



February 2009

Dear Friend:

One of my favorite stories is in Luke 10, the parable about the Good Samaritan. Often overlooked is that the story is an answer to the question, “Who is my neighbor?” To that question, Jesus responds with the story of a Samaritan man who had different customs, different religious beliefs, and lived far away. This was not who we usually think of when we consider who is our neighbor.

Every now and then somebody asks the question, “Why does PathLight focus its energy on at-risk kids in other countries instead of here at home?” I respond with the story of the Good Samaritan and point out that we are called to love our neighbor, and that our neighbors are all over the world.

This is even truer today in an era of globalization. Here is a story about how globalization impacts us in ways we often never notice.

Last weekend I needed to pick up a picture being framed that was finally done after months of delay. I drove to the quaint downtown area of Pleasanton, which looks like a movie director’s idea of Main Street America. Parking at the curb, I stepped out of my car and a passing pedestrian asked me for directions to a nearby restaurant. His accent made clear that he was from Africa; I learned that he was visiting family in town. After giving him directions, I turned toward the frame shop and almost tripped over a little dog on a leash that was being led by a woman from Hong Kong. We both apologized (her for the leash in the way, me for my clumsiness), and I walked into the frame shop. The owner of the shop then apologized for the delay in getting the job completed, explaining that the imported frame was held up in customs for two months. I paid the bill, stepped outside, and walked past a sidewalk café that served Mediterranean food. Just at that moment an Indian family was being served lunch and smiling at the food on their plate. I opened the back of my German vehicle, put the picture inside, and drove away.

Thus in about 5-minutes I encountered an African man and an Asian woman, discussed the challenges of global trade, enjoyed the delicious smell of olive bread Mediterranean style, smiled at an Indian family, and drove a German vehicle down a classic American Main Street. Oh, and I didn’t mention it earlier, but the painting we had framed was from Italy!

We live in an incredibly complex, globalized world. Who is our neighbor? I have come to believe that our neighbor is virtually everybody on the planet, many of who seem far away but are actually nearby.

So when I am asked why PathLight works in faraway places, I respond that it is not so far, that we are called to walk in the way of Jesus, and that caring for our neighbor – even our neighbor in Belize – is part of that walk.

As you think about your neighbor, please lift up the PathLight students in your prayers. They face challenges academically, spiritually and socially as they attempt to break a cycle of poverty. Your prayer and financial support is a tangible way to love these neighbors. Besides, you never know when you might run into one of them on Main Street!

Blessings,

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