



Who is My Neighbor?

Luke 10:29: (NASB) *But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*



Do you know who your neighbors are? I am not necessarily asking about the people who live to your left or right, but am more readily referring to the people who live around you - all around you - the people you work with, the people you shop with, the people you go to the gym with, the people you go to church with, the people you pass on the street or in the parking lot - those people - you know, the people you notice and the people you don't notice. Are *they* your neighbors? Do you owe them anything - or do they owe *you* anything? We want to talk about the relationship between being a neighbor, being a Good Samaritan and being a human being. Stay with us as we look into this somewhat well-known parable of Jesus with some striking and perhaps not so well known details! Who is my neighbor? Let's see if we can find out...

Our only question for consideration:

Who is MY Neighbor?

A lawyer asks this question of Jesus:

Luke 10:25-29: (NASB) ²⁵*And a lawyer stood up and put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* ²⁶*And he said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"* ²⁷*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."* ²⁸*And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; Do this and you will live."* ²⁹*But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

There seems to be a battle of wits engaging. A customary teaching tool of asking questions is taking place. Jesus first answered the lawyer's question with a question. The lawyer then answers Jesus' question and follows with another question.

So, Jesus tells the story - not in response to a sincere question from one searching for truth - but in response to one who only seeks self-justification by trying to trap Jesus in his own words.

Let's look at "who is my neighbor" from a very Old Testament Jewish perspective, from what that lawyer would have already known.

"My neighbor" is mentioned in the Ten Commandments:

Exodus 20:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶*"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.* ¹⁷*"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*

Two of the Ten Commandments deal with your neighbor: Not lying about or taking his possessions.

"My neighbor" is the needy - those who are hungry:

Leviticus 19:9-10: (NASB) ⁹*Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.* ¹⁰*Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God.*



"My neighbor" is my employee:

Leviticus 19:13: (NASB) *You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning.*

"My neighbor" is my countryman:

Leviticus 19:17-18: (NASB) ¹⁷*You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.* ¹⁸*You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.*

"My neighbor" is the stranger in our land:

Leviticus 19:33-34: (NASB) ³³*When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong.* ³⁴*The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.*

There are a number of countries in the Middle East surrounding Israel in which Jews are not welcome.

The lawyer talking to Jesus would have well known that the law defined "neighbor" as a sweeping generality of basically anyone with whom one comes in contact.

"My neighbor," according to the Old Testament Law, seems to be anyone and everyone who may cross our path. Now, does this mean that we are to forget or compromise standards and laws to accommodate anyone and everyone? NO!

Leviticus 19:17 clearly said we may surely reprove our neighbor, but not act in a sinful way because of him. Just because we are supposed to treat everyone kindly doesn't mean we throw away righteousness. We still uphold the laws.

So the Old Testament template has been set:

Luke 10:30: (NASB) *Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead."*

The distance between Jerusalem and Jericho is about nineteen miles. It was a rocky, desolate area that was notorious for places where robbers would come. Jamison, Fausset and Brown's Commentary says that this continues even to this day.

Luke 10:31: (NASB) *And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*

A priest would have been one of the highest representatives of the Jewish Law. Jericho was one of the appointed cities of the priests and Levites. It is estimated that 12,000 of them resided there. They took their turns at the service in the Temple at Jerusalem, and consequently were frequently on this road.



Won't You be My neighbor? Mr. Rogers



Mr. Rogers idealizes being a neighbor, but this story of Jesus shows the stark reality.

So what happens?

- The beaten man is presumably a Jew;
- The priest "sees" the beaten man - not by a mere glance, but he perceives - he understood what has happened!
- He passes by ON THE OTHER SIDE, getting as far away as he can.

Sometimes being a neighbor requires something more than a smile.

The following audio clips are taken from a talk that Daniel Goleman gave in 2007 called "Why aren't we all Good Samaritans," recorded on www.ted.com available on YouTube.



The Study - Introduction, *Daniel Goleman*

- Study at Princeton Theological Seminary;
- Students told to give a practice sermon;
- Half told to speak on the Good Samaritan;
- All were told they needed to go to another building to give that sermon.

Luke 10:32: (NKJV) *Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.*

A Levite is an instructor of the people, set aside for God's service. Their work was to be works of spirituality, performing the sacrifices. They should have understood what a neighbor was according to the Old Testament. So the Levite sees the man, came to look closer at the man, and then passes by on the other side!

Deuteronomy 22:1-4: (NIV) *¹If you see your brother's ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it but be sure to take it back to him. ²If the brother does not live near you or if you do not know who he is, take it home with you and keep it until he comes looking for it. Then give it back to him. ³Do the same if you find your brother's donkey or his cloak or anything he loses. Do not ignore it. ⁴If you see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it. Help him get it to its feet.*

Even if the animals of your neighbor are having trouble, you help him.

Here is the Christian perspective of the Jewish law:

James 2:14-16: (NRSV) *¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?*

Where are we so far in Jesus' story? We have:

- a Jew robbed and beaten, left on the road to die;
- a Jewish Priest - one of the highest representatives of the Law - did not help;



- a Jewish Levite - an instructor and guide of the people - did not help.

The Study - The Question, *Daniel Goleman*

- On their way to their practice sermon, each passed a man doubled over in pain;
- Did they stop and help?
- Did the contemplation of the Good Samaritan help them to help someone in need?
- The answer? NO!

Even people directly focused on the Good Samaritan story avoided someone in need. What does this mean?

Luke 10:33: (NASB) *But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion,*



Observations so far:

- This Samaritan was on a journey - he had some place to be.
- Like the two previous men that passed by, this Samaritan also sees - perceives - the man's condition.
- The Samaritan had compassion.

This particular word "compassion" ([Strong's #4697](#)) means *to be deeply moved from the depths of your heart* and is *only* used in the New Testament when Jesus is describing someone in a parable or in describing Jesus himself!

Matthew 9:36: *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with **compassion <4697>** on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

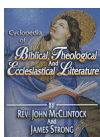
Matthew 20:34: *So Jesus had **compassion <4697>** on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.*



The Study - The Conclusion, *Daniel Goleman*

- What determined what made a person stop was how much of a hurry they felt they were they in.
- We don't take every opportunity to help because our focus is in the wrong direction.

When we have a single-minded purpose in our busy lives, it is difficult to stop, reset, and then do the right thing. We live in a very self-absorbed, object-oriented world. In this kind of an environment, we often lose out on the important opportunities to be a neighbor as defined in the Scriptures. Those of us that claim Christianity for our lives of all people should be the most willing, ready and able. The Lord could be giving us such experiences to see where our hearts are. Christianity should be built on those things that come into play in our everyday lives.



McClintock and Strong's: The establishment of a separate worship made the breach existing between the Jews and Samaritans irreparable. From this time malcontent Jews resorted to Samaria; and the very name of either people became odious to the other. About the year B.C. 129, John Hyrcanus, high priest of the Jews, destroyed the city of the Samaritans.

...their animosity became more intense than ever. The Samaritans are said to have done everything in their power to annoy the Jews. They would refuse hospitality to pilgrims on their



Putting labels on people make them irrelevant to us. If we focus on what we don't like about the person, the core of what they need and what we might be able to do in their life doesn't matter. They are precious human beings for whom Jesus died. They got lost like we do and stuck like we do. Once we were the ones who were in need on that road to Jericho and Jesus stopped. We need to refocus, reset. We need to at least connect with people by prayer and focus on who they really are.

road to Jerusalem, as in our Lord's case. They would even waylay them in their journey and many were compelled through fear to take the longer route by the east of Jordan.

Luke 9:52-56: (NASB) ⁵²and he (Jesus) sent messengers on ahead of him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for him. ⁵³But they did not receive him, because he was traveling toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴When his disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; ⁵⁶for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And they went on to another village.

... "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil" was the mode in which the Jews expressed themselves when at a loss for a bitter reproach. Everything that a Samaritan had touched was as swine's flesh to them.

THE SAMARITANS

...had a connection with the Jews in their heritage but went a different way –

THEY HAD MAJOR POLITICAL DIFFERENCES

...had a heritage of paganism –

THEY HAD MAJOR RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

...did not like the Jews – they thought the Jews did not follow God closely and were NOT liked by the Jews – the Jews thought the Samaritans corrupted the Law –

THEY HAD MAJOR MORAL DIFFERENCES

The ensuing bitterness was deep, corrosive and encompassing!

Who has major political differences with Christians today? How about the Muslims?



JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT ANSWER DOESN'T MEAN YOU ARE LIVING THE RIGHT ANSWER.

Luke 10:34-35: (NASB) ³⁴...came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.'

 **The Study - Wired to Help, Daniel Goleman**

- If we attend to the other person, we automatically "feel with" that person.
- We don't help because of our complete self absorption.
- Noticing, empathy, and compassion are the other side of the spectrum. If we are pre-occupied, we don't notice the other person.

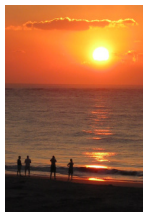


Observations about the Samaritan:

- Treats the stranger's wounds - oil to ease their pain and wine to clean them;
- Now has to walk to be able to move the wounded stranger to safety;
- Spends the night caring for the wounded stranger;
- Leaves enough money for the stranger's care in his absence (Two denarii = two days wages);
- Offers to pay any balance for the stranger's care upon his own return.



The Samaritan doesn't only lend a hand, he lends his life to this other man so the stranger can move forward.



We can be so heavenly-minded that we are of no earthly good.

2 Corinthians 5:20: Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.



A Christian's life depends on how he treats his brother.

1 John 3:14: We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

Three major lessons we can learn from the Samaritan's compassion:



Perspective: Who are we?

Matthew 5:13-16: (NASB) ¹³*You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.* ¹⁴*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;* ¹⁵*nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.* ¹⁶*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

To live this lesson is not only an admirable way to live, for the true Christian, it is an identifying way to live! As ambassadors for Christ, we are to be representing something higher. We are to be examples of living heavenly-minded but having great value to those around us.

Priorities: We are to serve God - but what are the most important things in that service?

Proverbs 24:17: (NRSV) *Do not rejoice when your enemies fall, and do not let your heart be glad when they stumble.*

Hosea 6:6: *For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.*

Philippians 2:3-4: (NASB) ³*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;* ⁴*do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*



Practicality: Just how do we live the lesson of the Good Samaritan?

Luke 6:31-32: (NRSV) ³²*Do to others as you would have them do to you.* ³²*If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.*

We cannot do the following unless we NOTICE!

Romans 12:14-17: (NASB) ¹⁴*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.* ¹⁵*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.* ¹⁶*Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.* ¹⁷*Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.*



"Pay It Forward" movie - The Idea

Now that Jesus finished the story, he concludes with the lesson:

Luke 10:36-37: (NASB) ³⁶*"Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?"* ³⁷*And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."*



Final observations regarding the depth of the lesson in this parable:

- All people are subject to trial and tragedy in life;
- At one time or another, we all witness the trial and tragedy of others;
- Trial and tragedy, even when they are not your own, are NEVER convenient;
- Just because we have religion does not mean we know God;
- Just because we don't have religion, does not mean we cannot be merciful and compassionate;
- The heart of our perceived enemy can be a big heart;
- The heart of those with authority can be cowardly and selfish;
- Our actions always speak louder than our words.

How did Jesus treat the Samaritans in real life? Did he practice what he preached? Of course. Refer to John 4:7-15 with the Samaritan woman at the well; his teaching her that he is the Messiah in John 4:25-26; Jesus healing Samaritans in Luke 17:12-18; and one of Jesus' final instructions before his ascension included the Samaritans in Acts 1:6-9.

Go and do thou likewise...



On the Road to Jericho, Keith Green



Lyrics:

I left Jerusalem, last week for Jericho,
In the afternoon, the sun was getting low,
And then the bushes shook, and out they came at me,
They were robbing me half naked, while they beat me head to toe,
And they left me on the road to Jericho.

Lying almost slain, and wounded by the road,
Crying out in pain for a sympathetic soul,
First a priest, and another of my kind,
Well they were men I could have trusted, but they acted deaf and blind,
They were strangers on the road to Jericho.

Through the blood and tears, I saw a worried face,
He was from Samaria, my people hate his race,
He bandaged up my wounds and he laid me on his horse,
Although my memory is cloudy, I can still feel his friendly flow,
Such a kind man on the road to Jericho.
When I later asked the innkeeper the man's name he did not know,
Just a neighbor on the road to Jericho.

