

LARGE GROUP LESSON

BOTTOM LINE:

God wants us to love others - no matter who, no matter when.

OBJECTIVE:

Kids will learn that thinking of others ahead of ourselves is really important to God.

KEY PASSAGE:

Luke 10:25-37, Parable of the Good Samaritan

INTRO:

What is a Good Samaritan? That's a question almost anyone can answer even if they've never been to church. A Good Samaritan is a person who stops to help a stranger. They interrupt their schedule, stop what they're doing, and lend a hand where it's needed. Maybe you've seen one or two Good Samaritans in action. Your car blows a tire on the highway, and someone in a truck pulls over to help your parents change a tire. An old lady struggles to load her car with groceries, and a teenager races over to lend a hand.

Good Samaritans are caring. They don't hesitate to leap into action. They save the day. That's what a Good Samaritan is to us.

That's not how the people who first heard saw Samaritans. Without going into great detail, let's just say that Samaritans and Jews did not get along. Jews would walk miles out of their way to avoid walking through Samaria, and Samaritans kept their distance from the Jews as well. There was no such thing as a Good Samaritan to the people who followed Jesus because in their minds, all Samaritans were BAD!

When we know the bitterness between the Jews and the Samaritans, it makes the Parable of the Good Samaritan all the more powerful. This is the parable where Jesus shows us what it costs us to truly love our neighbor.

READ LUKE 10:25-37

MAIN POINT:

A man was robbed and in need of help. Two men of God, a priest and a Levite, saw the man and walked on by. Then a Samaritan came by. Of these three men, the Samaritan is the one least likely to lend a hand, but that's exactly what he does.

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The Samaritan refuses to let his differences with the wounded man and his people deter him. He bandages his wounds, he takes him to safety, and he pays the innkeeper to help with his recovery.

Loving your neighbor, even if it's someone who disagrees with you, is a powerful lesson, but that's not the only lesson. Not only does Jesus want us to help everyone, he wants us to be willing to sacrifice for them. The Samaritan was not taking a walk on a dangerous road for exercise. He had somewhere to be, something to do. He canceled his plans to help the wounded man. He sacrificed his time by tending to his injuries and taking him to an inn. Then he sacrificed money on top of that to pay for the man's recovery.

The Good Samaritan put the needs of the wounded man ahead of his own plans. He didn't care who he was. He didn't care what it cost. He did what he needed to do. A Good Samaritan helps people in need no matter who they are, no matter what they need, and no matter what it costs. That is how we love our neighbor the way Jesus loved us.

DRIVE IT HOME:

Here's a practical example of what we're talking about. Was there a time in your life when your Mom and Dad made plans to go out? Maybe it was just a date night. Maybe it was a weekend getaway. They spent days or even weeks planning that special event. They made reservations. They might have even bought special outfits for the occasion. They arranged for a babysitter or for your grandparents to watch you and your siblings.

Then, just before they walked out the door - or right after they left - it happened. You got sick. Maybe it wasn't you. Maybe it was your brother or sister. You certainly didn't plan it, and your parents and sitter never saw it coming. So what happens to Mom and Dad's plans?

They came home, didn't they? Or at least one of them did. Whether one or both parents returned home, they sacrificed their plans for you. As much as they wanted that special time away, their love for you compelled them to stop their plans, to come home, and to love you when you needed it most.

Life happens to all of us. Unexpected events ruin our plans all the time. You know how much it means when someone takes time for you. Imagine what it would mean if you took time for someone else.

It doesn't matter who it is. It doesn't matter how different they are or how much we might disagree with them. Loving our neighbor means loving whomever is in need whenever they are in need.

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It's not easy canceling plans, and it's really not easy making time to help someone we don't get along with, but if we are willing to sacrifice for that person, we are truly showing others what it means to love like Jesus.

Loving your neighbor means loving everyone. It means loving them when they need it, not when it fits in our calendar. Let's show our neighbors that Jesus loves them with a sacrificial love of our own.

CLOSE WITH A SIMPLE PRAYER:

Dear God,

Help us to be on the lookout for people who need our help.

In Jesus' name,

Amen