



# Five Steps for Sharing the Gospel with Your Neighbors

by Lucas Burton

Immediately before his ascension, Jesus' promised his disciples that the coming Holy Spirit would empower them to be "[his] witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" ([Acts 1:8](#)). Though they had already been commissioned to "make disciples of all nations" ([Matt 28:19](#)), their instructions were to begin this mission in Jerusalem ([Luke 24:47](#)). While there are significant theological reasons for making Jerusalem the starting point of the church's mission, we should not overlook the simple fact that beginning in Jerusalem meant starting at home in their own community.

In our efforts to bring the gospel to the most distant and unreached corners of the globe we must not overlook the opportunity and responsibility that God has given us to make Christ known to the folks next door—our neighbors.

Some of us may already be making inroads in sharing the gospel with our neighbors, and others may be wracking our brain to remember the name of the person down the hall or across the street. Wherever you find yourself, here are five basic steps toward being a faithful witness where you live.

**Pray** - It may seem like a given to start with prayer, but ask yourself, "when was the last time I prayed for my neighbors?" If the answer is "I can't remember," or "I don't think I ever have," then begin by asking God to give you a heart of compassion for the people on your block or your apartment floor. Pray that he would help you to see your lost neighbors as "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" ([Matt 9:36](#)). Pray that God would open a door for you to speak to your neighbors about Christ ([Col 4:3](#)) and that he would give you both the words and boldness you will need in those moments ([Eph 6:19–20](#)).

**Seek** - Jesus described his earthly ministry saying, “the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” ([Luke 19:10](#)). In other words, Jesus did not wait for people to come to him—he went to them. For those of us who have barely ever spoken to our neighbors, this means starting with a “good morning” or “my name is...” Once you’ve introduced yourself, look for common meeting spaces that will provide you with more opportunities to interact—whether it’s the laundry room downstairs, dropping your kids off at the bus stop, an afternoon at the neighborhood playground, or offering to help clear a snow-covered driveway. The goal is to intentionally place ourselves in regular contact with our neighbors in hopes of having opportunities to get to know them and to speak of Christ.

**Invite** - Some of us may be prepared to interact with our neighbors at the park down the street or even on our front porch, but the thought of inviting them into our homes seems strange or uncomfortable. Sadly, many of us have become accustomed to a culture that says, “my home is my private—my retreat from the business and chaos of life” instead of viewing our home as a resource for living on mission in our community. The reality is, one of the best ways you can build trust and relationship with your neighbors is by breaking the norm and inviting them into the space that culture says is yours alone. Whether it’s inviting one neighbor over for coffee, a next-door family for dinner, or several people for a potluck BBQ, we should be eager to open our doors to those around us. Once we recognize that we are “ambassadors for Christ” ([2 Cor 5:20](#)) we will begin to see our homes as embassies of the kingdom of Heaven, which exist for a greater purpose than our own comfort and escape.

**Share** - In the midst of seeking our neighbors and inviting them into our homes and lives, we should be looking for and creating opportunities to share the gospel with them. In some cases, an opportunity might present itself in our very first conversation, and in other cases we may need to build relationship with that person before they become open to discussing things of faith. For this reason, we need to approach every interaction prayerfully and listen closely for the Holy Spirit to direct us concerning when to speak and when to listen. While our goal is to lovingly call our neighbors to repent and trust in Christ, we should recognize that doing so may involve several conversations about who Jesus is and what it means to follow him. Instead of saving these topics for one-off “evangelistic” conversations, we should speak openly and regularly about our faith and its relevance to every sphere of our life.

**Invest** - Being a faithful witness to those around us means choosing to see them as people not projects. When we think of our neighbors, our goal should not be finding an opportunity to ramble through a gospel presentation so we can check their name off a list and move on. Instead of trying to appease a sense of Christian duty or guilt our motivation should be love. In his letter to the Thessalonians Paul writes: “being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us” ([1 Thess 2:8](#)). One the greatest indicators that you are growing in love for your neighbors is your readiness to share not only the gospel but yourself with them—to invest in their lives as you lead them to Jesus.

What would it look like if Christians across our country believed that God has empowered us with his Holy Spirit to be witnesses in the very place we live? Imagine how God would transform our communities if together we endeavored to make Jesus known among our neighbors by praying, seeking, inviting, sharing, and investing.

As the Church gives itself for the cause of global missions, may we not forget that fulfilling the Great Commission means not only crossing the world but also crossing the street!