

BREAKING BUSYNESS
THE ART OF NEIGHBORING SERIES
Ben Rudolph

Good morning Life Fellowship, and thank you for being here this morning. Are you guys ready for the art of neighboring? All right. My name is Ben Rudolph and I am one of the teaching pastors here at Life, and we are in a series called, 'The Art of Neighboring.' We are joining with almost a hundred churches in the Charlotte Lake Norman area and we are doing this combined sermon series. I think it is cool to think about how churches from all different denominations are coming together with this, because we believe that when the church of Jesus Christ comes together good things can happen.

The story about the art of neighboring is really fascinating. I know Pastor Dan did an amazing job last week kicking off this series, and that he explained the call of God is for all of us to be neighbors to those who are close to us. The Art of Neighboring is actually a book and a sermon series that came from a group of pastors in the city of Denver, Colorado. Dave Runyon is the name of the pastor who wrote this book. He was meeting with a couple dozen pastors in the Denver metro area, and they were just praying together asking God to show them something great in their city.

And they had this great idea of talking to the mayor of Denver to find out what they could do to help the city. That was a great idea, right? So they got a special meeting with the mayor of Denver, who was not a follower of Jesus and I don't believe he even went to church. But they sat down with him and they asked him this question: *'What could we as the church do in this city to make a positive impact and to bring transformation to the city of Denver?'*

And the mayor of Denver told them this: *'Here is how you can transform our city; if you guys would just be good friends and neighbors to the people around you. The stress on our police officers, social services, and health care providers is just so great because most people don't have someone they can call on that is right next to them to help them out when help is needed.'* And Dave and that group of pastors left that meeting incredibly convicted, because here was someone who didn't follow Jesus, but who had told them what Jesus had told all of us long ago, and that was to **"Love your neighbor as yourself."** So these pastors took this suggestion from the mayor of Denver, and they started implementing ideas of loving your neighbors and of being someone who was present in their neighborhoods. And this series came out of their experience in Denver, Colorado.

So we are excited to be here today and to be doing this series. Last week as Pastor Dan spoke he gave all of you a homework assignment. Do you remember what it was? It was to get the names of your neighbors. Now I am not going to have a show of hands, or check each one on how you did, but I know some of you probably left last

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week's service thinking, *'Oh, come on. I mean I am so busy and now you give me something else to do.'* How many of you are busy in life, raise your hands? Okay, I see a lot of you are. We are all busy. I asked a couple of people this week how their week was, and they all said the same thing, *'Busy.'* How many times do we use that response in our conversations with people? Busy is so very much a part of our lives.

And I believe that so much of that busy lifestyle had just become accepted. It is socially normal to have a busy life. In fact I believe that sometimes we feel like if we are not busy there is something wrong with us. So as we think about being a neighbor, we believe that one of the biggest barriers of us doing this is our time, that we are not prioritizing the right things, that we are not taking our calendars and putting them under the Lordship of Jesus. Instead we are just chasing appointments. So busy is a part of life.

This morning we want to break busy. We are going to be looking at Scripture in Ephesians Chapter 5 and breaking busy this morning. I believe that when we are too busy we don't hear from God the way we should. And what we should want to do is to be a people who hears from the Lord on a regular basis, because if we are not going to hear from Him we are not going to be able to live the life that we need to live. We should want to be a people who are not chasing our calendars and who are not always incredibly busy. We want to be a people who are truly hearing from God and following Him.

This passage in Ephesians Chapter 5 and verses 1 and 2 tells us this: ***"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."*** Here is what Paul is saying in this letter to the Ephesians, here is what he wanted these people to do; he wanted them to imitate God and to walk in love as they have been loved by God. And that is great, that is the call for us as Christians, that we are to walk in love towards one another.

Paul is furthering his teaching of Jesus by saying, *'We have been placed on this earth for a purpose, for a reason, and that is God wants us to represent Him to the world.'* Paul wants people to understand the love of God by the way we love other people. God sent Jesus Christ to come and die for our sins. He arose from the dead so that we might have eternal life in Him. And He left us here so that we might represent Him and tell others about Him. That is why we are here. And we can never forget that is why He placed us here, to walk in love.

What we are going to read about is this issue of time in verses 15 through 17. We have to understand that in the context of walking in love. In verses 3 through 14 Paul starts writing about how we cannot spend our lives on using and abusing people for our own sexual benefit. He talks about sexual morality and covetousness, and saying if we

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are just living our lives for our own self-seeking desires, we are going to miss out on what it means to walk in love toward other people.

Then Paul goes down to verse 15, and here is the thing. He goes from talking about sexual immorality to how we spend our time. Maybe you are thinking that that is an interesting switch of topics. Why would Paul go from here to there? And maybe you have heard this American proverb, *'If the devil can't make you bad, he makes you busy.'* I think a lot of times what Satan loves to do is get us distracted, to get us focused on ourselves. We might not be doing things destructive in nature, we might not be hurting other people, but we are not walking in love towards our friends and our neighbors because we are so self-consumed.

So look what Paul says in verse 15. ***"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."*** What Paul is saying here is this - it matters to God how we spend our time. In fact it matters because if He is calling us to imitate Him, if He is calling us to walk in love towards those who are around us, then we need to understand that we have been given opportunities to do this every single day.

Here is the main idea for this morning and you can write it down. The main idea is this - let's not miss an opportunity to show love. Don't miss an opportunity to show love every day. We have opportunities every single day to show love to people around us. And what we do in life most of the time is we are so busy with our own schedules that we miss the opportunities that God puts in front of us every single day.

If we are going to talk about walking in love with our friends and neighbors, we cannot walk in love if we are running through life. Many times we are just doing our own thing running through life, we have constant crazy busy things in our lives, we have family, we have work, we have church, and we have all of these things that just consume our lives. And we have to remember that there is something bigger and deeper God has for us, and if we have no margin in our lives to engage with people around us, and to show love to them, then we are just too busy.

So what some of us have to do is take a step back and say, *'If I am too busy to hear from God, if I am too busy to walk in love to people around me, what do I need to change? What has to change in the way I am scheduling my life, and in the way I make decisions?'* I believe that God is always working to give us opportunities every single day to show love to the people around us. But if we are too busy we are going to miss it.

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Let's look at three ways in which we miss these opportunities and hopefully we can correct them as we choose to walk in love. The first one is this - we miss opportunities to love when we fail to prioritize. Priorities are very important to us. And if we were to do a Google search on time management we would get thousands of webpages about it. I did a little Google search and I clicked on a couple of different webpages to see what people would say. These were not Christians, but one of the big things they all said was - we have to learn to prioritize. They emphasized we need to learn when to say 'yes' and when to say 'no' to things. And that makes a lot of sense because it is common wisdom.

But look what it says here in Ephesians Chapter 5 and verse 15. "***Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise.***" Paul is saying that he wants us to think carefully about every step with this idea of walking in love. Not running as fast as you can through life but walking in love. And what he wants us to do is this - take every step carefully, understanding that every step of our lives is an opportunity to either build up or tear down. It is an opportunity to show light or to cast darkness.

So what we should want to do is look carefully for each step we take. Other translations talk about walking circumspectly. Circumspectly is a word that simply means that we are to be very aware of everywhere we walk. We need to walk through life watching every step we take being aware that we need to be careful and that we are being aware of the needs around us. Looking carefully means that every step we take is important.

In my life nothing stresses me out more in my home than when I hear a glass break. I am not sure how many of you are like that, but when I hear a glass break, or a plate shatter, I immediately say, '*Don't move. We need to get our shoes on.*' And that is because I don't want to have to pick glass out of anyone's foot. So I am in immediate mode of telling everyone to stand still. And I am throwing shoes at everyone to put on. I am looking at the light reflecting on the glass so I can know where all the pieces are. Is anybody else like this? This just causes me incredible anxiety.

Then what do I do? I sweep up all the glass I can see first, and since I am really anal about this so next I get on my hands and knees with a wet paper towel and I wipe down the entire floor. Is anybody else like this? And then not only do I do those two things but next I have to vacuum the floor. That is number three, because I know those little tiny pieces of glass can haunt you, okay? So when a glass breaks, I take every step carefully, every step carefully.

And that is the way life is. Every step we take is an opportunity. There are dangerous things all around us so we are to be careful in every step we take. This isn't an

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issue of wisdom, it is understanding that if we just go through life carelessly we can hurt people and we can miss opportunities to show love. So we need to be aware of our own busyness and not just be running around, because we could accidentally hurt someone and not even be aware of it, or of the hurt that is around us.

I shared in the first service that I have been reflecting on my busyness because this sermon has been so convicting to me. I was writing this sermon over the last three weeks and it happened to be during one of the busiest seasons of my life. Here I am going to preach on time management, I am so busy, and I came under deep conviction.

So I had to do a lot of reflecting on what it is that makes us so busy. I think there are two kinds of busyness. Number one I think we get busy from the sheer amount of activities and responsibilities we each have. We load up on as many activities as possible. We say 'yes' to everything and everyone. And we chalk our calendar full of so much stuff. Maybe we are busy because we can't say 'no,' and that can lead to busyness.

Another type of busyness is not necessarily the amount of activities but the order of activities. So we may have a decent amount of activities to do, but then we put other things first. For example, if I gave you a list of 20 items to do, some of you would be like, *'Okay, let's do it.'* You would get excited about it and you would get in charge of it and you would get joy in crossing out every item on the list. Some of you are just weird like that.

Now others of you if I gave you a list of 20 tasks to do, you would be like, *'Oh no, I need to watch this show and I won't have time.'* You wake up in the morning and you think, *'Oh no, I have to go to work today,'* but then you will spend some time on social media, and looking up headline news, and getting on Amazon, and then all of a sudden you realize you have to hurry to get to work on time. And the busyness was created, not because you had too much to do, but because there were other things you didn't need to do but you still did them, and that put the things that you really needed to do on the back burner. And then when you have to do them, you think you are too busy.

So some of us have a hard time saying 'no' to anything, and some of us have a hard time saying 'no' to the wrong things. Now I could start trying to give you some tips and tricks on busyness, but what I believe is this - that what we really need to do is take a look underneath and then ask ourselves 'why.' I could tell you that you need to learn to say 'no' more, or you should do this more, or that more, but what we really need to ask ourselves is why do we keep ourselves so busy.

So I had to do a lot of reflection on this. And here is one of the things I have learned over the last few years. I spend time disciplining men and I sit down with other

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people I coach like with church planters, and I was up in Pennsylvania last week doing that. And I realized that a lot of times when I got to the root issue of things that were wrong or off in their lives, I would ask them the question of why they were doing that. And the most common answer I get from people when I ask them why they do something is *'I don't know. I don't know why I do that.'*

And so many of us when we come into a room like this and find out we are going to talk about busyness we would be surprised if we heard the question, *'Why are you so busy?'* And the reason we would be surprised at that question of why we are so busy is because we don't know why we are so busy, we just are. And when it comes to not being able to say 'no,' or not being able to say 'no' to the wrong things, I think we have to ask ourselves just why that is.

When I was looking at my own heart about this I found this list, and it is not an exhaustive list, but these are some of the 'whys' I found in my own life, and I think you may be able to identify with some of them as well. The first one is - ego. Man, there is nothing like talking to someone and telling them, *'You won't believe how busy I am. I am so busy that you would not even believe how very busy I am.'* To some of us it is like a badge of honor to be the busiest person in the room. So it is an ego thing of how many hours you work. *'You work how many hours a week. Well, I worked ten more hours than that this week alone.'* And it is ego. It makes us feel good that we are the hardest working, busiest person ever. I was talking to someone right after the first service and they said, *'If I am not busy I feel like there is something wrong with me.'* So we may have an ego issue that we need to confront.

Number two is - people pleasing. People pleasing is when someone else's priorities become your priorities. And many people have a hard time saying no because they feel like if they say no to people they are not going to be their friend. They are like, *'Hey, can you do this?'* And you are like if I say no they may not still like me. And you struggle with that. You allow other people's priorities to be your priorities so you can't say no to those people because you fear them not liking you anymore.

Number three - we are feelers. We just don't FEEL like it. We have stuff to do but we don't feel like doing it. Like my kids come home from school and I will ask them, *'How much homework do you have?'* And they tell me what they have been assigned to do, so then I ask them, *'Are you going to start on that now?'* And their usual answer is 'no.' (*Laughter.*) I ask them why and they respond, *'I just don't feel like it.'* And we usually just do what we feel like doing, right? It is like we have to be inspired before we can do work. And if we have to wait to be inspired to do our work, there are a lot of things that aren't going to get done.

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The last one is this - the myth of self-satisfaction. Here is what I mean by that. You are busy, maybe you have other people's responsibilities at work, and you just think, *'If I just had one or two hours to do what I want to do, then I would be happy.'* It is like to have time for oneself is just this really precious thing. *'This is my time. You can't touch my time. I am going to binge watch whatever show I want for two hours because it is my time.'* And we have this idea if we can have our time doing what we want that will satisfy us and we will somehow feel better. And do you know what I realized - that was true about me, and I am sure it is true about you. But if you sit there and you do whatever you want, I don't care if it is one hour or two hours or five hours, at the end of it you are going to feel empty. It is a myth of self-satisfaction thinking if we get to spend time the way we want to spend it somehow we are going to feel better. And it never makes us feel better.

And when we do those things, whether it is self-satisfying, or feeling like we have to be inspired, or feeling like we have to please people, and we are putting off things that we need to do, then that is a problem. Or maybe it is because of ego, or because we are saying 'yes' to too many things, all of these things can become the root of busyness. If we say 'yes' to everything, or to too many things, or we don't say 'yes' to the right things, what we are going to end up doing is putting people on the side line. And then we are going to not have the right priority for the people in our lives.

One of the things that Jesus showed over and over and over again in His ministry here on earth was how much He prioritized people. There is a story of Jesus in the New Testament when His cousin John the Baptist was beheaded by King Herod. And I know you understand that when we lose someone who is very close to us it is painful, it hurts. Jesus had been spending an incredible amount of time pouring Himself out, so He and His disciples get in a boat to take a little time away to mourn privately. But when they get there they see thousands of people waiting, and it is the story of the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus gets out of the boat when He sees the thousands of people there and His disciples want Him to tell the people to go away. But Jesus looked upon the people and He had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

I think about how in that moment Jesus saw their need, and His priority was always with people who were hurting. And I believe if we are constantly busy, if we don't have the right priorities, if our priority is not people or relationships, we are going to go through life and at the end of life we are going to be very lonely. *'Hey we got our tasks done. We got all the things done that we needed to do on our list. We met every obligation on our calendar.'* But at the end of the day, there can be loneliness and isolation, and there aren't any relationships, or any walking in love. We need to be

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careful of every decision we make because how we spend our time shows what we prioritize in our lives. Are we prioritizing loving our neighbors?

There is a second way in which we miss opportunities to show love and that is when we aren't present. Look at verse 15 again, "***Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.***" Paul is saying that we live in a broken world, a world in which there are people who are hurting, and the days are evil. There is so much pain and hurt from the evil in the world. And Paul is asking what can we do about it? Well, what we can do about it is we can redeem the time. What does that mean? It means as we are walking in love in life and we encounter moments of evil, moments of brokenness and pain in the people around you, this is the moment that we can do something. We can try to make the best use of every opportunity to change the narrative, to shine light where there is darkness, to do good where there is pain.

I think so many of us, because of our busyness, we are not present where we are. We might be in a geographical location with our bodies, but our minds and our hearts are somewhere else. We are just not present when we need to make the most of every opportunity. The words 'best use' actually means to redeem, to buy back time, buy it back from the evil. What is going on in this world is bad here, but if we are present and we show love and share truth with people what can happen is we can change the evil to good. That is what Jesus was saying. We have to be present in those moments where we see evil to shine the light of Christ to people who need it.

This idea of being present is so important. I learned in Bible College that it is true to say that the ministry of presence is one of the most important ministries we can have as believers. It can be like just being in the same room with someone who is hurting and listening to them, just being there. When you are in the room with someone who is suffering, you don't need to worry about what you should say because I have learned that those people don't remember what you say, but they do remember that you were there. And for so many of us we miss the opportunity to be present when the ministry of presence is so important.

I believe the number one vice, the number one way in which we are missing being present is because of our cell phone. It is the reason why most of us are not present where we are. Here is our thinking, '*While a song is being sung today that I have heard before it is okay for me to check my phone, right?*' Or maybe when we have gone out to eat after church we just need to check the Panthers score, okay? Or you may be sitting at a restaurant having a good conversation with the person across the table from you and

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then you feel the vibration of your phone in your pocket. So what do you do? You just have to answer it. *'Hello. Yeah. Uh-huh. Totally, man. You should do that.'*

And we will do that. We will look at our phones, and we will answer our phones because we think it is so important, and we don't want to miss anything. And this was so convicting to me because when I am at the dinner table at home I have learned that I have to put my phone away, or to put it in a do not disturb mode, because otherwise I will not be present with my wife and children. Or I can be out at lunch with someone and my phone signals I sit there wondering if someone died or some horrible thing has happened. And we turn to it and then we are in our virtual world more than we are in the real world.

I will never forget a couple of months ago when I was walking into a school for a meeting there, and I was watching a parent drop their child off for school that day. I think I shared this story as a podcast, so if you have heard this, please bear with me. But I am walking by and I hear this young boy say to his mom as he gets out of the van, *'I love you, Mom.'* And I look back and the mom is on her phone scrolling through whatever. The boy says again, *'Mom, I love you.'* No response. The child told her he loved her twice but the mother said nothing. The boy then shuts the door and walks into the school.

We are missing life. We are missing the real world. We are missing relationships. We are missing people all around us because we are not present. We are not present to our neighbors, we are not present to the people that may be at the same table that we are, or in the same room that we are; we are just not there. We let other things dictate to us what is important. And I believe we need to learn to put those things away, and to be people who are present, to be someone who is able to have a conversation with people who are hurting all around us. The days are evil and we need to be able to just sit and talk with people, and try to understand what they are going through, to provide help and love to them. So we miss opportunities to love when we are not present.

There is a third way in which we miss opportunities to love and that is when we forget to plan. Listen to what it says again in verse 17. ***"Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."*** Notice how many times Jesus talks about wisdom and understanding. In Verse 15 it says not to walk as unwise but as wise. Verse 17 says not to be foolish but to understand. There is this idea of wisdom here. And the idea of what He is talking about is not intellect and stupidity here. A lot of times we think about wise and foolish as being somehow connected to our intellect, and that is not what wisdom is. Wisdom is this idea of understanding what needs to happen. This idea of foolishness is not thinking through what you are about to do.

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A fool is someone who acts first and then thinks , ‘*Should I have done that?*’ That is what a fool is. When the Bible defines what a fool is it is someone who acts first and thinks second. Someone who is wise according to the Bible is someone who thinks first and then acts, who thinks first and then speaks. And so what He is saying is this - He doesn’t want us to be foolish and miss what the will of the Lord is; He wants us to understand what the will of the Lord is.

Now when we are talking about the will of the Lord it is not to be thought of as big and mystical and scary. What is meant by the will of the Lord is simply what God wants and it is what God has planned. That is it. It is God’s plan and God’s desire. It is not mystical or spooky it is simply God’s plan that after He created the world and mankind fell, He was to redeem us and to save mankind.

That is why He sent Jesus, and why Jesus came 2,000 years ago to live the life that we could not live and to die the death that we deserved, so we might find eternal life in Him. He took away our sins, the condemnation and the penalty of our sins, and put it on Jesus. And when Jesus rose from the grave, He was able to offer that resurrected life to every one of us. God did something about our greatest enemy - sin and death through His Son Jesus. So what is the will of God? The will of God is for us to know, receive, understand and show it to other people.

I want you to listen to verse 1 and 2 again. “***Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.***” Listen, here is the thing - we cannot walk in love if we ourselves have not received God’s love. We have to receive it first. We have to understand that we are loved, that He has sent His Son for us. All the rotten sinful things we have done, He has taken that penalty and that punishment that we deserve. He has taken away from us the justice of God and put it on Himself. And if we receive it we will have this new life. That is what God wants.

And when we can understand the love by which He poured out on us, guess what we get to do? We can share that love with others. But we cannot imitate what we have not experienced. We cannot walk in love if we have not received His love. So we miss the opportunities when we forget the plan, when we forget that we are loved. And if we don’t take a step back and understand how much we have been loved by God we will never be able to share that love with other people. We have to first receive and understand what the will of the Lord is, and the will of the Lord is that all people come to repentance, that all people come within the family of God. He wants people to know and understand His love, His goodness, His grace and His power. God wants this for us and for the world.

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And many of us forget the plan; we forget that there is a greater story going on in our lives. I was talking to a friend of mine last week in Pennsylvania. He teaches philosophy at a couple of universities there and he is an adjunct professor for a number of private Catholic schools. He has a philosophy class with all the incoming freshmen and he tells them the three no's that every freshman has. And he tries to challenge their philosophical underpinning of their lives. He tells them that every freshman has no story, has no foundation and has no boundaries for their lives.

And I asked him what he meant by saying that they had no story. He said most young people that he has coming into his classes have stories but there is no story of their own. They live and have these moments of life, *'I did this with my friends. I experienced this trip. I dated this girl.'* But they have no story, no overarching narrative of why they are alive, or what their purpose is in life. They have no story.

And what we know from God is that He is inviting us into His story. When Jesus came He invited us into the story of God where we no longer had to go through life without a purpose. And it is not just college freshmen who struggle with this, but so many of us may have stories, but there is no story. We have forgotten the plan of God, and when we forget the plan of God we will forget why we are here. We will forget why God has placed us where He has placed us.

What we have the opportunity to do every single day is to share with people that there is a greater story. *'Yes, I know we walk in brokenness but there is a greater story. Yes, I know you are experiencing suffering, I know you are bogged down by addictions and pain, but I am telling you that there is a greater story. There is a story of healing and redemption and love that God wants you to hear.'* We have the opportunity when we make the time to walk in love and to tell people that story. How many of us are using the opportunities that we are given every week? Will we walk in love and make the most of every opportunity we have to show the love of Christ to people?

Three questions and then we are done. Number one - what do you need to stop doing, or to begin saying 'no' to? Remember we talked about priorities, and if our lives are so busy that we are just running through life and there is no time for priorities, how are we going to create a margin and learn when to say 'no'. Maybe we need to write down every single thing that we do and then say, *'God, these are all the things I am saying 'yes' to. You tell me what I need to say 'no.'* Put your calendar under the Lordship of Jesus.

Number two - how will you begin to be more present? Do you need to put your phone away when you get home? Do you need to set your phone to 'do not disturb' at

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mealtime and when you are with people? When your neighbor across the street starts a conversation with you, how will you be present in that moment?

Number three - will you intentionally plan a time to personally get to know one of your neighbors? Last week we talked about learning the names of our neighbors. This week we would like for all of us to get their story. Sit down with them for coffee or invite them over for a meal. This is not radical; we are not asking you to start a Bible study in your home. All we are saying is simply find an opportunity to invite your neighbor into your home, or go out to eat with them and hear their story.

One of the things that I have learned about people is they love to talk about themselves. All we have to do is ask this question - what is your story? And I promise when you hear their story you will usually find someone who is battling or fighting something in life. And you get to be there to be a voice of gentleness, a voice of hope, a voice of truth, a voice of comfort, to be present with them and to walk with them in love. All we are asking is to have just one meeting with one person. I believe we miss opportunities every single week because we are just running through life. Let's not miss another opportunity but walk in love to those who God has placed around us.

Let's bow our heads and close our eyes. I know that this issue of time is always so personal. We are going to have a moment of response and maybe God is calling you to take a look at your calendar when you get home today. Maybe you need to ask God how to make time for your friends and neighbors so you can show love to them.

I talked about receiving love this morning but maybe you have never received God's love and you don't understand what it means to receive it. I want to encourage you if you are unsure what it means to walk in love or to receive God's love, we have people up here that would love to talk with you. Or there is a prayer room to the far right as you leave this room and there is a counsellor that is there to answer any questions you might have about receiving the love of God. We cannot share what we do not know, so if you have questions about if God really loves you, we want to be able to share with you the good news of Jesus and how we can be sure of it this morning. Please don't leave here if you have questions.

And then I would ask you to think about the person that God has called you to love. Maybe you got your neighbors names this week, and now you need to reflect on who God has called on you to reach out to. Pray for them right now, would you.

As we get ready to stand and sing maybe you are going through a difficult time right now in your life with health or work or family and it is burdening your heart. There is a pastor up here in front that would love to pray with you, or you may want to go to

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one of the crosses and spend some time praying there. Whatever God is leading you to do, don't leave here today without laying your burden at the feet of Jesus.

There are stations around the room where you can partake of communion and reflect on the love that Christ poured out for us on the cross. But let's respond to the love of Christ and walk in love as we have been loved. Let's stand for prayer.

Father, I pray for every person in this room that we would be imitators of you this week. God, as we leave this room that we would remember that you have called us and you have placed us in this world, you have placed us in our neighborhood for a reason. And there are hurting people are around us because the days are evil. But God, you are good, so may we learn to walk in love and not run through life missing opportunities you have given to us to shine the love of Christ to others. God, burden us with people who are hurting. Show us how to build bridges into their lives and may we be a neighbor so they can experience the love you have for them. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.