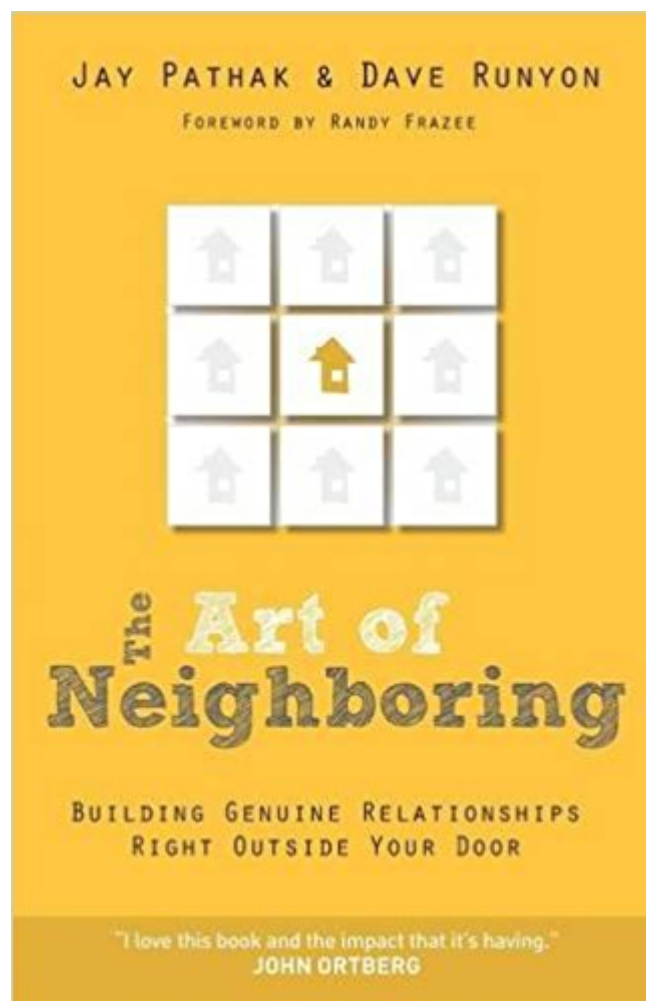




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The Art Of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door



Synopsis

Drawing on the success of their own church campaign, two pastors help readers learn to value, respect, and care for the people who live in their neighborhoods.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What if Jesus meant that we should love our actual neighbors? 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. Most of us have turned 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? "Building relationships with our neighbors leads to better communities, better cities, and ultimately . . . a better world. I encourage you to read this book and to step outside your front door and start making a difference."--Ken Blanchard, coauthor of *The One Minute Manager* and *Lead Like Jesus* "Our church spent a month studying and applying the principles found in *The Art of Neighboring*. It's simple yet powerful. I love this book and the impact it's had on our church."--John Ortberg, senior pastor of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church "At the end of the day, community transformation is all about strategic neighboring. *The Art of Neighboring* is a great book and a useful tool that will help you engage your neighborhood in a meaningful way."--Bob Lupton, author of *Toxic Charity* "The Art of Neighboring is a tool that is

helping government and faith-based leaders work together to serve their communities."--Reggie McNeal, missional leadership specialist for Leadership Network "Jay and Dave hold readers accountable to live out the Great Commandment in literal and creative ways. The Art of Neighboring is a unique and necessary addition to any serious Christian's missional library."--Ed Stetzer, author of The Subversive Kingdom "Thought-provoking yet practical. The truths in the book have the potential to transform not only your life but also your entire community."--Margaret Feinberg, author of Scouting the Divine and The Sacred Echo "The Art of Neighboring has united many of the churches in Duluth and has helped us to launch a neighboring movement. I'm excited about the influence it is having in my city and its potential to impact other cities around the country."--Don Ness, mayor of Duluth, Minnesota "The Art of Neighboring is at the forefront of a national movement to renew local communities. This book reminds us all of the value of pursuing relationships with the people who live around us."--John McKnight, co-director of the Asset Based Community Development Institute, Northwestern University

Jay Pathak is the senior pastor of the Mile High Vineyard, located in a suburb northwest of Denver, Colorado. Prior to planting this church in 2001, he served at the Columbus Vineyard as a leader in its young-adult ministry, Joshua House, and as an intern to the senior pastor, Rich Nathan. Jay is a graduate of Ohio State University with a BA in philosophy and a graduate of the Vineyard Leadership Institute. He has spoken nationally and internationally for the Vineyard and other groups in both conference and classroom settings. Currently he serves on the National Board of Vineyard USA. Jay and his wife, Danielle, have two daughters. Dave Runyon helps faith, business, and government leaders work together in the Denver Metro area. He serves as the executive director of CityUnite and as a consultant for companies that have a desire to make a positive impact in their communities (cityunite.org). Previously, Dave served as a pastor for nine years at Foothills Community Church and The Next Level Church. In 2010 he led a neighboring movement that mobilized over 70 churches and 40,000 people in the Denver area. He graduated from Colorado State University, where he studied history and secondary education. He speaks locally and nationally encouraging leaders to collaborate for the good of their cities. Dave and his wife, Lauren, have four kids and do not plan to have any more.

Many years ago I preached my Grandpa Foster's funeral. While it was a very difficult thing to do, I was blessed. The order of service for the funeral was unusual. It read, "Services for Robert Lee Foster ... Service performed by Robert Lee Foster." While preaching the service, I was very nervous

and in mourning. I had a very difficult time holding it together but I am called of God and my grandmother asked me to preach the service. I wanted to say "no" but I am glad that I didn't because I would have missed a huge blessing. A blessing that continues to bless me today. As people were leaving the service, I received many kind words from my family. Many of my grandparent's neighbors and friends who were in attendance that day also shared words of sympathy with me. I started to notice a theme in their comments about my grandfather. They kept telling me about various things that my grandfather had done for them and how much they appreciated my grandfather. Many of them said, "He was a good neighbor." My grandfather lived his more than ninety years in rural Kansas. He worked on oil rigs into his seventies. He also served the local community church as a lay minister. I am biased (and one of his namesakes) because he is my grandpa. I knew that he was great! But to stand at his funeral and hear the community express their gratitude for his "neighborliness" was a true blessing. I learned something that day: being a good neighbor matters. A few months back one of my friends stumbled on a recent publication: Jay Pathak and David Runyon, *The Art of Neighboring* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012). The title struck a cord with me and I thought that I should read that book. A few weeks went by and then it was offered as a free daily deal on Kindle so I downloaded it. I finished reading it last week and I am impressed. The basic narrative of the book is a story about a church in Colorado that is trying to find a way to serve their community. They decided to live out the Second Greatest Commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31), not generically but specifically. Consistently though out the book, they remind us, "The problem is...that when we aim for everything, we hit nothing. So when we insist we're neighbors with everybody, often we end up being neighbors with nobody" (page 35; Kindle, location 382). The whole book is good, practical advice about how to build a network of people in your neighborhood to care for the needs around you. Themes of friendship, compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation are woven throughout the book. Chapter eleven, "The Art of Forgiving" is a must read for solid, practical advice on "When Neighbors are Enemies...What do you do when you have a neighbor you can't seem to get along with?" (page 156; Kindle, location 1695). [As far as I know, I am currently at peace with my neighbors.] Many of us would say, "I am too busy to add anything else to my life." And indeed, we are a busy culture. One of the admonitions that they gave to reorient our priorities was "be interruptible." "The idea of being interruptible is being willing to be inconvenienced. It means developing a mind-set that accepts the interruptions of others" (page 55; Kindle, location 602). This is one area where I desperately need to improve, with my neighbors, my family, my friends, my students...you get the picture! You should also check out their website, artofneighboring.com, but it will make more sense once you have read the book. The

website includes many excellent resources for living out the teachings in the book. Including:- a pdf copy of the block map talked about in the book- how to start a movement guides for both civic and church leaders- how to cast a vision for your city- a block party kit- and a host of other digital resources!The book is a good book. I hope that you will read it for yourself and think about how you might become an intentional good neighbor."Start now, by doing the small things well, and commit to good neighboring as a lifestyle. You have been invited to begin a sacred journey, one that has the potential to change your block, your city, and possibly the world" (page 184; Kindle. location 2014).My grandpa had that figured out and his neighbors gave witness. Will yours? Will mine?

I picked up this book a couple months ago when I visited The Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, TX. They had a kiosk in the foyer with recommended reading relating to the topic of that morning's sermon (which was excellent, by the way), and this was one of them.I'd never read a book on neighboring. I don't know that I'd ever heard of a book on neighboring. And honestly, I'd never considered "neighboring" to be a verb. So I bought it. I'm glad I did!Pathak & Runyon are both pastors based in Denver, Colorado. This book grew out of an initiative in which their churches—along with eighteen others—joined forces to encourage their congregants to become better neighbors, at the encouragement of local elected officials. Their goal: mobilizing every church member to be intentional about reaching out to those who live close to them, and to build and foster relationships that lead to stronger, more caring neighborhoods all over their city."But why do we need a book about this? Shouldn't the Bible be enough to convince us to love our neighbor as ourselves?"Sure. Maybe. But do you intentionally reach out to your neighbors to the extent that you probably should? I know I don't. So maybe I needed something like this after all.One of their main points is a great one: We often misinterpret (or at least misapply) Luke 10:25-37. When a lawyer, seeking to justify himself, asked Jesus "who is my neighbor," Jesus responded by telling the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The takeaway is that everyone is my neighbor. Who am I called to love as I love myself? Everyone!Well, that's all true, so far as it goes. But the argument Pathak & Runyon make is that if "everyone" is my neighbor, it can be easy to overlook those who are my actual neighbors, living in close proximity to me. And while Jesus' commandment to love "everyone" stands, the fact remains that I can't love "everyone" specifically; I can only demonstrate love to those I actually encounter. Since God has providentially placed me in a certain place and time, the authors argue compellingly that I have a special calling to love those He has placed near me in a specific, tangible, sacrificial way.That's an important point, to be sure, and they build their case effectively, but it doesn't require a whole book to get that point across. The

Art of Neighboring spends a couple short chapters establishing the "why" of being a good neighbor, but the bulk of this book is very practical. Pathak & Runyon lay out a very specific strategy for building relationships with your neighbors, and developing unity in your community. One challenging concept which struck me as odd at first, but which I later grew to accept, is that "good neighboring" does not need to be explicitly evangelical. That is, building genuine, loving, long term relationships with our neighbors does not require us to draw every conversation back to the Gospel. It's not that we should avoid talking about Jesus... more that we should trust that, as we build trust and camaraderie with someone, the Spirit will open doors to share the Gospel at times when our neighbors will be ready to receive it. I know I've turned people off in the past by hitting them so hard with the Gospel that I forgot to love them (that is the point of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, after all!), resulting in doors that became closed for building any kind of relationship. Each chapter is genuinely helpful, though I often found myself skimming large sections. The biggest drawback is that this good book would have been a great book if it were about 80 pages shorter. The concept and the content are excellent, but the authors obviously had a word count quota that caused them to restate their points more often than necessary. Still, this book is very unique, and very much worth your time.

The United States is an individualistic culture where people are naturally task oriented instead of people oriented. There is nothing wrong with this, but often a side effect of such orientation can be people feeling isolated, lonely and have a sense of being incomplete at the end of the day. I am sure there are thousands of Americans that desire to have genuine relationships with others, but fail to for many reasons, such as fear of rejection, struggling with shyness, personality traits (eg. introvert), and other factors. This book encourages the reader to take the initiative in being the catalyst for starting relationships with their literal neighbors, that is the people that live in their community. On the other hand, there are collective cultures in which relationships are of high importance. I have lived in the United States most of my life, but currently live in the Philippines and spend some of my childhood living in Mexico. Both countries are collective cultures in which people are naturally people oriented. This includes but is not limited to neighbors always visiting with one another, sharing and borrowing house items (sugar, flour, tools), and often sharing meals together. This is perfectly normal in these cultures. Living in both collective and individualistic cultures I know that there are pros and cons to each. This book addresses a solution to a con of living in an individualistic culture. Lastly, "The Art of Neighboring" is a great and practical book on assisting an

individual and/or group that desires to start authentic relationships with their literal neighbors.

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