

Katie Langston 00:16

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Linda Booth 01:00

Welcome to another edition of "Coffee Connect". My name is Linda Booth, and I love stories. I served as a Community of Christ apostle for nearly 23 years, and in my ministry travels, I heard wonderful stories of how God interacts in ordinary people lives. As, just as I love to hear those stories, I also love to tell them because I believe they're modern-day scripture, holy, transforming, and inspiring. In this "Coffee Connect" episode I'm going to share three short stories about real people who told me their stories. The stories answer the question that Jesus asked his followers in the 10th chapter of Luke; Who is my neighbor? You know the scripture story that answers Jesus's question. It is called the Good Samaritan. The story is about a man who's beaten and robbed and left injured and dying on the side of the road, and several very important people walk by him; a priest, and a Levite, and they don't stop. However, a Samaritan man doesn't pass the bleeding man, he cares for him, and when he must continue his travel, he pays someone to care for him. So, these stories are, answer the question; Who is my neighbor? During the 2009 Gulf Mission Center reunion or family camp, Barbara told the following story. She and her husband Glenn are retired professionals who live their discipleship in the context of their lives. One evening, they drove from their home in Pascagoula, Mississippi, to meet friends at an expensive restaurant in New Orleans, Louisiana. Along a busy highway they saw an old man bleeding, struggling to get on his bicycle. Barbara said, "Glen turn around and go back. We must stop and help him." Glen reasoned that because so many cars were passing by the old man, that surely someone would stop and help. But when he had an opportunity, he turned around and headed back to the old man who was still struggling. Glen and Barbara got out of the car. They tended to his wounds and told him that they would take him to his home. And as they were loading the man's bicycle into their Escalade SUV, two policemen arrived, putting on rubber gloves to deal with the man's injuries. Barbara said she looked at her hands which were covered with the man's blood. They followed the police car to the man's home, where they spent time with him to ensure he would be all right. They missed their dinner with their friends. Barbara and Glen could have made a different choice. Many drivers, some of whom probably were Christians, drove past the bleeding man, however, Barbara and Glenn were the only ones who stopped to help him. On that day, they heard the call that summoned them to take part in God's grand story. They traveled as good Samaritans and gave flesh to Jesus Christ. The biblical narrative continued through their actions.

Linda Booth 04:13

Story number two; Who is my neighbor? At the first Racine, Missouri reunion commitment service, many people stood to rededicate their lives as Jesus's disciples, and I vividly remember one of them. A retired man named Bill simply said, "I commit to being a good neighbor to my neighbor, Bill," then he sat down. Several months later, I had the opportunity to sit next to Bill at a potluck in his home

congregation, and I asked him about his neighbor, Bill. He said, "Well, that's quite a story. I knew Bill before he went to jail. For years he and his wife lived next door, and one night, when they got into a fight, they both took out their guns and they shot at each other. Well, she missed him, but his aim was better, and he wounded her. She went to the hospital and he went to jail. He's released now and moved back to his home, and I'm trying to help him. He doesn't have a car yet, so I take him to the grocery store and to run other errands. And since he's been in prison, he's developed some rather bad habits and behaviors, and last time I took him to pick up a benefit check, he said something inappropriate to the woman clerk, and now the office has banned him. Next week, I will need to go in and pick up his check." And I said to Bill, "You know, Bill, your neighbor will never change. He probably will continue to get in trouble and cause you a lot of trouble." "Yeah, I know," Bill replied. "But you know what? He needs a good friend, and that's me. And something else. My neighbor, Bill, is a child of God. He needs to know that." My third story; Who is my neighbor? Several years ago, at a reunion or family camp in western Pennsylvania, a man stood during the morning fellowship service to ask for prayers for a woman and her granddaughter. They were going to be baptized at that reunion. The woman was his next-door neighbor, and they had started out as casual friends, occasionally speaking across their front yards, and now they were really good friends, and as a result, the woman and her granddaughter had asked to be baptized. Another morning he asked for prayers for the woman's brother. He explained that her brother had been in a motorcycle accident, paralyzing him from the waist down, and because he couldn't care for himself when released from the hospital, he was forced to live with his sister. The man said that each day, he would go next door to help the woman care for her brother. He said, at first, the brother was very angry, especially at God. But as they became close friends, and he shared his witness of Jesus Christ, the paralyzed man's attitude gradually changed. The man was developing a personal relationship with God, and he wanted to support his sister by coming to her baptism. So, the man asked for prayers on this man's behalf. On the afternoon of the baptismal service, we gathered on the bank of a lake as storm clouds moved toward us. Several people with guitars were standing on the shoreline singing these words: "And Jesus said, Come to the water, stand by my side; I know you are thirsty, you won't be denied. I felt every tear drop in the darkness you cried; and I strove to remind you, that for those tears I died." As the woman, her granddaughter, and the man who was a living expression of Christ with this family, walked into the lake, it began to rain. And I thought, God must be crying tears of joy now. They came out of the water and we clapped in joy, and because it was raining harder, people were moving quickly to seek shelter. And as they separated, I saw for the first time a man in a wheelchair. The man who had cared for the paralyzed man, and had just baptized his sister and niece leaned over to talk with him. And then that good neighbor raised his hand and shouted above the commotion, "Stop, we're going to have another baptism!" And then he and another man gently put their arms under the man. They lifted him from the wheelchair and they carried him into the water, as God's joyful tears rained down all around us.

Linda Booth 09:08

I often think of Jesus's question; Who is my neighbor? The answer takes me to unexpected places, to friends, family, acquaintances, and sometimes even strangers. It's your question too; Who is your neighbor? Please don't pass by that neighbor. Be the Good Samaritan that they need.

Josh Mangelson 09:44

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