

What Do I Believe?  
Gretchen Wold Jensen '66

I believe in the power of relationships. Our response to those around us has a direct effect on whether or not we can make a difference in bringing about the changes we need in our lives and in our world. Our relationships begin with our families and move out from us in a series of concentric circles to neighborhoods, communities, other nations, and the Earth itself. Only by having healthy, caring, and respectful relationships at every level will we be able to bring an end to the hunger, disease, poverty, war, and many forms of violence around us that are so destructive.

It is said that “the greatness of a nation can be determined by the manner in which it treats its most helpless and needy”. This call could be expanded on one hand to read “the greatness of an individual can be determined by the manner in which he/she responds to those who are in need in their midst”. To further enlarge on this idea we could say “the greatness of a nation is determined by the degree to which it extends support to the struggling neighbors who share this planet”. And lastly we might add “Our concern for future generations can be determined by the manner in which we care for our Earth”.

I believe that each of us is where we are on this planet as an accident of our birth. When we look around we need to realize that we could just as easily have been born into a Third World Country with different values, traditions, and beliefs. What is important here is that we show respect for these differences and listen and learn from our neighbors whether they live on our street or simply share the same planet. I believe the biggest threat to building healthy relationships on any level is the idea that we are right and others are wrong. We need to listen and learn and understand. This is called tolerance and is key to what I believe.

This is all very general and grand in scope but I leave it to each of you reading this to answer the question of how you can build relationships in your own lives. Start with your family, move out to your community, take a stand on how our country is relating to the rest of the world, and do whatever you can to keep our Earth healthy for future generations. I believe in the power of relationships.