

Loving Your Neighbor

By Bill Scheidler

Introduction

Jesus' teaching on loving our neighbor is summarized in His story of the "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-37).

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" 27 So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" 28 And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." 29 But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' 36 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" 37 And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

This story deals with three primarily things:

A. This story describes the condition of all men apart from Christ.

The victimized man in this story represents the people of the world apart from Christ.

1. They are on a journey downward.
2. They are on a journey away from the city of God.
3. They are on a dangerous road that will potentially lead to death.
4. They are being stalked by an enemy who is seeking to steal, kill and destroy.

B. This story summarizes the function of our ministry to the world.

C. This story teaches us what it means to be neighborly.

This story is told by Jesus in answer to the question, "Who is my neighbor?"

What did the thieves do to their victim?

The thieves represent the forces of darkness that are out to destroy lives. Notice that the thieves did three things:

A. They stripped the man of his clothing.

It is interesting that the first thing that Adam lost when he sinned was his clothing. God has provided clothing for the believer. Satan’s desire is to take it from us and replace it with clothing of his own.

God’s Clothing	Satan’s Clothing
Garments of Salvation (Is. 61:10)	Cloak of Bondage
Robes of Righteousness (Is. 61:10)	Covering of Sin
Garments of Praise (Is. 61:3)	Spirit of Heaviness
Armor of Light (Rom. 13:12)	Shroud of Darkness
Beautiful Garments (Is. 52:1)	Ashes

B. They wounded the man.

They abused him, injured him and inflicted him with many wounds with sticks and clubs. These thieves could have stopped with robbing the man, but they insisted on damaging the man’s person. Their intent was to kill him. Satan is an expert at bringing pain and death to our lives.

C. They abandoned the man and left him for dead.

Lamsa says, “They left him with little life remaining in him.” They left him in a helpless and hopeless condition, totally shut up to the mercy of God and the compassion of others. He had been so thoroughly injured that he could do nothing for himself and apart from grace was doomed to die a slow and agonizing death.

Jesus clearly wants us to understand that people outside of Christ are victims of the devil, they are not our enemies.

Why didn’t everyone help the victimized man?

The man who was robbed, beaten and left for dead was without hope unless someone would come by to help him. Praise God, some people did come by (religious people at that), but unfortunately not everyone was willing to help. Many saw the condition of the man, but different things were in their hearts and for one reason or another they did not come to the man’s assistance.

Not everyone wanted to get involved. Not everyone wanted to be neighborly. There may have been several reasons why they did not want to get involved.

A. Some may have failed to respond out of fear for personal safety and a strong desire for self-preservation.

“If I get involved, maybe the same thing will happen to me. Maybe I will be beaten and robbed. It is too risky to get involved.”

B. Some may have failed to respond out of selfishness.

“If I get involved I will have to change my schedule. It may cost me personal finances. It may cost me my valuable time.” It takes real commitment to get involved with the harvest.

C. Some may have failed to respond out of prejudice.

Jesus introduced the thought of prejudice when he made a Samaritan a part of the story. Some may fail to respond because they do not deem the injured man to be worthy of their attention. He is not of “their kind,” racially, economically or socially. Unfortunately without clothes it was difficult to know this man’s actual station in life.

D. Some may have failed to respond out of a cold judgmentalism that suggested that the man probably got just what he deserved.

This argument says that if the man had been more careful, if he had not been traveling alone or if he had made wiser choices this never would have happened. He is simply experiencing the consequences of his own bad choices. Sometimes it is easy to forget that “there but for the grace of God go I.”

E. Some may have failed to respond because of a wrong sense of priority and a wrong understanding of “true religion” from God’s perspective.

The Levite may have been thinking that if he helped the man he would be late for his religious duties. The priest may have been concerned that if he tried to help this man and the man died he would have been ceremonially unclean for a week (Lev. 21:11; Num. 19:16). This would mean that he would not be able to carry on his normal schedule for that amount of time.

F. Some may have failed to respond because they feel that they have no answers.

They see the condition of the man and they are sure that he is well beyond their own skill and ability to help the man.

Whatever the case, there are always plenty of reasons **not** to respond. There are thousands of people who can justify themselves with millions of excuses why not to make the effort and why not to get involved.

Notice that the lawyer in this case asked the question of Jesus because he wanted to “justify himself.”

Why did the Samaritan man get involved?

When some were making excuses or hurrying by, there was one man who was different. There was someone who decided that no excuse was good enough not to get involved.

We cannot be sure why Jesus chose to use a Samaritan man as an example of the one who responded except for the fact that he may have been the least likely (in the lawyer’s mind) of the persons who passed by to naturally respond or to have the resources to respond.

Often times it is not the well-trained, the seminary graduate or the people of fame and fortune who respond to the needs of mankind. Often it is just “common ordinary people” who have few resources and little training who actually do the work of ministering.

Sometimes, the people that we think should have an answer do not have an answer. Sometimes, the people that we think should care do not care. Sometimes, the people that can afford to spend resources to attend to these needs do not attend to these needs.

Why? Because they do not have a perfect, sensitive and caring heart.

The difference is the heart. Some people have education, training, financial resources and spiritual giftings, but they do not have a sensitive, caring and compassionate heart.

Perhaps the Samaritan was different because somehow he could identify with the beaten man. Maybe he had been there before. Maybe he had experienced this kind of trouble and was better able to identify with the need. Sometimes we are so far removed from our personal experience of salvation that we no longer empathize with the lost.

The priest and the Levite may have been out of touch with the true human condition. It may have been easier for them to exhort the man, criticize the man or give him a tract on four ways to avoid pitfalls in the future. Unfortunately this is not what the man needed.

What the man needed was simple and not complex.

Sometimes we make ministering to people too complex. We feel that we must have training in psychology or professional counseling, when in reality these needy ones may just need a helping hand, a listening ear and a personal touch.

The Samaritan was not a medical doctor. He was not a trained professional, but he was there. He was on the scene and something had to be done. Often times the best trained people are not where the needs are. The people that are hurting the most are not always sitting in the doctor’s waiting rooms. More often than not they are in the gutters, along the sides of the road or in the back alleys where the trained professionals never go.

But God has an army of ministers that He is raising up in these days from all walks of life who are familiar with the needs of mankind and who pass the needy every day.

This army needs to be motivated by the compassion of Jesus and released to function in the power of the Spirit to reach those in the highways and byways. This army of ministers needs to follow the pattern of the Samaritan.

What did the Samaritan man not do?

The Samaritan did not do the **wrong things**.

1. He did not try to over analyze the situation.
2. He did not try to determine why the man was in that condition.
3. He did not try to decide if he was the best man for the job.

What did the Samaritan man do?

The Samaritan did the **right things**.

He simply saw the need and reached out with whatever resources that he had to meet the need. His motto was, "See a need and meet it, find a hurt and heal it."

The Sevenfold Ministry of the Samaritan

1. He came to where the man was.

We cannot always wait for the needy people to come to us. In fact, I often find that the truly needy are not the ones who are coming and the ones who are coming are not the truly needy.

I am glad that Jesus was willing to come to where we were in our wounded, stripped condition when we could do nothing for ourselves.

God want us to be relatable. He wants us to be able to touch people where they are. Some of us want people to clean themselves up first. But we must be willing to take men as we find them. The command is to "go."

2. He had compassion on the man.

Here is the thing that separated the Samaritan from the priest and the Levite. He had a different heart. He had a heart of compassion. The word "compassion" means to feel what someone else feels and to hurt with those who hurt.

Because the Samaritan had a compassionate heart, he could not keep walking. He had to stop and minister to the man in need.

No other motivation will sustain you in the ministry. Ministering to people is need orientated. We must be able to feel what people feel if we are going to be true ministers of reconciliation.

3. He bound up the man's wounds.

Jesus came to bind up the brokenhearted (Is. 61:1). He bandaged the hurting areas and dressed the wounds of Satan's victims. He was willing to touch the untouchable (Mark 1:40-42). Some people need a personal touch.

4. He poured in the wine and the oil.

The oil and the wine represent the Word and the Spirit. The wine brought cleansing and the oil brought soothing to the man's wounds.

5. He set the man on his own animal.

He was willing to use his own resources to meet this man's needs (not the central government). He used his own animal, his own wine and oil and his own money to help the man in need. He didn't refer them to a government agency.

6. He brought the man to an inn.

He didn't leave this man on the roadside. He brought him to a place that he could receive ongoing care. He brought him to a place of refuge and healing. We need to bring people to the local church where they can get ongoing care through relationship.

7. He followed up on him.

He didn't stop his involvement with this man until the man was up on his feet and he could take care of himself.

How does this story help us to redefine our mission of evangelism?

1. Evangelism involves loving people.
2. Evangelism involves meeting both natural and spiritual needs.
3. Evangelism involves being ready with the gospel to those who are open.

Close: Jesus said to the lawyer at the end of the story that he was to...

“Go and do likewise!”