



Session 5: Loving Neighbors and Strangers Like Jesus Does

Focus Prayer

Before you begin your reflection time, offer this prayer or the words of your own heart.

God, give me ears to hear, eyes to see, and a heart to know your love through my time here today. Amen.

Core Theme

Love neighbor – Jesus had a heart full of compassion for everyone he met, and that flowed out in healing, feeding, listening, humbly serving all, and seeking justice for the most vulnerable. We learn from him how to love neighbors and strangers alike through our words and deeds.

Scripture: Mark 6:30-44

The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.” But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?” And he said to them, “How many loaves have you? Go and see.” When they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and the fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

In a journal or with a partner, explore the following:

- In the passage from Mark 6:30-44, what word or phrase that Jesus said did you notice? What did you notice about the disciples’ words and actions? What about the actions of those who followed Jesus? Why do you think these stood out to you?
- What intention do you want to set to help you follow Jesus’ example from this passage?
- What have you learned from the life of Jesus about loving neighbors and strangers?

- What does loving your neighbors and strangers entail (for instance, having a heart full of compassion for everyone you meet, healing, feeding, listening, humbly serving all, and seeking justice for the most vulnerable)?
- What helps you and your community to be like Jesus in this way?

Closing Prayer

Close your reflection time with prayer, either with these words or your own.

May I be open to opportunities to love my neighbors and strangers like Jesus. Amen.

Additional Engagement Opportunities

- Between now and Session 6, keep practicing Learn and Pray from the Way of Love with regular prayer and scripture reading.
- Reflect: How can you cross boundaries to love your neighbor? Journal or talk with someone about your reflections, and share them at your next small group session.
- Learn more about the Way of Love spiritual practice of Go. How can you cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus this week?