

## REACH WIDE

### HOW BIG IS YOUR WORLD?

By Nancy Tichy

#### Chapter 4: “An Unexpected Arrival”

The four Nicholsons sat around the table in the corner of the kitchen, happily eating hot waffles. “I wish I’d had a camera last night when you answered the door, Jeremy,” Dad said.

“And saw Mom standing there!” Cara finished. “We thought we were meeting you online at 10. What brought on the unexpected change in plans?”

“I was very close to finishing my work, so I decided I could accompany Orpha here,” Mom began. “Let me explain. Terrorists killed Orpha’s husband, a young medic serving with Doctors Without Borders. They had only been married a few months. When his parents in Indiana heard that their son was killed, they knew that he left a young widow and that she was carrying their grandchild. So they made arrangements for her to come to the States. Dad helped expedite the arrangements with a friend in the State Department, and the church the Simpsons attend helped by paying for travel expenses.”

“She’s still asleep in the guest room. But I did hear her crying in the night. Transitioning to a new culture will be hard for her,” Cara added knowingly.

Jeremy agreed. “I’m glad that you can be a friend for the few days Orpha is here waiting for her visa business to settle. You know how she’s feeling, Cara. I’m sure you still have memories of what that’s like.”

“Yes, I do remember, Jeremy,” Cara agreed.

“And what can we do to help Orpha make the last leg of her journey? She’ll need so many things. Warm clothes, I suppose, a reliable phone ... eventually a laptop. And ...”

“Whoa, Jeremy!” Dad said. “God has brought many people into this story, and we can be sure God will provide what Orpha needs, as she needs it.”

“I know,” Jeremy responded, “but still, doesn’t God want us all to do something? I move that we see how much is in the ‘dessert fund,’ and then see what it will buy.”

“Jeremy, we have agreed the fund would go for your new laptop — one better suited to supporting your growing interest in art,” Mom said.

“I know. But I can wait on that,” Jeremy said. “Orpha’s needs right now are so much more important.”

Mom rose from the table, stifling a yawn. “I’m going to take a nap now. Don’t let me sleep too long. When Orpha comes down, please see that she gets something to eat. Later on, we’ll discuss what new developments Dad unearths and pray together. I’m so, so glad to be home, Jeremy and Cara. You have no idea how glad.”

Cara and Jeremy began clearing the table. “Jet lag, I guess,” Cara whispered to Jeremy. “I’m guessing it’s jet lag.”

### REACH WIDE: Ideas for Engagement

Like the Nicholsons, you may be able to generate some funds to give as an “unexpected” gift of love. The family gave up eating snacks and desserts except on Wednesdays and special occasions, saving the money they would have used for treats.

When God provided them with an urgent need for someone else, they were able to help immediately, blessing someone with unexpected help.

Plan and pray — who will God provide who needs your unexpected gift?



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## BE CLOSE: Unexpected Love

### HOPES AND DREAMS 2021

Let God's love overflow to your neighbors!

Make a big batch of your favorite snack mix or hot chocolate mix and package into individual baggies. Attach a small Bible verse as an encouragement for the new year. Invite your neighbors to stop by and get a free treat on a certain day at a convenient time for families with work schedules.

Prominently display a sign in your yard or hand out simple invitations to each household close to you. Arrange your treats on a table outside on the designated day and time.

Build relationships with each neighbor by asking about their hopes and dreams for 2021. Help others to experience Christ's love through your time with them.



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## BE CLOSE: Unexpected Love

### LACE UP YOUR SHOES!

A fresh, new year calls for fresh experiences and nurturing relationships.

Take a friendship hike together with an individual or family in your community whom you want to know better. Find a spot that is new to all of you, if possible, experiencing something new together.

Allow God's love to overflow as you simply enjoy your time together.



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## LOVE DIFFERENTLY: Unexpected Love

### WARM CONVERSATIONS

Purchase several pairs of socks or gloves, depending on your climate this time of year. Package them attractively, possibly add a small treat, and keep them with you.

During this season as you are around town, be aware of anyone who might be homeless, struggling financially, or just needs encouragement and would appreciate this unexpected gift.

Share your first names and find out theirs. Ask their favorite Christmas memory and pray with them. Set a reminder to pray for them each day for the next week.



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## LOVE DIFFERENTLY: Unexpected Love

### SHARING DINNER

Food has its own way of opening conversations, inviting friendships, and satisfying deep needs.

In your community, locate a hot meal program where you can help by serving, preparing, and cleaning up. Or help a food pantry through donating, organizing, or packing. Ask how you can get involved for a specific date or in an ongoing role. Create ways for everyone to be involved and to get to know those you are serving.

Be sure to share with each other the stories of your experience and ways you saw God's presence during your time of serving.

*For even the Son of Man came not to be served  
but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

— Matthew 20:28 (NLT)



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