





Who Is My Neighbor?

Luke 10:25-37

Parables of Jesus

If your audience enjoys a drama presentation, this would also be a good story to act out.

The story begins with a lawyer who comes to Jesus and tries to tempt him.

People were always trying to catch Jesus doing something wrong. The Pharisees and scribes were scholars of the law, and they judged Jesus by their interpretation of the law. When his views did not line up with theirs, they became outraged and eventually their accusations resulted in his death.

The lawyer asked Jesus, “What should I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus responded by answering a question with a question, causing the person to reflect back on their own thoughts and motives. Jesus asked him what is written in the law, and asked the lawyer how he interpreted it.

Discuss:

What do you think is the answer to this question?

The lawyer knows the law of Moses, and quickly responds with a quote from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength and and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

Is this lawyer right? Did he correctly answer the question?

Yes. Another time in the gospel a Pharisee that was a lawyer asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment. Jesus responded exactly the same (Matthew 22:36-40).

A person can have all the answers right, but it does not matter if the motive in their heart is not pure. God knows our thoughts and He looks at the intents of our hearts, not only our outward actions.

Discuss:

What does it mean to be righteous?

A person can be self-righteous.

This would be someone who prides themselves on how good they are, whether genuine, or simply an act that they put on for others to see.

True righteousness means to be in right-standing with God.

It means that you are innocent, faultless, guiltless and blameless before God. Righteousness is not something that can be earned through our deeds or something that can be achieved. The only way that we can be righteous is by faith. We must accept our righteousness as a gift from God that we can only receive by our faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22; 4:5; 4:13; 5:17; 9:30; Ephesians 2:9).

Our gift of righteousness comes with the responsibility of being a representative of Christ and his kingdom.

In Christ’s kingdom, loving the Lord your God and loving others comes as first priority, and the leaders of His kingdom are those who serve others.



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Jesus was content with the man's answer and responded, "You have answered right; do this and you will live." But the lawyer was trying to justify himself. He was trying to prove himself, and show that he was righteous in his own right. So he pressed for more information and asked Jesus,

"Who is my neighbor?"

Jesus responds with a story:

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho..."

Historically, Jesus was speaking of an actual road, and the story speaks of a very real possibility. There was one main road to get from Jerusalem to Jericho. This road was somewhat remote, and had many caves and hiding places along the path. There was not often a lot of traffic on this road, and thieves and robbers would hide in the caves and behind the rocks and then steal from travelers.

This certain man was attacked by thieves.

They stole his clothing, probably everything else he had, beat him up, and left him half-dead on the side of the road.

Discuss:

What would this be like? This would be scary.

Thieves jump out from behind the cliff, take everything from you including your clothes, and not only that, they beat you up and you are not able to go get help.

Without your clothes you are embarrassed and humiliated.

You are so badly hurt, that the thieves have left you for dead. You have no money, and have no way of asking for help, or even offering to pay someone to help you.

You are completely helpless and at the mercy of strangers.

A priest comes walking down the road.

In the religious society of the day, this would be like a pastor or a bishop today. People would have thought this man to be a good and holy man. Of course he would do the right thing and help this man.

But, what did the priest do? Did he see the injured man? Yes, he did, but the priest did not stop to help. Not only did he not stop, he pretended like he didn't even see him and he walked by on the *other* side of the road.

Discuss:

What do you think this priest was thinking in his heart?

It seems hopeless, but there's someone else coming!

Next, a Levite comes walking by.

This would be like a church leader today; someone who works or teaches in the church. This is someone who should know what is right, and someone who is thought of as a "good person."



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The Levite walked by, *looked* at the man, and then passed by on the other side. We do not know if the injured man saw him, or if he was unconscious, or moaned in pain and asked for help. All we know is the Levite offered no assistance and walked by on the other side.

Discuss:

What would you do? What do you think about someone who behaves as the priest and the Levite did?

Now it seems really hopeless.

But, finally another person comes along. This person is a Samaritan.

The Samaritans were not liked by the Jews. The Jews were the people of Israel, but most Samaritans were half-Jew and half-Gentile. The Jews had been told not to marry the Gentiles, so these people were looked down upon because they were a mixture; they were not pure. They had similar, but different religious beliefs, and there had been bitter relationships between the Samaritans and the Jews for hundreds of years. This was the last person you would expect to be “a neighbor.”

This Samaritan man was on a journey, and he came across the half-dead man and had compassion on him.

Compassion is described as an inner voice, to be moved from within with sympathy or pity. This type of compassion compels you to act, to do something to help. When Jesus healed people, it often says he was “moved with compassion.”

The Samaritan did not just help the man. He went above and beyond. He bandaged up the man’s wounds and used his own supplies.

Discuss:

He had oil and wine with him for his journey, and he poured these on the man. Why would he do this?

Wine is alcohol, and serves as a natural disinfectant. It kills germs and cleanses. The oil would have been a salve, and would have been an agent for healing.

Next, the Samaritan put the man on his own animal.

His animal was very likely a donkey; meaning the Samaritan had to walk the rest of the way leading the man and making sure he did not fall off of the animal. He then took the man to an inn, or type of hotel, and took care of him there. The Samaritan had to leave the next day, so he gave money to the people at the inn and asked them to take care of the injured man. He told them if it cost more than the money he gave them, that he would pay them back when he came back again. It seems that this Samaritan may have had a relationship with the people at this inn; maybe he traveled here frequently. They seemed to know him and trust him since he was able to leave someone in their care promising to pay extra the next time he came through.

Jesus always told the unexpected.

His teachings were often the opposite from what everyone else was thinking. The people who were listening to this story most likely thought that a Pharisee would be the one named as the “good neighbor.” Pharisees were respected as the “most righteous” people. But to turn this around and say that an undesirable person such as the Samaritan was the true neighbor?

This was a scandalous interpretation of the definition of a neighbor.



Who Is My Neighbor?

Then Jesus ends his story with yet another question. He puts it back on the man for him to decide. He asks him,

“Which of these three do you think was the neighbor to him that fell among the thieves?”

And the man answered, “The one that showed mercy on him.”

Jesus simply responds, “Go and do likewise.”

Jesus in the Story



Jesus was always doing and saying the unexpected.

This is why so many people had a hard time believing that he was the Messiah. He did not interpret the law the way they did. He healed on the Sabbath, he had relationships with the outcasts, he ate with sinners.

The people did not understand that all of the laws are summed up in two commandments: loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind; and loving your neighbor as yourself.

The law in its perfect form would completely accomplish this. But people had turned the laws into paths of self-righteousness, and ways to show how good they were bringing glory to themselves rather than to God. They respected others based on their outward actions but Jesus saw their hearts and called them out on the motives behind their actions.

The lawyer questioning Jesus is trying to do right by the letter of the law. He asks, “Who is my neighbor?” He wants the legalistic answer, so that he can rightfully and lawfully measure what he is supposed to.

But he misses the whole heart of the commandment.

It is not about helping someone because they meet the right criteria, but about having genuine love and compassion for others. In this story Jesus told, he turned the whole thing around and gave a surprise element to the story, presenting them with the least likely individual who was actually the true loving neighbor.

Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

33. The Door

1. Who comes in the door?
2. Who do the sheep follow?
3. Will the sheep follow a stranger? Why or why not?
4. What does it say we will recognize if we know Jesus?

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

34. Who Is My Neighbor?

Read Matthew 25:35-40

1. Jesus said, I was hungry and you gave me?
2. I was thirsty and you gave me?
3. I was a stranger and?
4. I was sick and you?
5. I was in prison and you?
6. When we help others, who are doing it for?

Matthew 22:37-39

...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

35. The Wicked Servant

1. How many times did Jesus say we need to forgive? Explain.
2. What did the master give to the man who owed a very large amount of money?
3. What did that man do when his worker owed him a little bit of money?
4. What does God say he will do if we do not forgive others?

Mark 11:26

But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.

36. The Lost Sheep

1. How many sheep did the shepherd leave behind?
2. Where did he leave the other sheep?
3. Where did he take the one lost sheep after he found it?
4. What did Jesus say happens in heaven when someone repents?

Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

