

August 16, 2020

Who Is My Neighbor?

Luke 10:25-37

When Jessica McClard installed a small wooden box on the grounds of her church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, in 2016,¹ she had no idea what she was starting. That wooden box is approximately three feet by three feet, has a see-through door on its front, and sits atop a pole so it is at eye level of passers-by. Inside are basic pantry items and toiletries. It is the first Little Free Pantry. Everything inside is free for anyone who needs it. “Anyone can put up a pantry, anyone can take from the pantry, and anyone can donate to the pantry.”² They are a way for neighbors to help one another in times of need.

Little Free Pantries are now located around the world, and over the past few months, the pantries have seen a spike in activity. “COVID has people looking to do something and this is something that people can do,” McClard says. “Social distance is built in, so you really don’t need to be close to someone to help through these spaces. I feel like it’s the mini-pantry moment.”³ As more families struggle with food insecurity during the pandemic, the Little Free Pantries offer a way for them to get immediate help when a traditional food bank might not be available.

Scripture tells us that the man traveling to Jericho was left “near death.” Perhaps he was even unconscious when the Samaritan found him, meaning that he might not have seen his rescuer. He might not have been able to thank the person who saved his life. Those who donate to the Little Free Pantry don’t know who benefits from the donations. Donating is an act of generosity that is often unrecognized by others, but God sees and is pleased.

Random acts of kindness aren’t always huge, life-saving acts. Sometimes a thing as small as a tube of toothpaste or a can of beans might make a difference in someone’s life. The student book author writes, “Our means to help others might be limited and not as extensive as what the Samaritan did for this injured man, but our compassion should be limitless. Helping others in times of need is a clear and positive expression of God’s healing hand in the world.”⁴ We are all called to love our neighbors as ourselves in ways big and small.

1. What are ways you can help your neighbors this week?
2. How have you helped someone anonymously in the past?
3. How have others helped you in a time of need?

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¹From littlefreepantry.org/what-we-do.

²From csmonitor.com/World/Making-a-difference/2020/0721/With-Little-Free-Pantries-neighbors-feed-neighbors-in-need.

³From csmonitor.com/World/Making-a-difference/2020/0721/With-Little-Free-Pantries-neighbors-feed-neighbors-in-need.

⁴From *Adult Bible Studies*, Summer 2020, by Robert Gardner (Cokesbury, 2020); page 117.