



WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

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“WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?”



(Photo is not the home mentioned in story.)

COULD IT HAPPEN IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

A True Story

Some of us remember a time when neighbors knew each other: we would talk over the back fence or walk over in the cool of the evening to sip iced tea under the shade of a tree. Unfortunately, those memories date back to my childhood, and I haven't experienced them since. Society has changed, and the change has brought an isolation that has resulted in the most needy, the most vulnerable neighbors going unnoticed for weeks and even months at a time.

What you are about to read is a true story that happened in a neighborhood where neighbors stopped being neighbors. However, before I go any further, I want to make it clear that I am not pointing any fingers as I relate the sad events. We don't know the whole story about this incident that could have happened in any neighborhood, even ours.



Who is My Neighbor?

We don't know why the brothers chose to live together or why they seemed to have no close friends or family. What we do know is that they were found dead in their home. Authorities believe the two, in their 60's, had been dead well over two years. Their decomposed bodies were found side by side in their recliners. Neighbors said they kept to themselves, and most thought they had moved because the house looked vacant.

Is it possible that for over two years they had no one to phone, drop by for a visit, or make any real effort to see how they were doing? Did the utility companies or the police check on them? Did a church member call or come knocking? Did not a single family member or friend check on them?

Obviously, we don't know all of the details or the circumstances. If we did, the story might read quite differently. We do know that many people seemingly failed, and two people are dead. Could seniors die alone in our neighborhood? Yes, they could if we aren't intentional in our actions.

The booklet you have before you is a biblical approach to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" We can ignore what is on the following pages and read more stories like this one, or we can be intentional neighbors ... treating our neighbors as we would want our parents to be treated. We can treat them as we would want to be treated, because one day ... we will be the aged and vulnerable neighbor!

Let's do our part to make sure that a similar story never happens in our neighborhood.

Stan Means
Elder Source Senior Ministries



“WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?”

JESUS GIVES US THE ANSWER IN THE STORY OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Who is my neighbor is the question an expert of the Law asked Jesus. We know the dialog as the story of The Good Samaritan. The participants in the story are two religious leaders (a priest and a Levite), an unidentified man on the side of road, and a Samaritan.

Most of us know the story well. The priest and a Levite both see the man who is naked, beaten and robbed; but they pass by on the other side of the road. The Samaritan stops, takes pity on the injured man, bandages his wounds, puts the man on his donkey, takes him to the inn, and pays the innkeeper to care for him until he returns.

We miss a key point in the story if we don't know the history. If the beaten man were not a Jew, the story would have likely said so. We do learn the identity of the one who helped. He was from Samaria, and the Jews didn't associate with Samaritans. Knowing that bit of information allows us to see that there is more to the story .

Jesus could have easily said, “The Jewish leaders deny me and deny my teachings. They are not compassionate or merciful; but one whom they despise, a Samaritan, is actually more of a neighbor than they are. Follow me and my teachings if you want eternal life. Help those who have no help. Don't pass them by. Go and be like the Samaritan. Be a neighbor to all in my name.”

*“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, Love your neighbor as yourself.”*



In the midst of the busyness of life, we can easily walk by. Our intentions are good, but the priest and the Levite probably thought their intentions were good as well. They may have considered themselves too busy to stop, or they had more important matters at the moment. Jesus' instruction to go and do likewise in the story of the Good Samaritan has a broad application. He could have used the woman in the story below to make his point.



TWO FOR TEA IS A LONELY WIDOW MY NEIGHBOR?

A tale is told of a very lonely older woman who received a visit from an old friend one fine afternoon. The woman brought out hot tea and cookies for her friend and sat them on the coffee table. The two ladies enjoyed tea, cookies, and sweet fellowship; but the time came for the visiting friend to leave. As the older woman watched her friend depart, she closed the door, returned to her familiar chair, and whispered, “Maybe tomorrow someone *really will* stop by and visit me, and I won’t have to imagine a visit like I did today’s visit.”

To go and do likewise may be as intense as taking care of one who has been beaten and robbed or as simple as stopping by to say hello to a very lonely older woman who needs someone to share tea, cookies, and conversation.



“THEY ABANDONED HIM WHEN HE NEEDED THEM MOST.” A TALE OF TWO OLD FRIENDS

Based on a True Story

I love the stillness of the winter and don't mind the cold weather. Even this latest blast, which has brought the coldest weather of the season, is peaceful. My health has declined to the point where most would consider me a shut-in, but I am fortunate to have a daughter who calls daily and stops by once a week to care for my needs beyond what the home health agency provides.

I don't worry about myself, but I have been worried about Ted, my neighbor across the street. Both of us are WWII veterans, retired auto workers, and widowers. We have been friends for years. I was very active in my church until my health failed. Seems now like the church has totally forgotten me. I tried numerous times to get someone from my church to visit Ted, but it has been a lost cause. I should have figured if they won't bother to visit me, a longtime member, they won't visit a stranger.

A policeman just left my house. I was worried because I hadn't seen or heard from Ted in a few days, and I hadn't seen any lights on the past three nights. I thought that someone may have taken him somewhere and he simply forgot to let me know; but Ted doesn't drive and all of his children live out of state. So, I called the police. They broke open the locked door and found Ted sitting in his favorite chair frozen to death. The police found the power bill and a stack of money to pay the bill sitting on the kitchen table. The power company should have checked before they cut off the power. His kids should have called their dad. My church should have visited him. They all abandoned him when he needed them most!





THE AGE WAVE TSUNAMI AND SOCIETY'S RESPONSE

Some Statistics

- Beginning in 1946 and ending in 1964, nearly 80 million children were born to a group called the Baby Boomers. They are reaching 65 at the rate of 10,000 per day.
- The parents of the Boomers are living much longer than previous generations, producing a tidal wave, a senior tsunami, that will rock the foundations of society and the church, neither of which is prepared.
- Today, seniors 65 and older in the United States outnumber the entire population of Canada.
- By 2020, the population that is 85 and older will almost double.
- By 2030, the number of seniors in nursing homes will double.

Family Caregivers

- Baby Boomers are also being called the Sandwich Generation because they are still helping their children and are also caring for their aging parents.

Businesses catering to the needs of seniors are seeing explosive growth.

- Drug Companies
- Home Health Agencies
- Home Care and Service Agencies
- Adult Day Services
- Senior Care Communities
- Retirement Communities



Government

- Is largely ignoring the fact that every government-based senior social safety net is on an unsustainable track.
- Political ideology and infighting has all but stopped the ability to address these issues with workable solutions.

The Church

- The church is fractured. In focusing almost solely on young families and children, some have said the church has abandoned its seniors and has forgotten biblical instruction pertaining to the aged.
- Most Americans, including those in the church, retire unequipped to deal with the health and financial challenges of their senior years.



Seniors are less likely to feel valued in today's culture, and the same is true for many church-based seniors.



A CHURCH-BASED SOLUTION FOR

Together We Can Reach the

A Five-Step Plan

1. Help the seniors within your church who have no help.
2. Do the same for your senior neighbors.
3. Adopt a senior care center as a church outreach.
4. Supply the care center with a volunteer chaplain.
5. Help another church to do as you have done.

In-Reach, Helping Those Within The Church

Families today are scattered, leaving many seniors with little or no family to care for them. The church can step in and assist as needed with practical household chores, physical needs, and emotional/spiritual needs.

Out-Reach, Helping Those Without

1. **The Senior Neighbor.** Neighborhood Watch usually implies a crime watch, but the church engaged in caring for the needs of their senior neighbors gives new meaning to neighborhood watch and also enables out-reach to those that may not be able to help themselves and who have no help from family or church.
2. **The Care Center.** Seniors in care centers are some of the most overlooked in society. Many have lost their homes, fortunes, families, friends, and have been abandoned by their church. Adopting a care center brings the love of Christ to seniors, staff, and family.



SENIOR IN-REACH AND OUT-REACH

World One Neighbor at a Time!

3. **The Chaplain.** A typical care center is larger (number of residents and staff) than the average church. A retired pastor, chaplain, or qualified layperson can have an enormous spiritual impact. Many church seniors feel abandoned by their church once they are in a care center. Most have at least one family member that the chaplain will get to know. Also, the typical care center has a great number of supporting care staff. The opportunity for ministry is limitless.
4. **Duplication.** The church can no longer afford to ignore the fact that our nation is aging. In following these simple steps we can see a dramatic national impact in the health and faith of seniors both at home and in the care center. A movement begins with the willing and continues by success and invitation. So, help another church follow your successful example and lead them through the steps.

Let the Movement Begin!



After Visiting a Nursing Home in the United States and noticing the absence of smiles, Mother Theresa said that the Poverty of Loneliness in care centers was worse than on the streets of Calcutta. *“This neglect to love brings a Spiritual Poverty.”*





LET THE MOVEMENT BEGIN!

What will Your Story Be?

A vision has been set forth in these pages. What you do with the vision is up to you. You can walk by on the other side pretending not to notice, or you can be intentional and engage.

The question we need to ask ourselves is simple. Do I want to be like the priest and the Levite, or do I want to be like the Samaritan? All three made a conscious choice. Two chose to ignore, but the selfless actions of the third saved a man's life and shattered a cultural barrier.

Jesus was asked a question, and his answer has survived over 2,000 years. The story lives today because someone dared to make a difference. What will your story be?

Will you choose to be like the Samaritan?

Let the Movement of God's Spirit Begin.

Stan Means

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Elder Source Senior Ministries

NOTE: All Scripture quoted is from The New International Version.

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The glory of young men is their strength, but
the gray hair is the splendor of the old.
Proverbs 20:29

Do not cast me away when
I am old; do not forsake me
not when my strength is gone.
Psalms 78:9

Therefore we do not lose heart.
Though outwardly we are
wasting away, yet inwardly we
are being renewed day by day.
2 Corinthians 4:16

The righteous flourish like a palm tree. They are
planted in the house of the Lord: They still bear
fruit in old age.... **Psalms 92:12-14**

Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for
the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord.
Leviticus 19:32

