

DIGGING DEEPER



Who Is My Neighbor? Lessons from the Good Samaritan

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What does it really mean to love our neighbor? That question sits at the heart of one of Jesus' most well-known parables, the Good Samaritan, and it turns out the answer is far more challenging and far more beautiful than we might expect. In Luke 10, a religious expert tries to test Jesus and ends up walking right into a story that dismantles every comfortable boundary we try to draw around our love and obligation to others. Jesus takes two respected religious leaders, the very people the crowd would have expected to be the heroes, and shows them walking past a beaten and dying man. Then He makes the most unlikely character, a Samaritan, a cultural enemy, the one who stops, sacrifices his own supplies, his own comfort, and his own money to care for a stranger. The parable forces us to ask not just who our neighbor is, but what kind of people we are becoming. Are we the ones who cross the street, or the ones who cross the divide? This message reminds us that love rooted in God is not a feeling we sit with. It is something that moves us into action, even when it costs us something.

1. The expert in religious law wanted to justify himself by narrowing the definition of 'neighbor' -- in what ways do we still do this today, drawing invisible lines around who we feel obligated to love?

2. The priest and the Levite were not callous people by nature, yet they walked past a man in desperate need; how can a focus on religious duty or personal purity cause us to miss the heart of God right in front of us?

3. Jesus deliberately chose a Samaritan -- a cultural and ethnic enemy -- as the hero of this parable; who would the equivalent of the Samaritan be in your own cultural context, and what does that reveal about your own assumptions?

4. The sermon draws a distinction between feeling compassion and acting on it, noting that Jesus was consistently moved into action; what is the gap between compassion you have felt and compassion you have actually expressed, and what holds you back?

5. The Samaritan's help came at real personal cost -- his supplies, his comfort, his money, and his time; how does the idea that 'the service that costs us is the service that counts' challenge the way you currently serve others?

6. Romans 13:8 describes love as the fulfillment of the entire law; how does viewing love as the foundation of all moral obligation change the way you approach the commands and guidelines found throughout Scripture?

7. The religious leaders in the parable faced a genuine tension between two biblical laws, and chose the wrong one; how do you discern, in your own life, when a rule or tradition might be leading you away from the deeper heart of God rather than toward it?

8. At the end of the parable, the listeners could not bring themselves to say the word 'Samaritan,' instead saying 'the one who showed mercy' -- what prejudices or discomforts in your own heart might make it difficult to fully acknowledge the goodness in someone you have been conditioned to distrust or dislike?

9.

The sermon notes that 1 John 4 teaches that our experience of God's love is meant to flow outward to others; in what practical ways does your daily life reflect the truth that God's love is not meant to stop with you?

10.

Jesus closed the parable not with a theological definition but with a call to action -- 'now go and do the same'; is there a specific person or situation in your life right now where obedience to this parable would require you to take a concrete step this week?

Remember...

"The service that costs us is the service that counts."