



## Love Your Neighbor . . . Really?

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A few months ago Sandra and I moved. After 20 years of living in the same house, we decided it was time for a change. After weeks of looking we found a place we both really liked, bought it and moved in. Since we moved into a new community, it sort of grew up around us. We met our neighbors, but we didn't really get to know them.

Then along came Hurricane Ike. Like much of Houston, our neighborhood lost all power. Suddenly folks came out of our houses into the street and for the first time really met one another. We really began to become neighbors, helping one another out, sharing what we had. There was a neighborhood generator, a neighborhood freezer, neighborhood meals. It was great.

Even though there are only seven homes in our small neighborhood circle, we are quite diverse ... black and white, married, never married and divorced, young and my age (that's as far as I'm going with that one), some with limited formal education beyond high school, others with professional degrees, some actively engaged in church and others who have no real interest in God or the church, lovers of country music and classical music lovers ... the list could go on and on.

I'm amazed at how unlike we are yet we still get along well. Growing up and in almost every place I've lived before, folks have always been like me. Now my neighbors are more unlike me than like me.

In reflecting on Jesus' parable about the Good Samaritan this week, I thought about how unlike the "man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho" the Samaritan was (Luke 10: 30ff). But that didn't stop him from reaching out and helping him. Nor should it stop us from reaching out to those who are very unlike us and helping them ... and the number of folks unlike us grows in our city every day.

Today more than 5.5 million people live in the Houston metro area. No matter who you are, I can guarantee that most of them are very unlike you (or me, or any of us). There is no majority population in Houston. We are about one-third Anglos, one third Hispanics, and one-third African Americans, Asians and others. There are over 300 different ethnolinguistic people groups living in Houston. Students in HISD public schools speak in over 200 different languages. One-third of Harris County residents will not speak English at home tonight. And most of them are not Christ followers.

No matter how unlike us they are, just as in the parable of the Good Samaritan, we have a responsibility for them. We, as the church, are responsible for seeing that every one of them has a chance to hear the gospel in their own language (just like at Pentecost) and has a chance to follow Christ.

I hope your church will join churches all across the city in our efforts to share the gospel with every person by Easter Sunday (April 4), 2010. Watch our website ([www.ubahouston.org](http://www.ubahouston.org)) for more details.