“And Who Is My Neighbor?”

ARTICLE BY STEPHEN WELCH

PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION—WHERE NEIGHBORS BECOME FRIENDS THEN FAMILY

LUKE 10: 25–37
And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took

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Pictured above are actual guests that PGM has recently served.
out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, ‘Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is known far and wide for many interpretations and lessons. Jesus told this parable to show how wide God’s love and mercy is towards all. Jesus’ story of a brutal highway robbery was all too familiar to his audience. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho went through a narrow and steep valley surrounded by cliffs. This narrow highway was dangerous and notorious for its robbers, who could easily ambush their victim and escape into the hills. No one in his right mind would think of traveling it alone.

The question becomes, should someone help a person who falls into trouble through a situation they have created, and who exactly is our neighbor? We all learned the “Golden Rule” in kindergarten: treat your neighbor as you would yourself, but who is your neighbor? For the answer, we step outside any narrowing definition set by man, move the time to 2016, and step inside Pacific Garden Mission, where God is working miracles every day.

This month we look at and live through the testimonies of those serving this ministry in Security, as they share “who is my neighbor.”

Who better to help someone who is lost, and in trouble, than someone who has been there? God made no mistake when he created the unique landscape at Pacific Garden Mission. People stumble and limp through our doors of hope every day. They have been robbed of their physical, emotional and spiritual strength, and need help. Many are at their end as they know it. Help they receive. At Pacific Garden Mission, every “victim” is a neighbor to us, and through all our efforts together (yours and ours) these neighbors become family: God’s family, changed for all eternity. Pacific Garden Mission is a safe harbor where people come and experience the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God that saves souls and transforms lives.

Our security department is, in reality, a ministry that maintains a constant vigil both inside and outside of our 156,000 square foot building. Security watches over 800 – 1,000 people every night with spikes in cold weather close to 1,200. The PGM security department consists of staff members and volunteer discipleship members from our New Life Program.

This important ministry is responsible for a multitude of people and their safety. At any time we have staff, visitors, guests and program members in our building, and that includes children. Safety for everyone comes first. Security controls the massive crowd flows into services, meals, and in and out of dormitories. People with serious problems come to the mission, and conflict resolution is handled by security using Biblical principles.

Security is often the first personnel an overnight guest meets before a service or before meeting with a counselor. We like to think of security as the front line of our Gospel ministry. The men and women of Pacific Garden Mission’s security preach the
Gospel of Jesus Christ in what they do for others—like the Good Samaritan. We want you to experience what happens in a day in the life of the Security Ministry. Here is just one such story.

Let’s start with what happened last night while Pastor Phil preached a Gospel message at the Saturday Evening Praise and Testimony Service.

REDA BOLDEN is in our New Life Program here at Pacific Garden Mission. The New Life Program has classes and volunteer opportunities in our workplace ministry for everyone enrolled. Reda volunteers in security where she serves the overnight women guests. Many times it is someone on the security team that builds relationships with our overnight guests. New intakes often ask questions before, during or after our three Gospel services a day. They need attention just like the man beaten and robbed in Luke 10:30. Many of the men and women who walk into the mission need attention and receive it from security. Often individuals are discipled and brought to Christ by a member of our security ministry. Reda shared the testimony of a French-speaking foreign woman who came to PGM on April 27th. She came in at night, speaking very little English, and unwilling to go back outside. As a requirement of staying at the mission, she agreed to go to Bible study and two church services daily. Reda recalls: “On her 5th day, during evening service, she came to me crying, saying ‘I don’t understand, I don’t understand.’ I asked her what was wrong, and she said ‘How can a man that is dead be alive, I don’t understand, is he better than Allah?’” Reda went to Stephen Welch, who found a (New Life Program) man from Africa that spoke French (Daniel Sama), and along with Reda and Pastor Phil, explained God’s plan of salvation through the shedding of blood by Jesus Christ, and his death upon the cross. At one point, with the help of Pastor Phil, Daniel explained to her that “If God is almighty and all-powerful, and created all things, then it would be possible for Him to raise someone from the dead, especially if it is His Son. I could sense the feeling of relief that came over her, as the Word of God was expounded to her.” Reda continued: “She was frantic and confused, and wanted to understand. She was comforted and touched by such a great love, and accepted the Lord into her heart; and now, one who did not understand the love of the cross will be sharing it with her friends and family in Morocco when she leaves.”

Later on, Daniel added: “I believe it is the Holy Spirit that teaches us. We can be told something, but there are some things you can only learn by experience, and that is what the Holy Spirit does.” Pacific Garden Mission is a place where Jesus’ love and the power of the cross are spoken in any language.

When we overlay Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan upon a day in the life of Security at the mission, we experience true neighborly care, compassion, and mercy. We also see three things through this experience that Jesus’ story tells us about true love for one’s neighbor. First, we must be willing to help even if others brought trouble on themselves through their own fault. Second, our love and concern to help others in need must be practical. Good intentions and sympathizing with others are not enough. And lastly, our love for others must be as wide as God’s love. No one is excluded. God’s love is unconditional.

“Who is my neighbor?”

Yes, we may all know the parable of the Good Samaritan, but it can be a little confusing, especially to practice. The “neighbor,” it would appear, is the man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho who was beaten and left for dead (Luke 10:30). The neighbor is the object, the one whom the three other characters encounter. But in the end, Jesus says the Samaritan, who helped this man, “proved to be the neighbor” (Luke 12:36–37).

The good neighbor didn’t pass him up; he picked him up. We are all challenged to love the unlovable and help the needy whenever and wherever we are able. Thank you for being part of this ministry with your prayers, volunteer hours and gifts.
INVITATION TO VISIT PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION

We look forward to sharing with you all the exciting things God is doing here at Pacific Garden Mission in 2016.

SATURDAY SCHEDULE
- Tour the mission – individual or group tours.
- UNSHACKLED – radio drama recorded live
- Dinner and fellowship in our cafeteria
- Evening Service – Praise and Testimony recorded for PGM TV

Please join us and attend as little or as much as your schedule allows. Call 312-492-9410 to R.S.V.P.

Last year’s Summer Picnic on 14th Place at Pacific Garden Mission was so popular that we wanted to move it to July 4th. Thank you for making this outdoor Gospel service and cookout possible last year. Many were present who would not be in our building for a service. Last year the Gospel was preached twice. We close down 14th Place next to our building, and all are welcome to receive Jesus Christ. Neighbors near and far will be here, and you can help. We will feed the multitudes and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all who attend. Pray for the harvest.

Over 1,000 plates of delicious barbeque, hamburgers, corn, beans, and watermelon served by Executive Chef Turnbull delight so many with nowhere else to go. We invite all our neighbors to enjoy a meal and fellowship at the tables with a Gospel message. Happy children are waving thank you to donors for a memorable July 4th.
A Word from Philip Kwiatkowski
President, Pacific Garden Mission

“Letting God Finish What He Started”

The story of the prodigal son is a story that has challenged and comforted many through the years. I have received many calls from distraught parents about a wayward child that has gone adrift, only to have their loved one wash ashore at the doors of Pacific Garden Mission.

The question many times is, “What do I do?” The heartfelt response of many is to go after the loved one, but in the story of the prodigal the father waited but did not pursue and real change only happened when the son saw his circumstance and came to himself, “And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger?” — Luke 15:17

I thought about this story yesterday as I witnessed a man that had been drinking heavily, sleeping in dumpsters and listening to no one, fall into the arms of one of our staff members and say, “I need help.” He recently had been beaten up, his face was lined with fresh scabs, he smelled of alcohol, his unwashed clothes were disheveled and now hopefully came to himself. He stated that he is a college graduate and does not want to live like this anymore.

For many it takes getting to the absolute bottom before they look up. For this young Jewish boy to be in the fields feeding and eating the food that the swine ate was the bottom. He came to himself; he woke up only when he looked around him and there was none to help. Luke 18:1 reads, “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”

Sometimes we get in the way of what God is trying to do. I am sure that the father of the prodigal prayed for his son, but he did not run after him; we too need to pray and not lose heart, let God finish what He started. I am so grateful there is a place like Pacific Garden Mission, that serves as a place for people to go when every door has been shut. Some think it is the end of the line but in reality, for others it is just the beginning.

Continuing Education Update

Samantha Goff and Darryl Henderson received their High School Equivalency Certificate on May 5, 2016, after passing the GED (high school equivalency) examination. Samantha and Darryl spent many hours in class at PGM and studied diligently while also serving in our ministry. After receiving her certificate, Samantha exclaimed, “Thank you, LORD, for allowing me to pass that test. It was so hard!” Samantha serves in the Mothers and Children Division and directs the Children’s Choir. Darryl manages our massive food stock room that supplies everything for the kitchen, and assists executive chef Turnbull.

Both Samantha and Darryl are graduates of the New Life Program (formerly the Bible program). Nothing can compare to the Biblical foundation and education for life that is available at Pacific Garden Mission, where Jesus takes many men and women to their highest potential. Samantha plans on attending a Christian college. To God be the Glory, great things He hath done.
FINANCIAL UPDATE  Stephen Welch, Director of Development

To reach the lost with the Gospel of Christ is the mission statement adopted by Pacific Garden Mission. I can’t help but reflect on how the Gospel message impacted me as I walked through these doors of hope as an overnight guest, became a volunteer, and now live a productive life as a staff member. There is something very different about the environment here at the mission—a nutritive environment for the lost and injured—a spiritual hospital. Maybe we are on holy ground.

The Gospel affects the way we see those around us. It’s not because they’ve become something different, but because we have. My circumstances didn’t change because someone fixed them for me. My circumstances changed when my heart changed, and God could use me.

God’s justifying work for us and transforming work in us commissions a path of good works prepared beforehand “that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). On this path are real people with real lives full of real stories. And now when we encounter them, they are a divine call to us. They are an opportunity — a welcomed mandate — for us to be who we are in Christ.

May we never lose sight that the central issue has to do with how the Gospel miracle bears on our own souls. God has made us new creatures in Christ — righteous before him, and empowered to love others for his sake.

Are we going to be like this Samaritan who gives help when help is needed? As I mentioned in last month’s newsletter, we are praying for help at the mission. We want to help more people who walk through our doors. This effort requires Godly men and women and resources.

We pray that this month’s offering from our faithful donors will be above what we could ask or think as we have a $325,000 budget shortfall to meet before our fiscal year ends on June 30, 2016. If God moves you to help us meet this shortfall, please write “FYE 2016 Gift” on your giving envelope or letter. To God be the Glory, great things he hath done!

WHAT YOUR MONEY SUPPORTS AND PROVIDES

Pacific Garden Mission’s budget is completely donor funded. We receive no government funding. We are eternally grateful for the individuals, businesses, churches and foundations that make it possible for PGM to serve thousands of homeless men, women and children each year.

When you come along side of us financially you’re not giving to the mission, but through the mission to the people that need your help the most. We are serious about demonstrating our stewardship, and we invite you to learn more by visiting Pacific Garden Mission, where lives have been transformed since 1877.

Here are just some of the ways your giving is measured (April)

- Daily average of homeless receiving aid and attending Gospel services....771
- Number of men and women enrolled in Bible study programs and provided room and board....104
- Approximate number of plates of food served....50,711
- Estimated number of items of clothing distributed or given to other missions....73,472
- Number of patients treated in our free dental clinic....170
- Number of persons who professed faith in Christ....105
- Stations and outlets in the U.S. and around the world broadcasting “Unshackled!”....3154

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