

REACH WIDE

HOW BIG IS YOUR WORLD?

By Nancy Tichy

Chapter 5: “An Evening to Remember”

Jeremy closed the door behind him quietly, deposited his jacket and tennis racket in the front hall closet, and tiptoed into the living room. He didn’t make it past Mom resting in the recliner, who opened her eyes and smiled. “Sorry, Mom. I didn’t want to wake you,” he said softly.

“That’s okay, Jeremy. I wasn’t expecting to bring back malaria and dysentery from Africa. Doctor says I’ll need to take it easy for a couple of weeks.”

“Jared invited me to his house for family pizza night, and I thought I’d see if I could find Dad and get his permission,” Jeremy explained.

“It’s a special mealtime for us, too. Remember, Jeremy? Orpha leaves tomorrow for her new home. She and Cara have been cooking dinner all afternoon. Dad took them to the international market early this morning to find the ingredients. They’ve been peeling and chopping and steaming and arranging platters of food. I think they would miss you if you left.”

Jeremy tried to hide his disappointment. Jared’s family had a huge TV and offered the prospect of watching an exciting basketball game while enjoying some delicious pizza. Just then, a door opened at the other end of the house, releasing the pungent odor of palm butter. Some time back, Jeremy had tasted his first authentic African meal of rice and greens cooked in the heavy gravy produced by palm oil, which had made him very ill.

“Oh, no!” he groaned just as Cara entered the room.

“It’s okay, Brother. Dad picked up some of your digestion meds at the pharmacy on our way back from the market. And we bought enough fresh fruit to go with your special portion of rice so you won’t go hungry,” Cara assured him. “But I think you should try a tiny bit of what we’ve prepared. Orpha really knows her stuff when it comes to cooking.”

“Remember, Jeremy, if you were in Africa and being hosted by a chief, you’d need to find a way to handle that queasy stomach of yours,” Mom added. “You’d have to get around issues of your comfort zone...quite literally.”

Orpha entered just in time to hear Mom’s last remark.

“And, my father is a chief, Jeremy. That makes me a chief’s daughter,” she said with a chuckle. “Of course, I’d excuse you if my food would make you sick.”

Before long, Dad returned home and the whole family gathered around the dining room table. Conversation was lively and Jeremy managed to find enough digestible items... seasoned rice and fried plantains to add to the fresh pineapple slices, strips of papaya, and squares of corn bread. He was permitted to sit as far away as possible from the fish heads swimming in palm butter gravy.

It was an evening to remember. Jeremy was glad he once again ventured out of his comfort zone as together they prayed for Orpha and the changes that lay ahead of her.



REACH WIDE: Ideas for Engagement

You can “change it up” just as Cara did at her next online date with her study buddies in Chapter 3. Invite a friend or neighbor from another culture to give you a cross cultural cooking lesson - even if it is a virtual lesson. (Or, find an illustrated online tutorial on how to cook something from another culture.) After you’ve cooked and eaten this new food, talk with your friend about the challenges facing their culture at this point in history and pray for them.



BE CLOSE: Change It Up!

SWAP ADVENTURES

Share your love of reading with a family near you. Arrange to swap favorite books with another family you would like to know better. Try to pick a book of an adventure they could read together as a family. Once each family has finished reading their book, set a time to get together and talk about your favorite parts, even if it's only through an online conversation.



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BE CLOSE: Change It Up!

A HEART-TO-HEART

Cut a variety of sizes of hearts from colored paper. On each heart, write a short phrase describing what you appreciate about your neighbor. When they are away at work, tape your hearts on a door or window, with the messages facing inside the house. Your “heart attack” will warm their hearts as they read your notes of appreciation.



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LOVE DIFFERENTLY: Change It Up!

STRETCH YOUR PALATE

Be willing to change up your food experiences! Find someone who is from a different culture than you. Ask them to teach you their favorite recipe from their culture, inviting them to your home in person or through a virtual cooking lesson. Study ahead how to say, "Thank you!" in their native language once your lesson is finished. Consider sharing your favorite recipe with them for another cooking lesson. Friendships are reciprocal!



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TIC TAC GO

Loving differently may mean you stretch out of your comfort zone to find the lonely. Create simple “tic tac toe” games. For each game you will need a square of felt and 6 shapes of two different colored felt or fleece fabrics for game pieces. On the square, glue felt strips into a grid or draw a grid with a permanent marker. Package your games in gallon plastic zipper seal bags for easy storage.

Make arrangements to visit elderly residents and play the game with them. Initiate conversation about their favorite games they played in their childhood. Pray with them as you prepare to end your visit. Leave the game as a present for them to enjoy with other visitors - and when you return.



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