

What Does Being a Good Samaritan Really Mean?

Luke 10:33–34: *33 But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, 34 and came to him and bandaged up his wounds...*



Most people know something about the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The core thought that is well known is the concept of helping a total stranger in a time of their great physical need. Think about it—there are laws in place to protect those who engage in helping strangers in case something goes wrong. They’re called “Good Samaritan” laws. There are organizations in place to promote these kinds of acts of brotherly kindness. There are ministries and hospitals that bear this name. As wonderful as all of this is, the message Jesus was giving when he spoke this parable is far deeper. The bottom line is, if we work on understanding and actually applying his true message, we will learn to become not only true neighbors but will also grow to be that much closer to the image of Christ.

Why did Jesus even speak this parable?



One of the traditional ways to communicate with the learned men of Israel was by asking questions. First, one would ask a question, and then the other man would respond to the question and then ask a question of his own. Jesus knew all about this method.

The Good Samaritan would prove to be a profound answer to an important question. This parable unfolded as Jesus was being specifically challenged by a “doctor of the Law” (lawyer) on his (Jesus’) true understanding of what the Law meant.

This challenge was packaged in very respectful language, and it asked a big question:

Luke 10:25: *And a lawyer stood up and **put** <1598> him to the **test** <1598>, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

This question had a very obvious Jewish Law-based answer, whose details could easily be debated by the educated. This indeed was a test for this “rogue” teacher named Jesus.

How strong of a test was this?

(put to) Test: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #1598 *ekpeirazo*; to test thoroughly

This word for *test* was only used four times in the New Testament.

Here is an example of one other use, when Jesus was tempted by Satan:

Matthew 4:7: *Jesus said to him, On the other hand, it is written, **YOU SHALL NOT PUT** <1598> **THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST** <1598>.*

Jesus' response to the question was also respectful, and it essentially prompted the lawyer to give an answer to his own question in the manner that was common among learned individuals.

Luke 10:26–27: *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.*

This individual, being a doctor of the Law, jumps to Jesus' challenge to show his knowledge.

This answer is appropriate and comprehensive, as it is directly from Deuteronomy and Leviticus:

Deuteronomy 6:4–5: *4 Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

Leviticus 19:18: *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.*

Jesus verified the answer by quoting sacred Scripture from Leviticus:

Luke 10:28: *And he said to him, You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.*

Leviticus 18:4–5: *4 You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God. 5 So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD.*

Okay, everybody agrees! Can we all go home now? Of course not! He has only begun to set up the test for Jesus.

The lawyer has another more difficult question and does not hesitate to ask it for a specific reason:

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

This lawyer seems to be pressing Jesus into a battle of words and interpretations based upon the Law. This was his territory. He was good at it. Would Jesus take his challenge?

The lawyer is probably looking pretty smug at this point. Jesus had verified the lawyer's words. He has Jesus just where he wants him—now he will really put Jesus to the test, *who is my neighbor?* We can sense he thinks he is smarter than Jesus.

How would Jesus respond? He stepped above such chatter, as this had now become a powerful teaching moment. Jesus knew the Law never said to hate those who are different. On the contrary, it commanded the people to be kind and respectful to all (even aliens and strangers in the land).

The lawyer is referring to Leviticus 19, and Jesus knows this:

Leviticus 19:9–10,33–34: *9 Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field... 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. 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.*

Notice that several of the scriptures we are reading end with, *I am the LORD your God*. God is reminding Israel that these commandments come from Him. This will weigh heavily in the discussion as we go through this account.

Jesus knows the lawyer is quoting from **Leviticus 19**, which defines proper action towards neighbors. The two of them do not talk directly about these scriptures, but they are there in the background.

Jesus had also already laid out his clear and unwavering perspective on how all of this should work in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:43–45: *43 You have heard that it was said, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy. 44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

Jesus is secure in the answer to the question. He already knows what it is. Instead of answering the question directly, Jesus would tell a story that had clear and present relevance to each and every listener. He would use a real-life example of a Samaritan, a people against whom the Jews had a generational hatred.

The wisdom of Jesus is so profound. He will use **Leviticus 19** to create this parable without violating one single word. Jesus will do it with grace.

We will unfold the history of generational tension between the Samaritans and the Jewish people throughout this episode. Understanding this tension profoundly deepens Jesus' lesson.

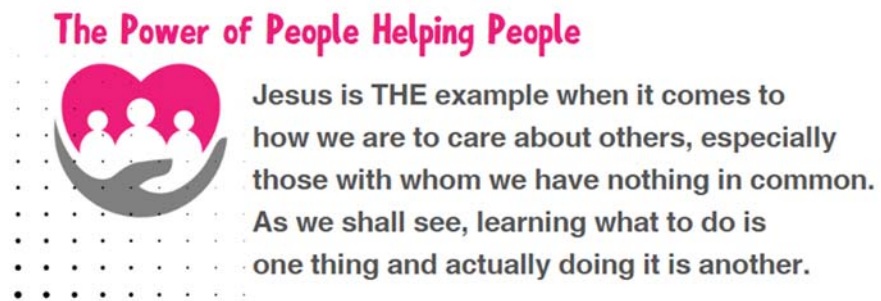
(Source: Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) ...the Samaritans were a "mixed race" contaminated by foreign blood and false worship. The Jewish historian Josephus indicates that the Samaritans were also opportunists. When the Jews enjoyed prosperity, the Samaritans were quick to acknowledge their blood relationship. But when the Jews suffered hard times, the Samaritans disowned any such kinship, declaring that they were descendants of Assyrian immigrants.

Because the Samaritans were part Jewish and part foreign blood, there was a natural animosity between them and the Jews who held to the Law and traditional Jewish life. These two peoples grew further and further apart through the generations.

(Source: Albert Barnes' Bible Commentary on the Whole Bible) The Jews, after their return from Babylon, set about rebuilding their temple. The Samaritans offered to aid them. The Jews, however, perceiving that it was not from a love of true religion, but that they might obtain a part of the favors granted to the Jews by Cyrus, rejected their offer. The consequence was, that a state of long and bitter animosity arose between them and the Jews.

This commentary takes us back to the time of Cyrus, King of Persia. Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem, rebuild the walls and rebuild Solomon's Temple. The Samaritans in the area slyly offered to help, thinking to gain from this, but their help was rejected. This caused bad blood between the two groups.

This was hundreds and hundreds of years before Jesus' day. By the time Jesus was born, the animosity had been so ingrained between the two groups that they may not have even remembered how it began. This becomes an important point when Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan. We will explore the power of an individual stepping up to help another individual regardless of who they are and where they come from.



It is easy to acknowledge this as a profound lesson, but it's something different to actually change how we live our lives. It requires a lot of attention.

We haven't even begun to tell the story, and already we can see how the power of personal ego and position can skew our view of reality.

**Jesus is about to teach a lesson that will certainly ruffle some feathers.
How does he set it up so his audience will listen?**

The wisdom with which Jesus approached each and every experience of his earthly ministry cannot be overstated. He ALWAYS knew who was listening, understood their condition of heart and mind, and always delivered much-needed answers. He would begin this story with a scene that was familiar to everyone.

Before we get to the story, let's review a little more history on the Jewish/Samaritan issues.

(Source: Albert Barnes' Commentary on the Whole Bible) While Nehemiah was engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem, the Samaritans used every art to thwart him in his undertaking, Nehemiah 6:1-14. The Samaritans at length obtained leave of the Persian monarch to build a temple for themselves. This was erected on Mount Gerizim, and they strenuously contended that that was the place designated by Moses as the place where the nation should worship. Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans, constituted his son-in-law, Manasses, high priest. The religion of the Samaritans thus became perpetuated, and an irreconcilable hatred arose between them and the Jews.

While Nehemiah was engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem, the Samaritans looked to thwart him. This was about 75 to 100 years after Cyrus had sent many of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity back to Judah to rebuild the Temple. There is a long time in between. Sanballat, the Samaritan, opposed Nehemiah's return because Nehemiah was rapidly rebuilding the walls surrounding Jerusalem which would fortify the city against attack from hostile neighbors—like the Samaritans. This hatred between the peoples continued to grow. It is ancient history for the Jews and Samaritans of Jesus' time, but it was still a strong hatred.

Let's get to the story:

Luke 10:30: *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.*

(Source: Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary) *from Jerusalem to Jericho—a distance of nineteen miles northeast, a deep and very fertile hollow. Thieves/robbers—the road, being rocky and desolate, was a notorious haunt of robbers, then and for ages after, and even to this day.*

This was nothing new. Jesus was very good at using “nothing new” to give his listeners something new!

This was a common journey taken on a common road between two well-known cities. Jesus once again taught the most important lessons using the most common aspects of life. There is a great wisdom in being able to use something already understood in order to expand one's understanding.

This robbery would not have been surprising to his audience. Take note of the direction he was traveling: the man was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho.

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

(Source: Henry Alford's New Testament for English Readers) *Many priests journeyed this way, for Jericho was a priestly city; this man is perhaps represented as having been up to Jerusalem in the order of his course, and returning. The Law and Prophets enjoined the act of mercy which this priest refused; see Exodus 23:4, 5, Deuteronomy 22:1-4, Isaiah 58:7.*

Jericho was a priestly city where many priests lived. They would come to Jerusalem to serve their term as priests in the Temple, doing holy things. At this point in the story, he is done with his work and heading back to Jericho.



A priest was going down on that road—he had left the higher elevation from Jerusalem and was likely going home, having finished serving for the day. The lawyer would have picked up on that detail.

Both the man and priest are traveling in the same direction.

What happened? This priest, who was personally responsible to uphold the Law and be an example to the people, “sees” this beaten man who is presumably a Jew. The priest is also going from Jerusalem to Jericho. The word for *saw* indicates perceiving and not merely noticing. Upon seeing him, the priest stayed as far away from him as possible, walking on the other side of the road to completely avoid him.

The priest’s reaction to seeing a beaten and bloodied man on the road was in direct contradiction to the Law’s instruction:

Exodus 23:4-5: *4 If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. 5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him.*

The priest would have known this. What was this priest thinking that made him not only disobey the compassion that the Law required, but leave a suffering, dying man helpless and hopeless?

Mirror Question:



What would make ME be so numb
to the suffering and difficulties of others
as I go on my way?

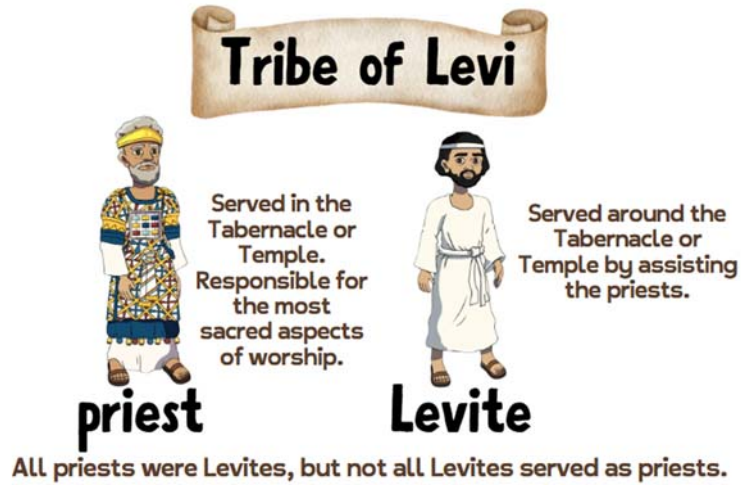
The story first describes a priest, a high representative of Jewish Law, a holy person, and then Jesus adds:

Luke 10:32: *Likewise, a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.*

The Levite did what the priest did—he *passed by on the other side*—he crossed over to the other side of the road to avoid the injured man, avoiding any contact or interaction.

All three of the characters in this parable are going in the same direction. One gets robbed and is left for dead. The other two completely avoid him by walking past him, skirting to the other side of the road.

(Source: www.bibliatodo.com) The Levites were the tribe of Israelites descended from Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. The priests of Israel were a group of qualified men from within the tribe of the Levites who had responsibility over aspects of tabernacle or temple worship. All priests were to be Levites, according to the Law, but not all Levites were priests.



Once again, these actions were in direct contradiction to the Law's instruction:

Deuteronomy 22:1-4: *1 You shall not see your countryman's ox or his sheep straying away, and pay no attention to them; you shall certainly bring them back to your countryman. 2 If your countryman is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it home to your house, and it shall remain with you until your countryman looks for it; then you shall restore it to him. 3 Thus you shall do with his donkey, and you shall do the same with his garment, and you shall do likewise with anything lost by your countryman, which he has lost and you have found. You are not allowed to neglect them. 4 You shall not see your countryman's donkey or his ox fallen down on the way, and pay no attention to them; you shall certainly help him to raise them up.*

Like the priest before him, what was this Levite thinking that made him not only disobey the compassion that the Law required, but leave a suffering, dying man helpless and hopeless?

The Law was clear: if you see even an ox or sheep of a neighbor wandering lost on the road, you take responsibility for that lost animal, even if it means bringing it home with you until your neighbor comes looking for it. You don't just let it wander. If your countryman's donkey or ox has fallen down, you don't just walk away; you stop and help him get it back up on its feet.

If the Law requires the Jews to be that compassionate to animals, how much more should they have shown compassion toward human beings? What was with this Levite? This action was a direct contradiction of the compassion that was mandated in the Old Testament Law. It was very simple and straightforward.

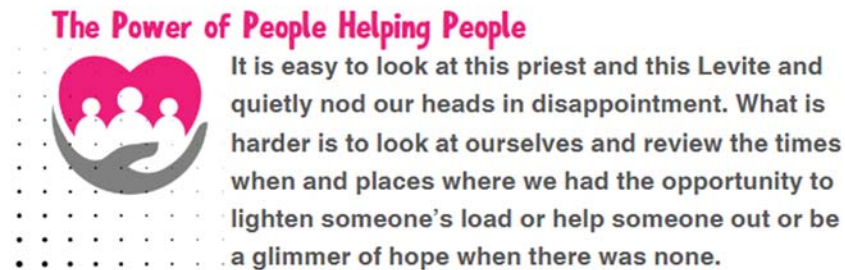
Mirror Question:



What would make ME be so numb to the suffering and difficulties of others as I go on my way?

The answer to this question should be about self-reflection and not about pointing a finger. The priest and the Levite really didn't have an excuse, but the bigger question is, do I? Do I make excuses? Am I too self-important or too preoccupied? Am I too busy because my schedule is too tight? Do I look at the situation and conclude that the cost of stopping outweighs the value of helping?

As bad as this is, this is just the introduction to the real point of the story. As we consider this parable, we have to ask ourselves, *Am I in a position where I could be like that priest or Levite? If I am, what am I doing there?*



How can we show simple and selfless kindness? It is a small adjustment—be determined to not “walk by.” *But I've got to do... but I can't... but I don't have time...* No, we have to resolve that we are not going to walk by.

Remember, Jesus is talking to a lawyer who is kind of smug in his perspective. Jesus is building a case to show who this man's neighbor was in a very powerful way.

Experience can be a great teacher, but observation can certainly save us some headaches. Let's observe and learn what NOT to do!

**So far, the story Jesus is telling is heartbreaking.
What happens next to break the heartbreak?**

It is at this point that Jesus will introduce a Samaritan into the drama. It's so important for us to realize the depth of reaction that would have been sparked in his audience, as this unknown and despised Samaritan man became the hero of the day. Every aspect of compassion and kindness any of his listeners personally hoped for would be reflected in this outsider.

(Source: Albert Barnes' Commentary on the Whole Bible) Afterwards, Samaria became a place of resort for all the outlaws of Judea. They received willingly all the Jewish criminals, and refugees from justice. The violators of the Jewish laws, and those who had been excommunicated, betook themselves for safety to Samaria, and greatly increased their numbers and the hatred which subsisted between the two nations.

The Samaritans received only the five books of Moses, and rejected the writings of the prophets, and all the Jewish traditions. From these causes arose an irreconcilable difference between them, so that the Jews regarded them as the worst of the human race, (John 8:48) and had no dealings with them (John 4:9).

How did the Jews look at the Samaritans? According to Barnes, “The Jews regarded them as the worst of the human race.” We know this to be true when we read of one of the biggest insults that could be given to a Jewish person in Jesus’ day.

The Pharisees didn’t like what Jesus was saying, so they insulted him:

John 8:48–49: *48 The Jews answered and said to him, Do we not say rightly that you are a Samaritan and have a demon? (There’s the insult!) 49 Jesus answered, I do not have a demon; but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me.*

Notice, Jesus doesn’t acknowledge the Samaritan part of the insult.

Using a Samaritan as the example in the parable would have been a big deal:

Luke 10:33–34: *33 But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt **compassion** <4697>, 34 and 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.*

This Samaritan was on a journey. He had some place to be, just like the priest and the Levite. He also *saw*, meaning he perceived the man’s condition. The difference? The Samaritan had compassion.

Compassion: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #4697 *splagchnizomai*: to have the bowels yearn, i.e. (figuratively) feel sympathy, to pity:—have (be moved with) compassion

This word means to be deeply moved from the depths of your heart and is only used in the New Testament four times when Jesus is describing someone in a parable or in describing the compassion of Jesus himself.

Several examples of how this word is used:

Matthew 20:34: *Moved with **compassion** <4697>, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed him.*

Jesus healed because of his deep compassion.

Mark 6:34: *When Jesus went ashore, he saw a large crowd, and he felt **compassion** <4697> for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.*

Jesus taught them because of his deep compassion. The compassion of Jesus included a profound, personal response to suffering. He reacts by doing something about it. Jesus says the Samaritan (the “bad guy” in Jewish eyes) in the story has this kind of compassion.

What did the Samaritan do? Right there on the road, he ministered to the wounded man.

- ✓ He treated the stranger’s wounds with oil to ease the pain and wine to clean them. This cost him his personal goods. Are we willing to do this?
- ✓ He transported the wounded stranger to safety and walked alongside of him. He walked next to him, expending his physical energy. Are we willing to do this?

- ✓ He spent the night caring for this wounded stranger.
He gave of his time and sacrificed his sleep. Are we willing to do this?

In just a few words, Jesus explained what being a “neighbor” means. Jesus showed in the most unlikely way what true compassion looks like. He was demonstrating the highest fulfillment of our love for God, through dedication to helping our fellow man.

We say we love God. Wonderful. How do we show that love for God? God showed His love for us by sending His only begotten son. God shows His love for us with His providence in our lives. God shows His love for us by holding us in the palm of His hand.

We cannot do those things for God, but we can serve others. This is the point Jesus is making in this parable.

These beautiful verses show what Jesus has and will do for mankind:

Isaiah 61:1–2: *1 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; 2 to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.*

Jesus knew he was sent to do his Father’s will. How does he do that? Through compassion. Through taking the gifts he was given and freely giving them to others. When the lawyer asks, *Tell me, who do you think my neighbor is?* Jesus’ answer does not get into a back-and-forth debate. Instead, he gives an undeniable and irrefutable example of what it means to be a true neighbor.

Did the Samaritan stop there? No, because the work of was compassion not yet complete:

Luke 10:35: *On 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.*

- ✓ He left enough money for the stranger’s care in his absence. Two denarii was about two days’ wages.
This was a great cost to him. Are we willing to do this?
- ✓ He offered to pay any balance for the stranger’s care upon his own return that way.
He was willing to go over and beyond what he had already given. Are we willing to do this?

Looking at the big picture, this Samaritan was selfless. This sounds like Christlikeness! Jesus used the “enemy” of that day to exemplify compassion and care.

In this next passage, Israel has been complaining to God (!) that He is not hearing them in spite of their fasting and outward devotion.

God speaking to Israel through Isaiah about what He wants from them as His people:

Isaiah 58:6–8: *6 Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? 8 Then your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; and your righteousness will go before you; the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.*

This is how you gain God's favor—treat your neighbor as yourself! In this “complaint” of Israel to God, God responds that they should divide their bread with the hungry—the Samaritan gave up his gain financial well-being to help someone else and bought him food and lodging. Israel should bring the poor into their houses—the Samaritan couldn’t bring the wounded man home, so he brought him to the nearest place where he could help him get well. The Samaritan did everything the lawyer knew the Law said.

Be focused on righteous living and spreading that righteousness to others. This is the message Jesus is expressing through the actions of the “bad guy,” the Samaritan.

The Law and the prophets absolutely showed us what is important if we truly love God with our heart, mind, soul and strength. The New Testament shows us as well:

James 2:14–18: *14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, Go in peace, be warmed and be filled, and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18 But someone may well say, You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*

James is teaching that we need to live what we profess. Anything less is hypocritical. Jesus shows a lack of action on the part of the priest and Levite in terms of fulfilling what they both should have known was required of them.

The Power of People Helping People



The priest and the Levite showed us what our lives look like when we have so much inner focus that we run away from challenging but incredibly profitable experiences. The Samaritan showed us what it looks like when we allow ourselves to see others’ needs above our own.

When we see someone else’s needs are above our own, it changes things—now we are not thinking about “me.” We are thinking about helping another.

Mirror Questions:



What do I see when attending to the business of my day?
Is there room for the needs of others?
Do I have room in my schedule?
Do I have room in my heart?



My wife, Trish, was telling me about the homeless guy we see on one corner often when we are out. She noticed his cardboard sign said he was a veteran. She went home and looked up the Veteran's Administration benefits for all veterans and printed them out and put them in an envelope along with a \$10 gift card to McDonald's. The next time she drove by him, she called out to him that she had something for him. She explained there was a gift card for some food, but also information on how the Veteran's Administration could help him because he was a veteran. She then encouraged him to look into the kind of help he deserved to get.

I had never thought to do that. She went out of her way to show somebody how they could help themselves. He had the capacity to help himself. She took a few extra minutes to give him a little help and a supportive suggestion that as he has the strength to stand all day with his sign, maybe he can go to the VA and find some help.

We have all heard the saying, "Follow the leader!" To follow the leader, we need to find the leader. Are we looking?

Jesus has finished with his story. How does he now bring home the powerful lessons he was teaching?

Jesus always knew how to finish what he started. This lawyer who was testing him had parlayed questions back and forth with Jesus. Jesus continued to not only participate but controlled this parlay with one final and piercing question. As we will see, once this question is answered, there will be no more room for speculation and opinion regarding what God wants from His people.

(Source: Trapp's Complete Commentary) *For the Jews have no dealings*—the Jews therefore hated the presence, the fire, the fashion, the books of a Samaritan. Neither was there any hatred lost on the Samaritan's part; for if he had but touched a Jew, he would have thrown himself into the next water, clothes and all; both of them equally sick of *a noli me tangere* (Do not touch me). (Epiphanius.)

Do we have a disdain like this for anyone along the lines of religion, race, politics or social differences? Do we get so upset and frustrated with "those" people that we fall into this kind of animosity that took those ancient peoples generations and generations to develop, but just takes us getting on social media?

How did this animosity towards Samaritans manifest in Jesus' disciples?

Luke 9:52–56: *52 and he (Jesus) sent messengers on ahead of him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for him. 53 But they did not receive him, because he was traveling toward Jerusalem. 54 When 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? 55 But he turned and rebuked them, and said, You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; 56 for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went on to another village.*

Jesus didn't harbor any animosity. He taught others to not harbor any animosity either. He taught others to rise even above what they had been taught in the Law. The standard was being raised higher.

The story concludes, and Jesus now addresses the lawyer's question about who his neighbor is:

Luke 10:36: *Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?*

Again, it is Jesus asking the questions. There is only room for one right answer here. The moment we speculate about why the priest and the Levite did not help is the moment we deny the value of unbiased brotherhood.

The lawyer answered accordingly:

Luke 10:37: *And he said, The one who showed mercy toward him. Then Jesus said to him, Go and do the same.*

Interestingly, when the lawyer answered he did not say “the Samaritan.” Whether this answer was given this way to avoid giving credit to “those people,” we do not know. Jesus labels everybody in the parable: the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan. But the lawyer answers with, *the one who showed mercy toward him.*

Here's what we can learn from this:



Being a true neighbor is defined by the actions that make you a true neighbor and not by the social or political status you hold.



The lawyer asked Jesus, *And who is my neighbor?*

Jesus used the most vile people the Jews knew to exemplify that **all of mankind is my neighbor.**

Three final points regarding our development as true neighbors:

1. Godly Perspective

Who are we? What do we call ourselves? What do we stand for?

The fact is, Jesus was willing to freely give of himself to any and all who came before him.

Jesus healed Samaritans. Why? They were his “neighbors”!

The ten lepers:

Luke 17:11–16: *11 While he was on the way to Jerusalem, he was passing between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met him; 13 and they raised their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! 14 When he saw them, he said to them, Go and show yourselves to the priests. And as they were going, they were cleansed. 15 Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, 16 and he fell on his face at his feet, giving thanks to him. And he was a Samaritan.*

Jesus didn’t look at the ten lepers and ask, “Who is a Jew among you? Jews on this side, the others over there. I’m only going to heal the Jews.” He didn’t care. He had a gift that previewed his Father’s kingdom, showing the impartiality of God.

In this account of healing, only the Samaritan leper said thank you. This incident was real, not a parable.

2. Daily Priorities

Beyond your basic survival needs, what is most important in your life? The fact is, Jesus gave the gospel message to Israel as well as to anyone who would have ears to hear. Jesus preached to the Samaritans! Why? They too could follow him!

Let’s take a brief look at the woman at the well:

John 4:7–10: *7 There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give me a drink. 8 For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 Therefore the Samaritan woman said to him, How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.*

Jesus is breaking all the rules by talking to her. Not only is she a Samaritan (who no Jew would talk to), but she is a woman! No self-respecting Jewish man, would talk to a strange woman.

He asks her to do something for him and then engages her in a way to show her something life-changing. Even though society regards her as “less than” for several reasons, he treats her respectfully, like he does with everyone.

Jesus’ daily life reflected his teachings in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Let's jump to near the end of the account of the woman at the well:

John 4:25-26: *25 The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that one comes, he will declare all things to us. 26 Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he.*

Jesus knew the struggles of this Samaritan woman and saw her potential. Through her, many Samaritans in her village believed.

Most amazingly, Jesus admits to this Samaritan woman that he is the Messiah! This is in spite of how the Jews viewed the Samaritans in that day. She ran back home and told others in the village. Jesus ended up staying in Samaria for three days, preaching to the people. Many were converted.

For Jesus, it wasn't just about being nice; it was about breaking down barriers. It was about living what he was teaching.

3. Ultimate Purpose

What is most important? That Jesus died for EVERY man woman and child who ever lived. Jesus even redeemed the Samaritans! Why? They were Adam's children, just like the rest of us! We are ALL neighbors!

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, he gave these instructions:

Acts 1:6-8: *6 So when they had come together, they were asking him, saying, Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel? 7 He said to them, It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the holy spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*

As Jesus is leaving the earth to go to heaven, he gives his final instruction: Spread the gospel! Specifically, *Be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all of Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.* Yes, even Samaria! He could have not mentioned them by name and simply include them as part of the *remotest part of the earth*, but no, he put them up front because there was such animosity and natural hatred. He made it plain that this was to be set aside. Their mission was to be neighbors.

When we say Jesus lived being a neighbor, we see it manifested at every turn.

The Power of People Helping People



The Parable of the Good Samaritan shows us the potential of humanity - even in our sinful state - to genuinely be good, kind and giving in spite of our differences. Jesus LIVED this example and taught us to do the same.

Mirror Questions:



Am I willing to look at others from whatever walk of life they may be as equal recipients of Jesus' redemption?

Am I willing to be kind, giving and compassionate to all as my neighbors?

The lesson Jesus is teaching is huge. It's about dissolving age-old clashes and challenges, breaking down cultural and racial discrimination and breaking every social barrier. We must not get stuck in prejudice or bias.

It becomes clear that what Jesus put forth in the Parable of the Good Samaritan is far more than being nice to someone. It is about breaking down the barriers we are used to, that seem to be natural but are not spiritually sound or God-honoring.

That is what the Parable of the Good Samaritan is about. How are we working with this lesson in our lives?

The entire Good Samaritan context:

Luke 10:25–37: *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? 30 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. 31 And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, 34 and 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. 35 On 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. 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.*

So, what does being a good Samaritan really mean?

For Rick, Jonathan and Christian Questions...

...Think about it!

All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.



Next episode

Episode 1344:
Should Christians Expect to be Healed?



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Ep.1138: Do I Treat You as My Neighbor?

Learning the life-changing meaning of being a good neighbor

<https://christianquestions.com/parables/1138-good-samaritan/>

Samaritan Woman:

Ep.1336: How Do We Cope With Feeling Shame?

Understanding the role shame should and should not play in our lives

<https://christianquestions.com/character/how-do-we-cope-with-feeling-shame/>



Parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with these short, animated videos for kids at [ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube](https://christianquestions.com/YouTube):

- **Who was the Good Samaritan?**
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Study QUESTIONS

Ep.1343: What Does Being a Good Samaritan Really Mean?

<https://christianquestions.com/parables/1343-good-samaritan/>

See:



1. What did the lawyer ask Jesus? Why did he question Jesus? (Luke 10:25)
2. What is Jesus' approach to answering the lawyer's question? How does the lawyer respond? What is Jesus' reply? What is the lawyer's next question? (Luke 10:26-29, Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Leviticus 18:4-5, 19:9-34)
3. Describe the story of the Good Samaritan. How did the priest react to the beaten man? How about the Levite? How did their actions violate the Law? (Luke 10:30-32, Exodus 23:4-5, Deuteronomy 22:1-4)
4. Have you ever made excuses in order to not help others in need? Have you looked at a situation and concluded the cost of stopping outweighs the value of helping? What is the solution to this attitude?
5. How was the Samaritan different from the priest and the Levite? Why is this parable more meaningful by Jesus using a Samaritan as one of the characters?
6. How did the Samaritan's actions define what being a "neighbor" means? What can we do to show our love for God's gift of love to us? (Luke 10:33-35, Isaiah 58:6-8, 61:1-2, James 2:14-18)
7. What do the actions of the priest and Levite show us? What do the actions of the Samaritan illustrate? Do you see parts of your own actions in either or both of these examples? What can you do to change or adopt these attitudes in your life?
8. What was the only right answer to the lawyer's question? What was the universal truth illustrated by this parable? (Luke 10:36-37)
 - a. What was Jesus' **perspective** towards other peoples, even though he was specifically sent to the house of Israel? (Luke 17:11-16) Are you aware of any of your own hidden prejudices?
 - b. What was Jesus' **priority** during his time here on earth? (John 4:7-10, 25-26) Take time to think about your priorities. How can you better prioritize your time?
 - c. What was Jesus' **purpose** in coming to this earth as a human being? What was the mission he gave his disciples before he ascended to heaven? (Acts 1:6-8) How can you accept that others are equal recipients of Jesus' redemption?
9. Can you use the Parable of the Good Samaritan to look at cultural and racial discrimination, prejudice and biases that might be keeping you from achieving a fully God-honoring life? In the eyes of God and of Jesus, do you accept that all others are your "neighbors"? What does being a good Samaritan mean to you?