



## OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, we thank you for this gathering of our small group and the ways in which you are working through us. As we settle into our time together this week, we ask you to guide our conversations, our thoughts, and relationships. We offer up to you everything that feels weighty or distracting. We ask that you pour out on us your deep peace, which you offer freely. Multiply our time together and help us to pursue you daily. Amen.

## COMMUNITY

**Time to build relationships: mix + mingle!**

- + Did something specific resonate with you from the sermon or worship service?
  
- + If you couldn't attend, ask others in your group what stood out to them.  
(Note: Links to both video and audio versions of previous sermons can be found at [www.standrewmethodist.org/podcasts](http://www.standrewmethodist.org/podcasts).)
  
- + Where did you see God's presence in your past weekend?

# WATCH THE VIDEO | Who is Your Neighbor?

We encourage you to take notes

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## SCRIPTURE

**A great starting place is always God’s word.**

### Mark 12:28-34

<sup>28</sup> One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” <sup>29</sup> “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ <sup>31</sup> The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” <sup>32</sup> “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. <sup>33</sup> To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. <sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

### Deuteronomy 6:5

<sup>5</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

## SITUATION

One of the most striking themes of Jesus' teachings in the original context is that of loving one's neighbor so thoroughly, honestly, and genuinely – which is how we are prone to love ourselves. Especially when Jesus preaches the expansion of his ministry will be for the gentiles, the non-Jewish people, as well. Let's try to imagine how radical this message was for the first hearers. Not only did Jesus preach the need to love one's neighbor, but that it was right up there with the first commandment of loving God. The Jewish believers of this time would have known the command from Deuteronomy 6, to love the Lord their God with everything in them. That is not a new message for them. However, to hear the story of the Good Samaritan, or the command to love one's neighbor... must have brought a convicting sting, for many of them (and us) struggle to do so. Through the connecting of dots between Old Testament laws and New Testament sermons, Jesus exemplifies the defining attribute of God: love. Now, it is up to us to strive to embrace and practice this command ourselves.

## BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

- + Throughout his ministry, Jesus travels far and wide carrying the gospel message. Who are his "neighbors" are in that process?
  
- + Why is it important that Jesus refers to the Shema in Deuteronomy, during his preaching?
  
- + How does this week's preaching topic relate to the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25?
  
- + Why did Jesus include comparisons between "burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:33) when speaking to the teachers of the law?
  
- + Notice how Deut 6:5 only lists three attributes (heart, soul, strength), and Mark 12 includes four (heart, soul, mind, strength). Why do you think there is a difference?

## PRACTICAL LIFE QUESTIONS

- + Consider your next-door neighbors at home. How might the tall order of loving your neighbor as yourself look in that context?
  
- + Consider your neighbors who are without homes, geographically far away, or complete strangers.
  - How does Jesus say we are to treat these neighbors?
  
  - How does he model this in his own life?
  
- + Jesus preaches to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). Does this sound familiar to what you see promoted in the secular (non-Christian) world? Why or why not?
  
- + One key identity of the Church is that we as Christians strive to care for one another in a meaningful and grace-filled way. Looking ahead, what is your hope for the future of Christians and the way this faith continues to prioritize caring for others?

## GROWTH

### ***Journal Prompt***

Jesus, I want to bear fruit this week so that your light within me can be evident in a world that so desperately needs your Spirit. Help me to be aware of the fruitfulness of this next week. You are the True Vine and I commit to remaining rooted in you, Jesus.

### ***Calling Prompt***

God is inviting you to participate in his ministry by answering the unique call on your life. How can you actively respond to scripture and God's presence this week?

### ***Closing Prayer***

**Let's prepare for the week ahead, shaped by our time together today.**

Gracious God, we trust that you go with us in the week ahead. We are changed each time we gather to learn more about you and your Word. Please give us boldness to proclaim your good news in the coming week and bring us back safely together again in this community. Amen.