



## Can You Love Someone When You Don't Know Their Name?

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I think most of us know that the second greatest commandment according to Jesus is that we are to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Most Christians I know would affirm the fact that they love their neighbors because that's what they're supposed to do as good Christian folk.

### Author

The weekly eNews is provided by CGGC Executive Director Lance Finley



Some of us might add qualifiers such as "I love them but I don't like them" or "I love them but I don't approve of their \_\_\_\_\_" (fill in the blank with whatever sin issue seems to be present in their neighbor). Christians are supposed to love everybody, right?

Here's the catch: more and more of us are living in neighborhoods or communities where fewer and fewer folks actually know their neighbors! I would like to suggest that it's really hard to love someone when you don't even know their name.

Now I can hear some of the push back already: Jesus illustrated this idea with the story of the Good Samaritan: he was a "neighbor" to a stranger that he found half-dead by the side of the road. According to Jesus, anyone can be a neighbor, even when it's a random experience.

Certainly, Jesus illustrated that we can be a loving neighbor to anyone we encounter; thus the illustration of the Good Samaritan; but I would offer that one of our greatest callings and opportunities as followers of Jesus is found in loving our neighbors: the folks in the house next door, or the apartment across the hall, or the farm down the road.

I grew up in a world where the goal was to get people to the church building, the worship service, or the event and that's the way you reached people for Christ. The goal was get them to the church and the pastor will take care of the rest.

Here's where we need a mindset shift. We're living in a culture where fewer folks are "going to church". At the same time, we're relearning the fact that the church is not a building, or a worship service or an event but rather a people sent by God to do the work of His mission in this world. God has sent His church (followers) to apartment complexes, subdivisions, condos associations and every other type residence in your local community. He's deployed His people so that they might live out their calling to love Him with everything they have and to love their neighbors as they love themselves.

How much do you know or understand about the folks to whom God has sent you? Do you know their names? Do you know anything about their lives, their families, their vocations, or what they value? Are you seeking opportunities to serve them, connect with them and simply love them because of the love you've received from Jesus?

Perhaps the best step you could take today to live on God's mission would be to make an introduction to one of the folks God has sent you to love in your neighborhood. Are you seeking to know your neighbors so that you can love and serve them well?

God has sent us to specific places and people with the goal that we might love Him in genuine ways and love those to whom we've been sent in authentic ways that reveal His great love for all humankind.

What would it look like for you to love your neighbor this week?

If you don't know their name, start there.

Let's be known as people who really do love our neighbors because of our love for Jesus.

Christ's Peace,

**Lance**