

# Four Parables of Jesus

The Insight Series

**Richard A. Davenport**

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Written by Richard A. Davenport

Edited by Robert C. Baker

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## **Hymnal Key**

*LSB=Lutheran Service Book*

*ELH=Evangelical Lutheran Hym-  
nary*

*CW=Christian Worship*

*LW=Lutheran Worship*

*LBW=Lutheran Book of Worship*

# About This Series

This course is one of the Insight Series of short (four-session) adult Bible study courses, each looking at an important biblical topic or theme. Using these courses you will gain insight into a portion of the Scriptures as you hear what God is saying to you there about Himself, about yourself, and about His Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. These insights will help you as you go about your disciple's task of living in the Word, and will equip you for a more fruitful study of the Word on your own in the future.

## Using This Course

This course is designed to be used for small-group discussions. Each of the four 60- to 90-minute sessions you will find in this booklet will provide you with a clear picture of where the session is going and what it is supposed to accomplish, give you a way to lead into the session's study, provide input and discussion questions to guide your study of the text, suggest ways to follow up on the study during the week, and offer closing worship aids.

You will not need a teacher for this course. The printed material will guide you through the study. No one will have to be the answerer. But you will get the most from these materials if you:

1. Assign a leader for each session. That person should:
  - a. Make sure he or she works through the material before the session and, if possible, looks at some additional resources to enrich your study.
  - b. Begin and end the session with worship. The devotional time may be quite brief; a prayer or a Bible reading is suffi-

cient. You might assign the opening and closing to a worship leader for each session.

c. Keep the discussion moving. There is a tendency to get bogged down on some questions or points. The leader should be willing to say, “We’d better move on to the next point.”

d. Make some choices if time is limited. The leader will want to select those items from the session’s content that seem to be most helpful if it is clear there will not be time to work through all of the material.

e. Listen. Make sure everyone is heard. Give each a chance to speak. Encourage participation.

f. Pray for all participants.

2. Prepare for each session. The discussion will work better, the material will be more meaningful, and the Word will speak more clearly if everyone in the class works through the session’s material before the class session. Even if preparation is limited to reading through the texts that will be a part of the session’s study, the effort will enrich your study.
3. Meet regularly (at least once a week) in a convenient and comfortable place. Too much time between sessions means that learning will be forgotten and much time will be used in constant review. Too little time between sessions does not allow time for you to connect what you have learned to your daily living.
4. Provide resources. Preparation that includes a chance to look at commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Bible reference books, maps, and so on will add to your class. Encourage those who do such research to contribute what they have learned or discovered as you study.
5. Encourage participation. The course offers many opportunities to discuss biblical texts and to talk about application of the Word to each individual’s life. The key is sharing. Everyone should have a chance to listen and to be heard. The goal is encouragement. We want to build one another up as we study the Word. We want to share the hope and the strength we receive by the power of the Spirit through that Word. We want to allow each person to come closer to the Savior as he or she

encounters Him in the Word. Emphasize the positive. Share the joy of the Gospel. Celebrate His promised presence as “two or three” gather in His name.

# Participant Introduction

This course will help you take a closer look at four of Jesus' parables and think through the meaning of those parables, both for the people who first heard them and for us today.

The parable was Jesus' favorite teaching tool. Perhaps you've heard the expression "The parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." In other words, it's an analogy, a saying that says, "This over here is like that over there." In fact, Jesus often says that very thing in the introductions to His parables: "The kingdom of heaven is like . . ."

Jesus' parables have one central point of comparison. For example, in the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31–32), the point of comparison is between the people of Christ, the Church, and a mustard seed. The central message is that just as the small seed grows into a plant way out of proportion to its initial size, so the Church starts extremely small but grows to tremendous size, out of proportion to its small beginnings. It will be our goal to "get" that central message as Jesus speaks His kingdom words to us.

As we study the parables, we want to let the Word into our hearts and minds, so that the Spirit can convict us of our sin and call us to repentance and renewal in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—the center of all of our study of the Word.

Richard A. Davenport

## ⌘ Session 1 ⌘

# The Good Samaritan

## Our Goals for This Session

- By the power of the Spirit through the Word, we want to
- become familiar with the parable, its setting in Jesus' ministry, and the key characters;
  - understand why it was remarkable that the Samaritan acted to help;
  - reaffirm our own willingness to reach out to people who are "different" and repent of our past failures to act;
  - be reassured of Christ's forgiveness as we commit ourselves to reach out, by the power of the Spirit, to that "different" person in our parish or community.

## Getting Started

A professor at a prominent theological school sent his students across campus to videotape their practice sermons. He emphasized that each student should be very prompt for his appointment. The video center was on a very tight schedule, the professor said, and there could be no makeup for a missed appointment.

At the next class the professor reviewed their experiences of preaching for the first time. But then he asked, "Did any of you notice a young lady along the sidewalk as you went?"

Yes, they all had.

Had they noticed anything odd about her?

Yes, she didn't look too well.

Had anyone offered to help her?

Well, no, they admitted with embarrassment. They all had been in a hurry to be on time.

Then the professor revealed that he had “planted” the young lady along their path to make this point: “Be careful that you're not so busy doing theology that you forget to practice your religion.”

Obviously the parable of the Good Samaritan is well known and works well for teaching. But few of us “trip over” that kind of situation in our everyday life. Sure, occasionally we read of the “Good Samaritan” who rescues a victim from a car accident or a burning building. But you and I rarely confront something like that.

Well, then, what does this parable have to say to us? And what did the professor mean when he said, “Be careful that you're not so busy doing theology that you forget to practice your religion”?

Share your impressions before you begin the study.

## Setting the Stage

*And behold, a lawyer stood up to put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” 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.” And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”*

*But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”*

Luke 10:25–29

Read Luke 10:25–29.

1. A scribe or lawyer had the task of interpreting the laws of Moses for daily life. Luke 10:25 says the lawyer was trying to “test” or “tempt” Jesus. Why might he do such a thing?

2. How does Jesus answer the man’s question? What might be His reasons for answering a question with a question?

3. What was Jesus trying to get the man to understand (Luke 10:28)? See Romans 3:19–20.

4. What might be the reasons for the lawyer’s question in Luke 10:29? What insight does Matthew 5:43 give?

## Into the Story

*Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and*

*when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."*

Luke 10:30–37

To answer the man's question, Jesus told a story. Read Luke 10:30–37.

5. True or false. The priest and Levite just weren't aware of the victim and his condition. Support your answer from the text.

6. The priest and the Levite both would have ministered in the temple in Jerusalem. If the victim had happened to be dead, they would be unclean by touching him, but only for that day. Check Leviticus 21:1–3. Jesus doesn't indicate that being unclean would have affected their work in the temple. What, then, might have been their reasons for avoiding the victim?

7. There was certainly no love lost between Samaritans and Jews. Jews considered Samaritans to be worthless half-breeds. Samaritans thought Jews were exclusive, arrogant snobs. Why did this Samaritan man stop for this Jewish stranger?

8. Hadn't the Samaritan done enough when he got the man to the inn? Why the extra commitment to even repay the innkeeper?

9. True or false. The Samaritan expected to meet the victim again and be reimbursed for his efforts. Why or why not?

10. Compare the lawyer's question in Luke 10:29 and Jesus' question in Luke 10:36. How are they different? Why are they different?

11. Read Matthew 5:43–48. How far is this business of being a neighbor supposed to go? How does insight into our relationship with God, described in Romans 5:10, help make that happen?

12. To be a neighbor means . . . Talk about your answer.

## The Parable Here and Now

Jesus was trying to get the lawyer to respond as a neighbor to people around him who needed his care and concern. Where are the people in our world to whom we should be “Good Samaritans”?

13. Evaluate the statement: “By nature, we’re more likely to extend ourselves to people of ‘our own kind.’ ”

14. Are there people in our congregation or our community who get overlooked and left out? What makes them “different”?

15. Do you think they’re overlooked because other Christians are selfish, or just not sensitive? Is there a difference?

16. Read aloud but answer privately: Have you ever failed to reach out as a neighbor to someone who’s “different”? When and why?

17. When Paul recognized his failings, where did he look? Read Romans 7:18–19; 7:24–8:1. How is the same true for you?

18. What does God's forgiveness in Christ mean to you?

19. Read Galatians 3:26–29. How is your adoption as a child of God a factor in reaching out to another person?

## **Bringing the Parable Home**

✞ Using a good Bible dictionary or a commentary on the Book of Luke, find out who the scribes were in Jesus' day, and what their attitude was toward Jesus and His teaching. You might also find it interesting to research the number of times Jesus responded to a question with another question.

- Who were the priests and Levites and what were their responsibilities?

- Who were the Samaritans and what was the basis for the poor Jewish-Samaritan relationship?

☞ By the Spirit's power, look for someone who needs your help—someone to whom you would not ordinarily reach out. For Jesus' sake, give the assistance you can.

• What is the result for you? for the person you help? Share your experiences with your classmates next week.

☞ Asking the Spirit's guidance and strength, see if you can invite a stranger to join you for the next time your group meets.

## In Closing

Prayer: Lord, I don't believe we would deliberately walk by on the other side, but maybe our eyes haven't been open enough to see the people around us. Is there someone in our congregation or community who needs a neighbor? Give us the commitment and the courage to reach out a hand of love. Help us risk getting involved with someone different from ourselves, someone who is overlooked and forgotten. Because of Your death and resurrection for us and because of Your love in us, we have the power to seek and to love. Be with us, Lord Jesus. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

Close by singing or reading in unison "O God of Mercy, God of Might" (*LSB* 852, *ELH* 458, *CW* 499, *LW* 397, *LBW* 425, *TLH* 439).

O God of mercy, God of might,  
In love and pity infinite,  
Teach us, as ever in Thy sight,  
To live our lives in Thee.