:4)**
- By our repentance of sin and faith (belief or trust) in Jesus Christ, we can be reconciled back to God and receive eternal life. **(Mark 1:15; 2 Corinthians 5:18)**

Lead them through a simple prayer of confession: *Lord, I am a sinner. Today, I wish to turn away from my sin. I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins and was raised in three days to offer me life. I make a commitment to follow Jesus, and I'm asking you to forgive me and save me. Amen.*

If they share that they aren't ready to make that commitment, don't worry. Rejoice that the Lord has given you an opportunity to plant the Gospel seed in your neighbor's heart. Then pray and ask God to give you more opportunities to love your neighbor.