

■ LIFE OF JESUS

July 18, 2021 | *Parable of the Good Samaritan*

PREPARATION

GETTING READY

- Write down how you would define the word “neighbor.”
- Read Luke 10:25–37.
- Pray for God to help you redefine your concept of “neighbor” through this study.

THIS WEEK

■ KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

God demands that we love the whole world, even at great personal expense.

■ THEOLOGY APPLIED

Christians are concerned for the welfare of others.

■ MEDITATE

“And he answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself’” (Luke 10:27).

GETTING STARTED

+Use this section to think reflectively on the neighbor-neighbor relationship.

Q: *What makes a good neighbor?*

Q: *What challenges do neighbors present that are different from family or coworkers?*

“Good fences make good neighbors.” This saying displays the challenge of maintaining good relationships with your neighbors. Neighbors are not part of your family, but, for most Americans, you cannot get away from them. You can leave coworkers at work, but neighbors are part of your home life. If you need some space from friends, you don’t have to invite them over, but neighbors are always right outside your door. Given the unavoidable nature of having neighbors, it is mutually beneficial to maintain a friendly relationship, but unlike your friends, you typically cannot choose your neighbors. It is little wonder that so many people want good fences. It makes it easier to pretend our neighbors are not there.

Q: *How does your commitment to Christ alter how you view your neighbors?*

Q: *How should your commitment to Christ alter how your neighbors view you?*

APPLICATION POINT – Our relationship with our neighbors is one of the strangest relationships we have because of their proximity to our home life. Our commitment to Christ, however, does not allow us to wall them off. Jesus commanded us to love our neighbors and to have compassion on them. Furthermore, Jesus expanded the definition of neighbor far beyond our typical understanding. How can we love our neighbor? We can start by making an attempt to get to know them. This is the only way we will know how to minister to their needs like the good Samaritan.

■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

+The parable of the good Samaritan shows us who our neighbors are and how we can love them.

1. WHAT SHALL I DO TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?

2. WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

GOING DEEPER

+This section will investigate Luke 10:25–37 and reflect on how the gospel is demonstrated by how we are neighborly to others.

1. WHAT SHALL I DO TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?

▣ LUKE 10:25–29

Q: *What initiated Jesus’s parable of the good Samaritan?*

Q: *Where else did Jesus validate how this lawyer summarized the law?*

This passage begins with the most crucial question a person can ask. “What shall I do to inherit eternal life.” Jesus, recognizing His challenger was well versed in the laws of the Old Testament, threw the question back at him. And the lawyer answered remarkably well. His response mirrors Jesus’s own when He was asked what the greatest commandment was (Matthew 22:36–40; Mark 12:28–31). There is nothing wrong with the lawyer’s response, and Jesus affirmed the truthfulness of his answer. Yet, there was still a problem, because the lawyer continued to feel the need to justify himself.

Q: *Is knowing theology a good thing?*

Q: *When can knowing theology be dangerous?*

APPLICATION POINT – The lawyer’s response shows the danger that often accompanies right theology. It is awesome to know even the finest details of the Bible and what it reveals about God, but if that knowledge fails to produce right actions, we are no better off than someone who knows no theology. If we enjoy taking in knowledge about God and His Word, we need to commit ourselves to applying that knowledge to our lives. We cannot be satisfied with mere knowledge.

Q: *What did Jesus say in response to the lawyer’s request to receive eternal life?*

Q: *Does this produce a difficulty for salvation by faith in Christ alone?*

The gospel says salvation is available only through faith in the work of Jesus Christ. There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation and receive eternal life. Jesus told the lawyer that if he kept the great commandments, he would receive eternal life. This may appear to be a contradiction until we recognize everything keeping the great commandment entails. There is no way a person can always love God and love others in the manner Jesus described. The law shows us how much we need the gospel.

Q: *If statements like these show us how far we are from earning eternal life, is there any value in pursuing these commandments?*

Q: *Does the grace shown to us in Jesus Christ ever excuse sin?*

APPLICATION POINT – The gospel promises eternal life by laying our sins on Jesus and granting us credit for His righteousness. Although we are freed from the guilt of sin, our sin does not go unpunished. Although our righteousness is not our own, we were created to do good works. Our desire, as followers of Jesus, should always be to keep the Great Commandment. Never think that since we are saved by grace, we have a license to keep sinning. Such a mindset is rooted in a heart that has not truly embraced the gospel.

Q: *Upon hearing Jesus affirm his response, what did the lawyer do?*

Q: *Why did the lawyer ask Jesus who qualified as his neighbor?*

The lawyer believed he was basically cleared by the Great Commandment, but he was bothered by how open ended the “neighbor” stipulation was. Surely, he was okay to identify some people as non-neighbors and forgo loving them. Luke informs us this was an attempt to justify himself. The lawyer knew he had not loved everyone as he ought, so he was wanting to justify his actions.

Q: *Why do we feel an innate need to justify our sinful actions?*

Q: *How does justifying ourselves obscure the gospel?*

APPLICATION – No one likes to be guilty and held accountable for wrong actions. If we do something wrong, we want to justify our actions by showing that what we did wasn’t really wrong in those circumstances or with those alternatives. But we cannot justify ourselves before God. Justification can come only through the life-giving power of Jesus, not through any excuse or rationalization we devise. When we attempt to justify ourselves, we are replacing Jesus as we try to be our own savior. We are never further from the grace of Jesus Christ than when we attempt to justify ourselves. Instead of trying to justify our sins, we need to own our mistakes and flee to His grace. Not only is this the only justification that matters, it is also a far greater testimony to the gospel.

2. WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

LUKE 10:30–37

Q: *How did Jesus identify the man who acted neighborly to the man in need?*

Q: *What distinguishes the three individuals who encountered the man in need?*

The Samaritans were a group in Palestine with roots to the old northern Israelite kingdom. The northern kingdom broke from the southern kingdom during the reign of Rehoboam, the son of King Solomon. The northern kingdom was consistently rebellious against God from its inception. None of the kings of the northern kingdom were faithful to the God of Israel. The nation was exiled by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., and upon moving most of the Israelites out, the Assyrians moved many foreigners in. The remaining Israelites married these refugees and their descendants become known as the Samaritans. Since the Samaritans were ethnically distinct, it did not take long for them to become theologically distinct as well. They recognized only the Pentateuch as Scripture, and they set up their own religious sites.

In his attempt to justify himself, the lawyer asked who his neighbor was. Jesus answered his question by describing a neighbor in terms of what does not define a neighbor. He identified the individual who helped the man in need as a Samaritan. In doing so, Jesus showed that “neighbor” is not limited by national, ethnic, or theological differences. The Samaritan would have had none of this in common with the man in need, but he stopped to help him because they were neighbors.

Q: *Are nationality, race/ethnicity, and theology used to identify “non-neighbors” today?*

Q: *What other illegitimate factors do you see used to establish “non-neighbors”?*

APPLICATION POINT – Sociologists have long recognized that humans tend to congregate around people with whom they share a similar background. Middle-class people tend to look for middle-class neighborhoods. Many cities and towns are still divided between hite neighborhoods and Black neighborhoods. As Christians, it can be easy to allow these cultural dividing lines to become the lines that separate between our neighbors and our non-neighbors. This approach is clearly contrary to the illustration Jesus provided in this parable. Make an effort to abolish these false dividing lines and seek a neighborly relationship with someone outside of your social and racial/ethnic category. Doing so is a wonderful testimony to the power of the gospel.

Q: *How did the Samaritan tend to the man’s wounds?*

Q: *How did the Samaritan arrange for the man to stay at an inn while he recovered?*

After identifying who our neighbor is, at least in terms of noting illegitimate lines used to exclude others from being our neighbor, Jesus discussed how we should love our neighbor. The Samaritan tended to the victim by treating his wounds with oil and wine, extravagant items during this time. Since the Samaritan was carrying these things with him, it is possible he was a merchant on his way to a distant market. Whatever the case, the Samaritan cared for the man in need from his own personal supply. He also footed the bill for the victim's stay in the inn. The Samaritan acted as a true neighbor by having compassion on the man despite the personal cost to him.

Q: *What is the best way for you to care for your neighbor through your personal finances?*

Q: *What are the dangers of using your personal finances to care for your neighbor?*

APPLICATION – Giving financially to help others in need is challenging. I'm no mathematician, but every dollar you give to help someone else is a dollar you do not get to spend on yourself. Dollars you cannot save for the future. Dollars you cannot utilize for your own personal comfort or entertainment. Dollars that, used responsibly, could have a great impact on the kingdom of God. Compassionate generosity pleases God and shows our devotion to serving Him and not ourselves. Consider ways to begin giving to others out of compassion. This may be something you should consider including in your monthly budget. Doing so will encourage you to give but give responsibly.

Q: *Of the three travelers on the road in Jesus's story, which one likely had the longest journey?*

Q: *Why did people travel with animals?*

The Samaritan showed compassion to the man in need despite personal hardship. We cannot know for sure, but it is likely the Samaritan had the longest journey ahead of him. And the Samaritan stood the greatest risk of rebuke and rejection upon entering the inn. Nevertheless, despite personal hardship, he took the man to an inn where he could recover. Since the man was too weak to walk to the next village, the Samaritan placed the victim on his own animal. The Samaritan was not escorting that animal down the road for the fun of it. The animal was likely carrying the Samaritan or at least a large quantity of his goods. By placing the injured man on the animal, the Samaritan was

resigned to walk and likely had to carry whatever load his animal had been carrying. Having compassion upon the victim of the robbery came with personal hardship, but once the Samaritan saw his neighbor in need, he made a choice to endure it in order to love his neighbor as himself.

Q: *What excuses do you typically use to avoid helping neighbors in need?*

Q: *Do you ever wish you could just give money to something rather than becoming personally involved?*

APPLICATION POINT – Have you ever noticed it is always easier not to do something? If you are looking for the path of least resistance through life, you will never be willing to have compassion on others at the cost of personal hardship. Yet bearing the burdens of others is at the heart of the command to love your neighbor as yourself. Just as you have to budget money to help others in financial need, you also need to budget your time. Your day off will always be busy. Even if you complete your to-do list, you will likely be looking forward to some time to rest. But the needs of others seldom recognize when you are busy or when you need rest. Helping others always requires sacrifice, and Christians need to ensure they are willing to pay that sacrifice when the opportunity to help a neighbor arises.

Q: *Was the Samaritan finished caring for the man in need when he dropped him off at the inn?*

Q: *How do the Samaritan's instructions to the innkeeper illustrate an enduring concern to care for the victim?*

You could not blame the Samaritan if he had dropped the victim off at the inn and then continued on his way. His act of mercy had likely put him severely behind schedule. His family may have been worried about him. He was on a road frequented by robbers, after all. But the Samaritan stayed the night to care for the victim and then even expressed a desire for his care to continue. He told the innkeeper he would be back to check on the man he was leaving. This illustrates a commitment to long-term care. The victim did not cease to be the

Samaritan's neighbor once his immediate need was met. The Samaritan made a long-term commitment to secure the man's welfare.

Q: *What are your long-term commitments to serving your neighbors?*

Q: *Why are we hesitant to make long-term commitments?*


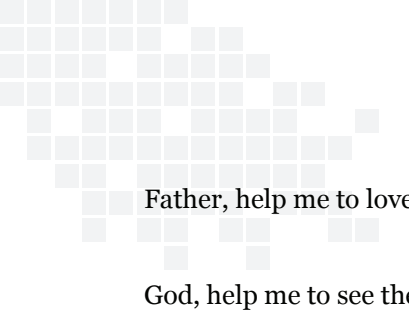
People in our society are more and more hesitant to make long-term commitments to serving others. We prefer to get our service done over a weekend and check back a few months down the road—another attempt to meet needs on our schedule. But this will always falter because the needs of others do not check our schedule before arising. Serving your neighbor often demands more than helping out on a single occasion.

NEXT STEPS

There is a growing refugee crisis around the world. There are many places where certain people are not safe in their own country. There are other places where people have been forced out of their country and have nowhere else to go. No matter what your opinion is on the refugee crisis and what our country's refugee policy should be in response, thousands of refugees arrive in our country every year. The care they are able to procure from the government hardly ever makes enough headway for them to successfully assimilate into our country. Some of these refugees are Christian brothers and sisters who are in need of our help. Others are non-believers who are in need of our help and in need of the gospel. The refugee crisis is one clear instance of neighbors who are in need. If you live in a city or community in which refugees are being placed, consider becoming involved in the programs helping them. This is a wonderful way to show our love for our neighbor. If there are not refugee placements in your community, consider what other community-wide issues your church could become involved in as you seek to be neighbors to those in need.

PRAY

+Use these prayer points to instill the lessons you learned from God's Word this week.



Father, help me to love you with all of my heart, my soul, my strength, and my mind.

God, help me to see the needs of my neighbors and give me the resolve to meet those needs.

Lord Jesus, you met my greatest need. You are my greatest neighbor. Help me reflect the glory of your name as I seek to be a neighbor to others.

God, give me your wisdom as I seek to make long-term commitments to serving others.