

Loving Your Neighbor

Bible Study Starters

Jesus identified the second-greatest commandment as the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). Who counts as our neighbors, and how can we love them the way God expects us to?

LUKE 10:25-37

(New King James Version)

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?”

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.’”

And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”

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

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. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 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. 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.’ So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?”

And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

STARTER QUESTIONS

1. To most first-century Jews, Samaritans were second-class citizens—people to be avoided whenever possible. Why do you think Jesus chose to make a Samaritan the hero of this story?
2. Jesus said that “all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:40) hang on the commandments to love God and to love our neighbors. Read through the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), making a note of which commandments show us how to love God and which commandments teach us how to love our neighbor. What would the world look like if everyone loved their neighbor this way? (See Romans 13:8-10.)
3. Leviticus 19:11-18 explores ways we might fail to show love to our neighbor. Verse 15 warns against showing partiality to either the poor or the great. What are some ways we might be tempted to skew justice because of someone’s wealth or status (whether they have a lot or a little)? (See James 2:1-9.)
4. Paul outlined godly love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Which three aspects of love are the easiest for you to put into practice? Which three are the most difficult?
5. Peter urged the Church to “above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins’” (1 Peter 4:8). Compare that instruction with Proverbs 17:9 and 1 Corinthians 13:6. Why does not repeating a transgression show love? Why does love “not rejoice in iniquity”?
6. In Colossians 3:12-14 Paul described qualities Christians should “put on” as the elect of God, defining love as “the bond of perfection.” How does love tie all the other qualities together? What happens to love when any of those qualities are missing?