

July 4, 2021

## 5. How to Be a Neighbor — Proverbs 3:27-30; 6:1-5; 25:20-23

Idella (my spouse) and I have lived in eight homes in six states. In each location, we determined that we would have good neighbors. Somehow, no matter what.

We have lived in three locations in Michigan. In Kansas, our home was at the entrance of Hesston College. In Fisher, Illinois, we lived in town while I completed Hesston's supervised ministry requirement at East Bend Mennonite Church. In Wayland, Iowa, the location of my first pastorate, we lived in town, with neighbors on both sides. In 2000, we moved to Nappanee, Indiana, to assume a second pastorate. We purchased a home in a cul-de-sac. Eighteen years on, we started our retirement. We bought a duplex in Florida.

We have always had good neighbors. No exceptions. Until now. (You knew that was coming.) New neighbors—with a *reputation*—moved in next door. We were warned: "He's hard to get along with. Nothing's ever his fault." Me to Idella: "We'll just have to teach them how to be good neighbors." Everything went well. For five years. Then "Richard" went to the city over a minor drainage issue, rather than discussing it with me, escalating it to a "code" issue.

I talked with Richard and thought we had come to an understanding. Not quite. He complained to the neighbors. We talked again. He complained to me about *other* neighbors and sent me an email naming their offensive conduct, including my indiscretions.

For me, today's title becomes a question: How to be a neighbor? How do we live into the choice to *have* good neighbors? How to live into the words of Jesus, the foundation of my relational beliefs: "Love your neighbors as yourself" (Mark 12:31).

Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall"<sup>1</sup> is named in this study (*Salt & Light*, p. 28): "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." And "What I was walling in or walling out / And to whom I was like to give offense." And the end: "Good fences make good neighbors." How does one interpret Frost?

My neighbor has constructed a "wall" between us. How do I respond? What does grace require of me? I wish I could be present in the various Sunday school classes to hear rejoinders to these questions.

—Ruben Chupp  
[rubenhome@outlook.com](mailto:rubenhome@outlook.com)

---

<sup>1</sup>. Robert Frost, "Mending Wall," *North of Boston* (Boston: David Nutt, 1914).  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44266/mending-wall>

**Ruben Chupp** of Nappanee, Indiana, is a spiritual director, chaplain, and retired pastor. His personal goals: “love God and the person in front of me at any given time; read some, write some, think some, pray some, and take a nap every day; love my wife, Idella, my children, and their children with all the grace I possess; and finally, get home before dark.”

## Resources for this session

### URLS in the Leader guide

- Amir Vera and Laura Ly, “White Woman Who Called Cops on Black Man Bird-Watching in Central Park Has Been Fired,” CNN, May 26, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/26/us/central-park-video-dog-video-african-american-trnd/index.html>
- Niara Savage, “Christian Cooper Declares He Won’t Cooperate In Prosecution of ‘Central Park Karen’ on False 911 Report Charges, Claims She’s Suffered Enough,” Atlanta Black Star, July 8, 2020, <https://atlantablackstar.com/2020/07/08/christian-cooper-declares-he-wont-cooperate-in-prosecution-of-central-park-karen-on-false-911-report-charges-claims-shes-suffered-enough/>

### *Salt & Light Videos*

**Jaye Lindo** is the presenter for unit 2, Neighbors. These teaching videos are great for leader preparation or introducing each session. They are available on [MennoMedia’s YouTube channel](#). Jaye is the pastor of 7 Ways Home Fellowship, Bowie, Maryland.