

## REACH WIDE

### HOW BIG IS YOUR WORLD?

By Nancy Tichy

#### Chapter 3: “A New Family Friend”

It was 10 p.m. Cara and Jeremy Nicholson sat in front of Dad’s computer waiting for the computer app to bring Mom’s smiling face up on the screen. This time, Mom was not alone as she greeted her family in Colorado.

“I have a special treat for you. My college friend, who has been ministering to widows here, just introduced me to a new friend. They were both born here in East Africa.” She put her arm around the younger woman sitting close by her side. “Say hi to Orpha. She is a recent addition to our group of homeless widows. She’s younger than the rest of the women and knows English.”

“Hi, Cara and Jeremy. Your mom has told me a lot about you two. I’m glad we can talk now. Thank you for sending your mother to us. She teaches us many helpful things. Praise Jesus!” said Orpha.

“We are happy to meet you, Miss Orpha. I am so sorry for your losses. But I want you to know we pray for you every day. Mom has told us a little about how you help her so that she can give grief counseling to the other women who don’t speak English. I wish I could give you a big hug,” Cara ended tearfully.

As they talked, Jeremy and Cara were fascinated by Orpha’s stories of life in her village.

Soon it was Mom alone on-screen asking questions, explaining how she was joining in the grief counseling ministry established by the local leaders.

Cara asked, “Mom, is there anything Jeremy and I can do along with praying for you and the women? We have their names on a sticky note right here on the edge of the screen, you know.”

“I’m glad you asked, Cara,” Mom replied. “Only one of the women we’re working with can read. They led simple village lives before the war and are very capable but never attended school. If only they could read God’s Word!”

Jeremy’s excitement was obvious as he interjected, “I’ve been asking God to give us some ideas about how we can join in what you are doing, Mom. I found an organization that makes ‘talking Bibles.’ What if we research that? We could find out how to get talking Bibles in the best language for that area.”

Cara caught the excitement. “I’ll ask my study buddies to pray with me. Maybe God will give us an idea for raising some funds to help our new friends have access to his Word!”

“That sounds wonderful! Let me know what you find out! My day is just beginning, but I know that it’s late there. I’m so thankful that we are working on this together!” Mom said.

Dad moved closer and put his arms around Cara and Jeremy. Even while the four Nicholson’s bowed their heads to pray together, Cara pondered how to help their new friend.



### REACH WIDE: Ideas for Engagement

#### SHARE YOUR STORY

Even as Orpha shared her story, she needed to hear stories of Jesus’ love. Sharing our story of encountering God’s love brings wonderful connections with people. Look at the map you made in Chapter 1 of the Nicholson story and connect with one of your international friends, or ask a missionary to help you connect with a child in another country so you can have an electronic “pen pal” to share your story with. Write a simple story of how you experience God’s love. Share it with your new pen pal friend during an online conversation.



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## BE CLOSE: Overflowing Love

### COMFORT AND JOY

God’s love gives us comfort, allowing us to snuggle into his presence and just relax. Bring comfort and care to others as you create these scarves for those in your community who need it most — elderly people, those in a memory care facility, people in homeless shelters, or your mail carrier. Ask God to point out who needs his comfort and care right now.

To make four 9-inch-wide scarves, you will need: 1¼ yards of fleece 60 inches wide, fabric scissors, ruler, and a decorative bag for gifting.

Trim as needed to make sure the edges are straight. Cut four strips — each 60 inches long and 9 inches wide. Cut the 9-inch edge to make fringe; each fringe strand will be 4 inches long by ½-inch wide. Place neatly in a gift bag with a small card of encouragement. Deliver your gift to someone you are building a relationship with. Ask them in what ways they need comfort and pray Romans 15:13 together.



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## BE CLOSE: Overflowing Love

### 30 SIMPLY POWERFUL DAYS

In the month ahead, what 30 simple things would God prompt you to do as first steps toward building loving relationships with those in your community?

Make a grid of 30 squares on a sheet of paper. We've listed five suggested steps to put in the first row. You get to add the rest. *Go!*

- Get a city map.
- Attend a community event.
- Check out a book at the library.
- Eat at a new restaurant.
- Walk on an unknown street.

Talk to one new person each place you go. Pray with each person and put a new name on your grid. You can put a name several times if you get to return to build a friendship with someone.



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## LOVE DIFFERENTLY: Overflowing Love

### COMPASSION FOR CHRONIC ILLNESSES

Battling chronic illness can be lonely and difficult — for the patient and the caregivers. How can you share God’s love with those who struggle with health issues? Ask church leaders to connect you with someone of any age who needs encouragement. Create an encouragement basket to brighten their day. Your basket may include cheerful socks, a soft hat, a special pillowcase, a book to read, an activity book, a small game, a small stuffed animal, or a small toy. Best of all, make a special card. Deliver the basket in person, if possible, and pray with them. Most important — listen and stay in touch.



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## LOVE DIFFERENTLY: Overflowing Love

### REACHING BEYOND THE BARS

Locate an organization that ministers to children of those in prison. Ask how you can help those families. Here are some ideas:

- Write a note of encouragement that the organization can give to them.
- Purchase gifts for them (a backpack of school supplies, or birthday or Christmas presents).
- Create a Christmas countdown wall hanging that they could enjoy together.

Involve everyone in your family as you prepare and choose what you will send. Talk about how to pray for the family and why it is important to encourage them. Pray for them and their needs each week.

***(God) heals the brokenhearted.*** —Psalm 147:3



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