



The Art of Neighboring

A NEW ERA OF OUTREACH AT EAST WHITE OAK BIBLE CHURCH

Article by Pastor Justin Waples

The book *The Art of Neighboring* grew out of the experience of a group of pastors in the Denver area who were told by the city's leadership that the deepest need the people of Denver had was to have folks be better neighbors.

The pastors were humbled and challenged by politicians basically saying that the churches of the area would bring the greatest blessing if they simply did what Jesus told them to do. Love your neighbors!

What wonders may God work when the people of Jesus join together to love the neighbors in their communities?

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COMING UP

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JOIN THE PRAYER CORPS

Did you know there is a group of people praying each Sunday morning for you? (Page 4)



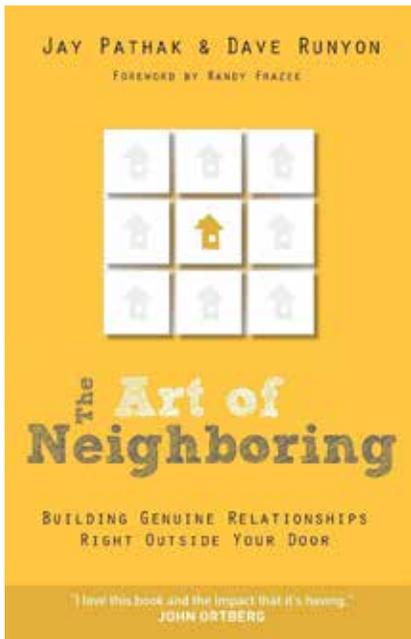
SECURITY AT THE OAK

We're working hard to make our church a more secure place for everyone. (Page 5)

East White Oak Bible Church

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As a part of our church's outreach to the community, Neighboring will become a foundational theme for our church-wide outreach efforts. Over the next several months we're going to invite you to get back to the basics and take the second half of the great commandment literally. The vast majority of us wish that we were closer to our neighbors, but that is often where it stops. So the question still remains, "How can we become better neighbors?" We will learn together that it is only through the power of Christ, obedience, and prayer that our lives and the lives our neighbors will be impacted by the Gospel.

When Jesus was asked to sum up everything into one command, He said to love God with everything we have and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Often we turn this simple idea of loving our neighbors into a nice saying, putting it on bumper stickers and refrigerator magnets, and then going on with our lives without actually putting it into practice.

What would happen if every follower of Jesus took the Great Commandment literally? Is it possible that the solution to our society's biggest issues has been right under our noses for the past two thousand years? Read these words from the books of Matthew and Galatians:

Matthew 22:34-40 says, "But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Galatians 5:13-15 says, "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another."

Jesus was once asked what the most important commandment was. This sounds to us like a Bible trivia question and in fact the folks that asked Jesus were trying to stump him. But the question in Jesus' time and place was essentially the same as folks asking today 'what is it all about.' We might make the connection ourselves between God's most essential instruction and the reason we are alive. Jesus does. And when asked what the most important thing was, Jesus said we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Loving God and loving our neighbor—that is what Jesus says we are to do above anything else.

The first thing that strikes me about this is that Jesus offers two positives as the most important commandments. We are tempted to focus on all the things the commandments tell us not to do—but at the core of these instructions is an invitation to action not a restriction. Too often we become Pharisees and believe the lie that God loves us most and best when we are avoiding 'bad things.' When we do this we miss out on the truth that God's instruction is not oppression but an offer of guidance to an abundant life.

So if the commandments were given for our good and joy, what shall we make of the 'most important' commandment? Could it be that our greatest good and greatest joys are found in following this instruction?

Do you think Jesus was using a figure of speech?

One of my biggest pet peeves is the misuse of the term "literally." As in when folks say, "I was so frustrated my head literally exploded." We have found a way to say literally and mean metaphorically. This is unhelpful and confusing. Scripture is filled with poetry and metaphor as well as history and literal statements. A relevant task in Bible exposition is to determine whether a text was intended to be taken literally or metaphorically. When Jesus says the kingdom of God is like a woman who lost

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

a coin, a father who had two sons, or an owner of a vineyard, He is trying to open our eyes to deep truths; not send us on a mission looking for a 1st century farm where a father lived with his two sons to discover who God is. This is figurative language and it is powerful and beautiful. Jesus uses it when he wants to change the way we view ourselves, God, or His mission.

The trouble is when we take a clear literal command of Jesus and turn it into a metaphor. This is exactly what has happened to the greatest commandment. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind” has often been reduced to simply attending a few church services and turning the command to love our neighbors into a metaphor for charitable action. Jesus says love your neighbor and so often we quickly convert that into an invitation to go on a mission trip, sponsor a charity organization, or perform some act of mercy in the community, but then neglect the folks that live right next door. These are great things that I am confident bring joy to the heart of God. But what if Jesus means exactly what he says: after loving God, our primary calling is to love the people who live around us?

As we embark on this area of outreach, we will be challenged to take Jesus at his word. We will be invited to learn our neighbors’ names and to be intentional about loving those around where we live. Our goal as a church is for folks who live next to us and around us to be thankful they live near us. Being a blessing is who we are and that starts on the streets and country roads on which we live.

At the very beginning it needs to be clear that this is not a new program or an evangelism strategy. The best insight and line from the whole of the book is this: “We don’t love our neighbor to convert them; we love our neighbor because we are converted.” Over the next several months, we will talk about sharing our faith and the hope that is within us in a way that invites and doesn’t repel people. We will tackle the how and when of sharing our faith.

I want to encourage you to begin talking over the Questions to Ponder (see right) with your friends and family and ask God to give you the courage to be obedient to His commands. I am excited to be on this journey together as a church and with each one of you!

— Pastor Justin Waples

- ★ What factors did you consider before choosing your current residence? What makes a community a great place to live?
- ★ In 2009, the mayor of Denver stated “The majority of issues that our community is facing would be eliminated or drastically reduced if we could just figure out a way to become a community of great neighbors.” To what extent do you think that this is true?
- ★ Describe your neighborhood and the relationships that you currently have with your immediate neighbors. Do you have any invisible neighbors or neighbors whose names you don’t know?
- ★ What would happen if every Christ follower made it a point to know and even befriend their literal neighbors?
- ★ Is it possible to love people when we don’t know information as simple as their names?
- ★ What if the people who actually live around us are not accidents but providential appointments?





YOU'RE INVITED TO JOIN US!

Prayer Corps

By John Shearin

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

With these words Paul closed his first letter of encouragement to the new believers in the church at Thessalonica. Likewise, these words are an encouragement to us to maintain an attitude of prayer and continual fellowship with God. One way East White Oak has done that over the years is prayer for our Sunday worship services while they're taking place. Those praying for our services are the Prayer Corps. Will you consider joining Prayer Corps?

Maybe you're familiar with Prayer Corps, but if not, I'd like you to be. You may remember over the past couple of years we've identified our destination as Christians, and as a congregation, as maturity in Christ. We've also talked about our pathways to that destination—Celebration, Community, and Cell. Prayer Corps is unique in that it falls neatly at the intersection of the three pathways. Prayer Corps groups are cells (small groups), and we pray for our celebration (worship service) and our communities (ABFs and youth and children's Sunday School). If you have questions about Prayer Corps you don't find answered here, we'll get answers to you. My contact information is at the end of this article.

What is Prayer Corps?

Prayer Corps is small groups of people, often 4-8, who meet on Sunday mornings in Room 173 to pray for our worship services. Group members pray for:

- God's presence with us during the worship service
- Pastor Scott as he delivers the message—for strength, energy, and a clear presentation of the Word of God
- Everyone worshipping and listening and their ability to focus on the message
- Other ministries and church leaders, ABFs, and children's Sunday School
- Prayer requests on the prayer list
- Personal prayer requests given to the church office

How often do Prayer Corps groups pray?

Prayer Corps groups pray one Sunday each month, and one service on that Sunday (unless a person wants to pray more often). Since there are four months each year with five Sundays, everyone has an opportunity to pray twice during one month a year.

How do we know who and what to pray for?

Each week our church staff updates a list of prayer requests for Prayer Corps. It's printed and ready for prayer in Room 173 each Sunday. Prayer Corps members do not have to prepare a list.

What happens during a prayer time?

People praying together have a short time of fellowship with an opportunity to share personal prayer requests. The group decides how they want to pray through the list, and prayer begins. Each person can pray for one prayer request at a time or pray through several at a time. It's up to the group to decide how to pray for the worship service and the items on the list.

How does Prayer Corps impact its members?

- Fellowship with the Lord and Christian brothers and sisters in prayer
- The opportunity to intercede on behalf of Pastor Scott, teachers, worshippers, and others
- A deeper understanding of Sunday morning activities at The Oak and how to pray for them

How can you learn more or join Prayer Corps?

You can contact me—we can talk at church, you can call or text me at (309) 838-9566, or email me at john.shearin@alumni.unc.edu. I can also connect you with others in Prayer Corps if you want to hear about their experiences and ask them questions. Come join us!

SECURITY AT THE OAK

by Dan Howerton and Dirk May

We recognize that God ultimately is our Protector and Deliverer. However, due to the environment in which we live today, we also recognize the need to exercise due diligence by becoming more aware of our church facility environment during services.

As a first step, the EWOCB Building Monitor Team was created and started on Oct 6, 2019. Currently, to create a presence on the grounds during services, they perform walkarounds of the church campus (facilities and grounds) during services and lock the nursery-wing door during services. We do not expect to be able to prepare for every scenario but our desire is that we, with God's help, can make EWOCB an overall safer, more secure place to worship for all attenders.



Our overall goal for 2020 is to continue maturing the team and adapt practices that make sense for the protection of our church family. More specifically, we plan to:

- Get security cameras installed and operational
- Begin meeting as a team every quarter—including the Children's Ministry Welcome Desk staff—to keep communication lines open
- Increase team size in order to provide a presence in the church lobby during the entirety of each service
- Get each team member certified in First Aid, CPR, and AED use
- Receive situation training from our first responders—McLean County Sheriff's Department
- Develop/implement policy to better define the team qualifications, expectations, and requirements
- Research security team best practices/methods of local churches to consider for use at EWOCB



WHAT CHRISTIANS NEED TO KNOW

Have you just been letting life "happen?"
Feel like your life is just wasting away?
Do you feel like you are just drifting?
Feeling lethargic?
Wandering?

Would you like to start life over? Well, let me remind you, you have been born a second time. You are now living what's called the Christian life. But, what exactly is the Christian life and how do you do it?

Actually, I've been thinking about that for several years and I've been doing some research. Then I discovered some interesting internet technology called "blogging." It took me quite a while but I finally figured out how to do it (I'm too cheap to hire someone to do it for me) and I created a "blog site" called whatchristiansneedtoknow.com. It is dedicated to the study of what Christians need to know to successfully live the Christian life. Sometime when you are cruising around the internet, take a look and let me know what you think? Explore with me what Christian living is all about. (merold@merold.com)



MEN'S BREAKFAST

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29

8:00am in the Banquet Room

Men's Ministry breakfasts in 2020 will focus on The Oak's "Four Affections." Join us February 29 as Dave Osenga leads a discussion on Growing in Christ. We will explore how to know Jesus better, love him more, and serve him faithfully! Enjoy a hearty breakfast and fellowship. Sign up by February 24.

REGISTER ONLINE AT EWO.ORG

SMALL GROUPS

Get Connected at The Oak!

In Small Groups, we are the body of Christ in a small group sized setting. This is an important size for the purpose of maturing in Christ.

See Exodus 18:21-23; Mark 3:14 (Jesus' small group); Acts 5:42 (the first church at Jerusalem was organized into small groups); see also 1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15 for examples throughout the first century church.

The struggles of life cannot be overcome alone. The mission to make disciples cannot be accomplished alone. The small group is a wonderful ministry to the believer. The community that can happen in a small group is unmatched. Small groups vary in basis for meeting. Some meet due to geographical proximity; others are gender based or interest based; some are based on stage in life.

Regardless, the mission of the small group is to make disciples. This means that small groups are not static. There will be a life span to a small group. Hopefully, small groups invite others to join them until they need to divide into two small groups, having been a training ground for creating new leadership. We need to avoid the "transfiguration trap" where we feel so comfortable in our own small group that our sense of mission to make disciples gets lost. Folks are welcome to join more than one small group, but everyone should belong to at least one. Knowing, being known, and being on mission for God happens in small groups like nowhere else.

Sign up for a Small Group on a Connection Card or e-mail justin@ewo.org to register.

Are you interested in baptism?

BAPTISM CLASS

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23
9:00 AM IN ROOM 174**

"Baptism and the Lord's Supper are gifts that the Lord of the church has given to his people...that visually proclaim the gospel and promote a healthy witness of Christ's transforming power. Let us joyfully accept them and celebrate them to His glory and our good."

– John Hammett, Southeastern Theological Seminary

Matthew 28:19 says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Baptism is a symbol, an outward sign of an inward change. It serves as a public proclamation of one's faith in Christ. The pattern throughout scripture is belief and repentance followed by baptism. Baptism is always administered to anyone having believed first. See Matthew 3:2-6; 28:19; Acts 2:37-38; 8:12; 16:14-15, 34; 18:8; 19:1-7.

We invite you to join our Baptism Class on Sunday, February 23, 2020 at 9:00am. This class is the prerequisite for requesting to be baptized. Adults as well as junior and senior high school students are welcome to attend. We require that parents attend with children under 16. Please email justin@ewo.org for more information!



GOSPEL RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Please take advantage of these free Gospel Resources and join us in reaching out to your community!

Here at The Oak, we seek to build and maintain a Gospel Resource display with themed resources to make your personal outreach ministry more effective. Look on the table in the long hallway for upcoming seasonal resources, Jesus DVDs in dozens of languages, and short studies on the basics of our faith or the Gospel of John.

"Take what you need" is what the sign says! Don't see your favorite resource? Email justin@ewo.org for a copy.



M.O.M.S. (Moms Offering Moms Support)

M.O.M.S. (Moms Offering Moms Support) meets the first and third Fridays of the month (September - April) from 9:30-11:30 AM in Room 172. Calling all moms of infants through elementary school aged kids...come be recharged and encouraged! Childcare is \$2/per child (max of \$8/per family). For more information contact Jessica (jessicamhatcher@gmail.com).



Save the Date! Breath of Fresh Air

Friday, April 24, 6:30pm. An evening of encouragement, community, and creativity! Invite a friend to join you. Experience creative workshops, delicious refreshments, and more. Watch for details and registration in March.



March 14 "Gather" Brunch

You're invited to gather with us for conversation over brunch. In a superficial, distracted world, join us as we press pause and connect on a deeper level. Watch for sign-up information!



New Highest Groups are forming

Meet weekly with three to five women seeking to develop a transforming, life-long relationship with Christ. Develop spiritual practices, study scripture, and share your journey with others. Groups set their own schedule and location. Contact Sue Jackson for details. s_jackson44@yahoo.com



Women's Winter Bible Studies

Thursday morning and evening studies include a Precept-Upon-Precept study on Judges and a Stonecroft study on the Holy Spirit. Studies will continue until March 26. Visit ewo.org/connect/adults/women for more details.

ELDER NOTES



by Dave Osenga,
Chairman of the
Elder Board

Here at The Oak, we want to nurture Four Affections in everyone moving toward Maturity in Christ.

- 1) Growing in Christ
- 2) The Bible and Prayer
- 3) Mission & Outreach
- 4) Obedience & Christian Living

This month I want to challenge you to think about the second Affection—the Bible and Prayer. This means that we grow in our real use of the Bible and prayer. We want to grow in our knowledge of the Word, our Christian beliefs, and to better be able to share the Gospel. We seek to develop a life of personal and corporate prayer, to pray as worship, and as mission as we seek the rescue of the lost.

Speaking of growing in our knowledge of the Bible—how did you enjoy reading through the whole Bible last year? I hope that you found it rewarding and that it gave you a better love of God's word. This year, we are reading the Bible in chronological order. Let's see how that affects your walk with God!

News from the Elder Board:

1. Pastor Josh has assumed leadership and oversight of all of our single adults and has formed two groups, one for single adults 18-24 and one for single adults 25+. He is working towards finishing his MDiv studies this spring, so pray for him as he balances this, his growing family, and as he continues teaching in the youth areas.
2. Work is ongoing on the upgrading of our website, logo, signage, and ways to better communicate our mission and goals.



JOURNEY BAGS

FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE



[FEBRUARY 2 – MARCH 8] SEE THE HALLWAY DISPLAY FOR MORE INFORMATION



WINTER

ELECTIVES

Electives will continue each Sunday morning until March 8. All adults are invited!



Discovering Membership / 9:00am / Room 174

Examine the mission and history of the church, doctrine, ordinances, and the devotional life. This is the next step for anyone pursuing church membership.



Responding to Life's Difficulties / 9:00am / Room 170

Hear stories from those who have lost their spouse, had children stray from the faith, lived through life threatening illness, and more. How might the Bible inform your own response to "trial and tribulation"?



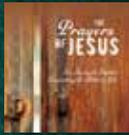
Christ-Centered Parenting / 9:00am / Room 172

Prepare to have meaningful conversations with your children about pornography, identity, homosexuality, abortion, technology, and more...all from a gospel perspective.



The Art of Neighboring / 9:00am / Room 171

When Jesus summed up everything important into one command, he said to love God and love your neighbor. What if Jesus meant that we should love our actual neighbors?



The Prayers of Jesus / 10:30am / Room 170

Jesus was a man of prayer who deeply valued intimate communion with his heavenly Father. What can we learn from the prayers he prayed?



Building Your Life on the Promises of God / 10:30am / Room 171

The pressures of this world can weigh you down. Living a life of confidence in God is available to you. You have everything you need in God's divine power and His precious promises.