

Read: Luke 10:25-37

## How to Love Unlovely People

### **Luke 10:30-37**

“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

The priest walked by. The Levite walked by. What were they thinking? Why wouldn't they help the poor man who was beaten, bloody, and left to die? Maybe they were thinking, “How can I help? I don't know this guy. I will not know what to do. Besides, I will be late...” The list could go on. Jesus said these two men went on their way. He didn't say they didn't care. They were men of God. They likely would have had sympathy or concern. But they didn't care enough to *do* something.

How often do we fall into the same situation? Parents do care: they make supper, pay bills, mow the lawn, wash/fold/put away laundry. Do we stop to care for a friend in crisis? Do we stop to understand the heartache our child has? Children care: they do homework, feed the pet, practice music or sports, and help around the house. But do we stop for a friend who needs someone to talk to? Do we go over and above to help our parents? Do we help an older neighbor struggling with their yard? How sad when our love stays focused inward.

The point of Jesus' story is not “Who is my neighbor?” Instead, it is “To whom can I be a neighbor?” The priest and the Levite, fresh from going to church, left the church parking lot and could have been a neighbor to the man who had been beaten, left looking unlovely and half-dead. They didn't. The Samaritan man had every reason to think, “Why should I help him? He's

not my neighbor!" Even if he thought that, he didn't say that. And if he felt that way, it quickly turned into pity for the hurt man. So his heart did not hold anything back.

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" Jesus' question makes us realize how often our heart is not right and our thinking is wrong. Our hearts need to change to show that kind of love. Only the gospel story of Jesus can change a person's heart from natural self-centeredness into a heart of selfless love and compassion. Compare the love of the Samaritan with the love of God's son, our Savior. Jesus held nothing back from helping us in our desperate and helpless condition. He laid down his life to rescue us from unending death and to give us life that lasts—a gift of pure grace

God *is* love! Love has no limits because the God of love has loved us with no limits. With such an attitude of love, Jesus ends today, "Now go and do likewise."

*The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.*

### **Questions for the Younger Children**

- What happened to the man who got hurt in Jesus' story?
- How did the Samaritan help man help him?

### **Questions for Elementary Age Children**

- Remember a time that you didn't help someone and should have. Why is it so important to then remember Jesus' love for you?
- Think of someone you are really struggling to love—someone who really hurt you and you are staying away from them. What would need to change inside of you to love them without limit?

### **Questions for Middle School and Above**

- List two things that keep you and others in your family from helping each other.
- Place yourself in the shoes of an unlovable person. Consider what may have made him (her) so critical, so touchy, so selfish, or so mean. How can better understanding their loneliness or unhappiness soften your heart?

### **Closing Prayer:**

Dear Jesus, I'm not perfect in loving others. But you are! Help me follow your example of love and loving action. Give me the privilege of being a little Jesus to someone in need of love. Amen.