

the ultimate Transfer

Nicole Jeffery wonders how to transfer God's love and compassion to those around us at Christmas...

"How can you extend God's compassion and love to your neighbourhood this Christmas?"

Christmas is a time to love as exemplified by this verse, one of the Bible's most famous: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life' (Jn 3:16). At Christmas, we remember how God sent love to mankind in the form of his only son. From the Almighty's compassionate heart came a gift—for you and for me. How can you extend God's compassion and love to your neighbourhood this Christmas? How can you be 'gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love'? (Ps 45:8).

LAST CHRISTMAS

My husband and I live on five acres a few kilometres out of town. Most of our neighbours are 100 or more metres away. I made a point of meeting most of them earlier in the year when we moved into a newly built home.

For Christmas, I made chocolate marshmallow balls rolled in coconut; wrapped them in plastic and cellophane,

tied them with ribbon and attached a gift tag. Like Red in the kids' movie, *Hoodwinked*, I rode my pushbike around, singing songs and delivering them to mailboxes and doorsteps. Could you do something similar in your neighbourhood?

Life is busy for most people. My neighbours have their own lives and are a variety of ages. Some have young children; others are raising teens and a few are grandparents. Just because we live close by doesn't automatically mean we are involved in each other's lives.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

'Neighbour' in the Bible means all the people in your sphere of influence. A lawyer asked Jesus in Luke 10:29, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan in reply. He concluded that we are neighbours when we show mercy on people (Lk 10:36, 37). Mercy and compassion are interchangeable. And we can start with the people in our street, or on adjacent blocks of land.

Proverbs 27:10 says, 'Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father, and do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you—better a neighbour nearby than a brother far away.'

CREATIVE IDEAS TO CONNECT WITH YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Making confectionery and dropping it off to your neighbour is a gesture of kindness at Christmas time. Try some of these ideas—a few could be done anonymously.

- Homemade or store bought cards with an uplifting message
- Small gifts of food, Christmas ornaments or trinkets from your local discount store. Wrap decoratively and attach a Bible verse if you feel it is appropriate
- Offer to baby-sit. This is giving your time so stressed parents can enjoy a romantic Christmas rendezvous
- Offer to mow lawns or do some gardening
- Invite your neighbours for Christmas drinks
- Go carolling with your family. In today's climate, you might get a smile and spread some Christmas cheer! Remember Buddy repeating a North Pole rule in the movie, *Elf*? 'The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loudly for all to hear.'
- Decorate your home with lights, including a nativity scene.
- Hold a kids' Christmas performance. I once lived in a country town in central New South Wales and each December, a family would hold a performance from their rooftop for all the townsfolk who were viewing Christmas lights. They entertained night after night; it was lovely for the community.

No doubt you are familiar with author Gary Chapman's, *Five Love Languages*. If you know your neighbours well enough, you can adapt the above ideas to suit their needs, whether they are words of affirmation, gifts, physical touch, quality time or acts of service. What would they most appreciate?

Your efforts are worth it, even if you make one person's day. When I dropped off the chocolate marshmallow balls, I spoke with a couple of people and received thank-you cards from a couple of others. Not everybody acknowledged what I had done. Even if there is no visible response, don't be disappointed. Your motivation should not be the praise of men, but rather the approval of your heavenly Father.

Think of the many prayers you may have prayed for your friends' and neighbours' health, protection and salvation. You don't always see the fruit of your labours. Matthew 6:3-4 says, 'But when you give to the needy (or do an act of kindness for your neighbour), do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.' [Paraphrase mine]. Have a compassionate, Christ-filled Christmas. CW



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