

11.2 A WORLD NEIGHBORS

If your next-door neighbor had a child who was starving, what would you do? Would you help? Give the child some of your extra food? Find a way to get the child some food? Go without food yourself so that the child could be fed?

There is another great story, in Luke's Gospel. A man came to Jesus and asked him what he needed to do to get to Heaven. Jesus replied by asking a question himself: What is written in the law? (The Jewish people strove to live by "the law," which is found in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible.) The man replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." To this Jesus said, "You have given the right answer, do this, and you will live." (Luke 11:25–28) But the man pressed Jesus for clarification, asking, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" The man said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 11:29–37)

In many ways we live in a world without neighbors today. Many people don't even know who their next-door neighbors are, and too often if a child were starving next door we wouldn't even know.

So, who is my neighbor?

Lately, I have been thinking a lot about this. My wife and I have three beautiful children and we do all we can to see to it that they have all they need physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. We are blessed materially and financially. But 22 percent of children in America live in poverty—that's more than sixteen million children. And while they may not live next door, they are my neighbors—and more than that, they are my brothers and sisters in Christ. And this is just America.

There are 2.2 billion children in the world, and one billion of them live in poverty.



Luke 11:25–37

KNOW IT: The Samaritans were looked down on in Jesus' time.

THINK ABOUT IT: Whom do you exclude, ignore, or look down upon?

LIVE IT: Go out of your way this week to include someone you would usually exclude.

Twenty-one thousand children die from poverty around the world every day. That's one child every four seconds, fourteen children dying every minute . . . and thirty-one children who have died since we began talking about it just over two minutes ago.

"They die quietly in some of the poorest villages on earth, far removed from the scrutiny and the conscience of the world. Being meek and weak in life makes these dying multitudes even more invisible in death." Unicef

They are our neighbors, yes, but more than that they are our family, our brothers and sisters. They are God's children.

What's the difference if the starving child lives next door or across the ocean? They are still God's children. And as always, God has a plan for his children. But he needs your help to fulfill his plan.

Will you set your plan aside and embrace his? If enough people do that, the world will become more just and much kinder, and be rid of so much unnecessary suffering.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. JESUS CALLS US TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR AS WE LOVE OURSELVES.
WHOM DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE YOUR NEIGHBOR?

2. WHY DO YOU THINK SO MANY CHILDREN DIE FROM LACK OF FOOD?

3. ARE YOU WILLING TO MAKE SACRIFICES TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT
OF SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?
