

12 neighbors Discussion Guide

Week One : Understanding Poverty

Note: In this episode, you will hear briefly from several "neighbors" whose stories we will get to know more fully throughout the course of the next six episodes.

Pre-Film Question

Start by discussing as a group:

- If this is a new group, perhaps start with a round of introductions and ask each person to share their hopes and goals for being part of this discussion group.
- To you, what does it mean to **love your neighbor**?
- Who should be included in the definition of "**your neighbor**"?

Watch the "Understanding Poverty" episode 1

Discussion Questions

1. What are your initial thoughts, impressions or takeaways from the film?
2. In what ways did the film challenge your personal definition of who is **your neighbor**?
3. What are the biggest challenges in practically living this out?
4. In what ways did the film inform or challenge your understanding of what poverty is?
5. How did the film challenge your assumptions around why someone might be poor or marginalized? How does your understanding influence how you might help?

Father Gregory Boyle points out that one of the main factors is "sheer dumb luck". He says, "...some people win the zip code lottery, some people win the parent lottery, or the education lottery, and some don't win any lottery at all. And it has nothing to do with moral character, smarts, or the ability to work hard. Not all choices are created equal"

Fr. Boyle also talked about the "forced choice economy" where there are "...unacceptable sets of choices, and yet they're forced to make them because you really can't do it all."

6. Can you share a story where you were in a situation where receiving help from someone made you feel weak, or ashamed, or powerless? What would it be like to experience this daily? How would it affect your sense of identity and value?

Father Gregory Boyle: "The principal suffering of the poor throughout history and scripture is shame and disgrace."

Julie regarding the food bank: "it felt very undignified. I just felt really gross after."

Victoria: "In our society those kind of labels, when you start buying into that stuff, you start losing dignity and respect for yourself and you start believing that stuff."

Nikki: "It makes people feel less than. It makes people feel unimportant. It makes people feel as if they have no control over their lives."

7. What did you think of the film characters' definition of what it really means to **love your neighbor**? What resonated the most with you?

Josh: "It's not something you can throw money at. You have to throw your time."

Jenny: "It's showing them that they are worthy of you stopping, and listening, and sharing your stories together."

Andy: "It starts with humility. You have to come into the relationship assuming you don't have the answers."

Del: "Your neighbor could be your enemy too. You've got to break bread with people, man!"

Father Greg: "It was the imagining of a circle of compassion with nobody outside of it." And "the neighbor is the other. The neighbor is the one who is outside... and that's radical."

Nikki: "we are asked to serve in our workplaces, in our families, in our friendships, in our churches, in our communities"

8. In what ways do we insulate ourselves and restrict the kinds of "**neighbors**" that we are willing to build relationships with?

Assessment

Assess the priority that "**loving your neighbor**" currently holds in your life. How do you feel about it? Are there changes you'd like to make in order to make this more central to your lifestyle?

Action

This week, spend some time learning about situations of poverty and marginalization in your community and do some research on the various organizations and people that are working to make a difference in your community. You could start with just online research, or if you will consider making contact with leaders in these organizations to deepen your learning.