

Love for Neighbors

Caleb slowed when he saw the old, blue pickup truck on the shoulder of the two-lane road. A very muscular-looking white man was bent over the open hood.

“Need any help?” Caleb asked, approaching hesitantly.

The white man’s face was slow to relax. “Yeah,” he said, as smoke continued to come from under the hood.

“Hi. My name is Caleb. If I can help, I will.”

“Hey, my name is Earl,” the man said. Caleb then saw the swastika tattoo on the side of Earl’s neck.

“You are the first person to stop,” said Earl. “I seem to need a new hose, and I’m on empty.”

“I can take you to the nearest gas station,” offered Caleb.

Earl seemed to look over Caleb for a minute, then the two men shook hands before going to Caleb’s car. On the ride to the service station, Caleb learned that Earl had been out of prison for six months and was still trying to find “decent work.” Caleb also found out that the two shared a passion for fishing.

Caleb paid for the gas and hose, and the two drove back to Earl’s truck.

On the ride back, Earl said he was considering looking into how to get tattoos removed. When Earl climbed out of the car, Caleb said he would be at the fishing spot Earl told him about in the morning.

“Hope to see you there,” Caleb said, waving as he drove off.

1. *Have you ever experienced segregation? Describe the experience.*

2. *Have you ever assisted an improbable person? How did that make you feel?*

3. *Why would we not help someone of a different culture if they needed help?*

How Do You Read It?

Luke 10:25-28, KJV

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Luke 10:25-28, NIV

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

²⁷He answered, "'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, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

²⁸"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, questions were a very common part of discourse. Luke 10 describes how an "expert in the law" (vs. 25) asked Jesus a question in order to "test" Him. He asked Jesus a commonly asked question during this time—how someone can be assured of living forever in the presence of God.

When interpreting the law, the "experts in the law" often looked to rabbis for help in articulating how a law was to be implemented. Notice that the lawyer was asking Jesus what he needed to "do" in order to inherit eternal life—reflecting the works-oriented mindset of most of the religious leaders.

Jesus asked the man to articulate what it was that he believed—namely, how would he put together the answer he was seeking. Amazingly, this lawyer gave the same answer that Jesus gave in defining the greatest commandment: to love God and to love one's neighbor (see Matt. 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34). Perhaps to the lawyer's surprise, Jesus agreed with him! Then He encouraged the scribe to

do those very things so he would be assured of eternal life. The lawyer, however, was not really interested in this gift of righteousness—rather, righteousness was something he was convinced he could generate on his own.

4. *What questions did Jesus ask the expert in the law?*

5. *How did the lawyer respond to Jesus' questions?*

A Man Attacked

Luke 10:29-32, KJV

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

Luke 10:29-32, NIV

²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side."

Dissatisfied with Jesus' answer, he asked Jesus for further clarification (on the scribe's own answer!). Luke tells us that this expert in the law "wanted to justify himself" (vs. 29). As a scribe, he would have been well-aware of what the law required—even the greatest commandments of loving God and others. Therefore, he should have been keenly aware in the areas of the law where he fell short.

If he could get an answer to the question "who is my neighbor?" that conformed to his idea of who a neighbor

should be, then perhaps his conscience would be clear. A “neighbor” at that time would most likely be a fellow Jew—not foreigners like the Romans. However, Jesus told a parable that clearly defined “neighbor” as “any human being in need,” an answer the lawyer would not have been expecting.

The setting of Jesus’ parable was the 17-mile road that went “down” (vs. 30) about 2,500 feet in elevation from Jerusalem to Jericho. The rugged road’s reputation was one of robberies and violence. More than likely, it was a Jewish man that Jesus said was traveling the road when robbers attacked him. They left the man naked, bruised, and on the verge of death by the road, in plain sight.

The next two characters in Jesus’ parable would have been well-known by the expert in the law: a priest and a Levite. Because they worked in the temple, they would have been extraordinarily conscious of remaining ceremonially clean. Some scholars speculate that they both passed by on the other side of the road so as not to ceremonially stain themselves. Touching a corpse would have defiled them and made them ineligible for temple service.

6. *What was the motivation behind the lawyer’s follow-up question to Jesus?*

7. *Who avoided the assault victim in Jesus’ parable? Why?*

The Merciful Samaritan

Luke 10:33-37, KJV

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

Luke 10:33-37, NIV

³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he

KJV

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

NIV

took out two denarii and gave them to the 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "

³⁶"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." innkeeper.

The expert in the law would have expected the priest and the Levite to be the heroes in the story. But to make a Samaritan the hero of this parable? The Jews hated the Samaritans as impure descendants of mixed marriages between Jews and Gentiles. For Jesus to make a Samaritan the hero would have been scandalous to His audience.

Unlike the religious leaders, the Samaritan took pity on the beat-up man, put some clothes on him, and tended to his wounds. He let the assault victim ride his donkey to an inn and gave the innkeeper the equivalent of two days' wages to take care of the beat-up man and offered to pay the difference in case his care exceeded that amount.

Jesus now wanted the lawyer to answer his own question: which of the three proved to be a true neighbor to the fallen man? Begrudgingly (he couldn't even say the word "Samaritan"), the lawyer said it was the one who had mercy on the victim. Jesus' challenge was, "You be like the man you despise in this story. Recognize that everyone is a neighbor, especially those in need of help and mercy."

8. What did the Samaritan do for the man who was attacked?

9. Who did the lawyer identify as the neighbor? Why?

Two Worlds Collide

It was the big day—Kendall’s wedding day. Kendall married Isaac, a Nigerian from the Yoruba tribe. Kendall, an African American, wanted Isaac’s tradition included in their wedding to celebrate his culture and community. Months before the special day, the couple received their wedding garments made in the traditional Nigerian cloth which was shipped by Isaac’s Nigerian family. Unlike the traditional American white dress for the bride, Nigerian wedding clothing is very colorful—the brighter the better! Kendall loved how she looked. The wedding day included various elements of American and Nigerian weddings. A traditional hot and spicy Nigerian dinner was prepared by the groom’s mother and friends, whereas the cake was made and decorated by an American bakery. The ceremony concluded with dancing to both American and Nigerian music. Kendall and Isaac couldn’t have dreamed of a better wedding.

When cultures merge—whether it be for a marriage, business events, ministry, etc.—there can be a clash of preferences, unique practices, and varied forms of communication. As sinners, our inclination is often to alienate those who differ from us and label them “other.” However, the parable of the good Samaritan teaches us to see far more similarities than differences when we meet people who are not from our “world.” While we should never compromise our beliefs in God’s Word for differing beliefs, we should always seek to understand, love, and show mercy to those around us—even those who differ from us in many ways.

10. *When have you encountered social and cultural differences with people that caused you to “rethink” your own ideas?*

11. *Have you ever felt alienated because of your own cultural or Christian beliefs? Explain your answer.*

12. *Why do we need to be Christian neighbors to those who live in a different “world” than ours?*

My Neighbor and His World

The story of the good Samaritan reminds us that our neighbor is not just the person next door but everyone we meet, especially those who are not “like” us in some way. When their world and ours collide, God can use our neighborliness to show His love and mercy to those we might think would never be interested in hearing about Him.

► *Get to know a new neighbor, one who is not in your “world” but needs to see the love of Jesus in a believer’s life.*

KEY VERSE

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

—Luke 10:36-37, KJV

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

—Luke 10:36-37, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

October 18 through October 25

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. 1 Samuel 30:21-25—Activists and Supporters Share Victories.

Tues. Romans 12:1-8—The New Life in Christ.

Wed. Philippians 2:1-11—Live by the Mind of Christ.

Thurs. Colossians 1:3-8—Faith, Hope, and Love in Action.

Fri. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11—Gifts for the Good of All.

Sat. 1 Corinthians 14:13-19—Pray with the Mind and Spirit.

Sun. 1 Corinthians 13—The Life of Love.