

We started by roasting s'mores in our front yard. We invited the neighborhood kids and their families and we all hung out in the front yard talking, playing, and roasting marshmallows. We also planned an end of summer party. We provided a BBQ meal for our neighbors and spent time getting to know them. It was great to have families with kids, retired couples, and college students all socializing and sharing a meal together. After the BBQ we showed a movie outside and provided snacks for everyone. We have plans to continue with the fun by cookies and cocoa with an outdoor movie sometime in November or December.

While we have planned some big events our ministry opportunities mostly present themselves in the everyday. If you were to visit our home whenever school is out, you will find the front yard littered with bikes and scooters, and a house full of children. Our house is often very noisy, very messy, and full of lots of fun. While I was typing this Mariah Shope stopped by to drop something off and said "Why are there so many kids in this house?" We laughed and said "It is always like this". We have had the chance to get to know these children and that opens the door to knowing their parents. We have found that just by getting to know these people and spending time with them, we have an opportunity to know their needs and how we can help them. It is our hope that our neighbors will see Jesus in us and want to know what makes us different.

Opening ourselves to whatever God wants to do with us in our neighborhood has opened some doors for talking to others about Jesus. We have had the opportunity to take neighbor kids to church, where we know they can learn about Jesus. Kevin has started a LTG with one of our neighbors down the street. They meet on Sunday nights and pray and discuss the Bible. We have also had the chance to discuss God at other times with our neighbors and their children.

This really sounds like a fun and easy thing to do, but it is not without it's obstacles. One of the main hurdles for me is the loss of quiet time. I am an introvert and I really like my nice, quiet house. It is always full of people now, and I know that is what God wants, so I am learning to cope. Another of the obstacles we have faced is some jealousy because of some of the friendships we have formed. When one of the children in the neighborhood who causes a lot of the problems comes over to play, my first instinct is to tell her to go away. In order to combat this I try to start my day by asking God to make our home a place of love where everyone feels welcome and safe. I try to remember that Jesus loves her and it often changes my perspective. This has also given us the chance to let our children know that they may not like certain people, but Jesus loves them and they need to show his love to everyone, not just people they like.

We have been blessed by our neighbors. Our children have formed life long friendships and have the opportunity to show the love of Jesus to others, even when they don't want to. I really liked what Stephanie Perez said at the end of her story last month. "These people, they are my blessings". Her statement echoes the way we feel about our neighbors.

What started out as a simple prayer has led us to find a neighborhood full of hurting people who need Jesus. It is our hope that our neighbors will see Jesus in us and want to know more about Him.