

SHOWING LOVE

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THE POINT:

WE ARE CALLED TO LOVE
GOD AND LOVE OTHERS.

LUKE 10:25-37

MEMORY VERSE

²⁵ Then an expert in the law stood up to test him, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ "What is written in the law?" he asked him. "How do you read it?"

²⁷ He answered, "**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 "You've answered correctly," he told him. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ Jesus took up the question and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and fled, leaving him half dead.

³¹ A priest happened to be going down that road. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

³² In the same way, a Levite, when he arrived at the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

³³ But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and when he saw the man, he had compassion.

³⁴ He went over to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on olive oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him. When I come back I'll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

³⁷ "The one who showed mercy to him," he said. Then Jesus told him, "Go and do the same."

KEYWORDS

Expert in the law (v. 25)– The Greek word points to one educated in the law, a lawyer. Luke always mentions such experts in a negative light.

Neighbor (v. 29)–The Greek term designates someone close by. For the Jews, this term just applied to Jewish people.

Two denarii (v. 35)– Equal to two days' wages for common labor. This was enough to cover expenses for one to two months.

Samaritans (v. 33)– Intermarriage between Israelites and non-Israelites produced Samaritans, considered half-breeds by the Jews.

HOW DOES OUR LOVE FOR GOD INFLUENCE OUR LOVE FOR OTHERS?

Most of us have heard the phrase, “the proof is in the pudding.” That’s a shortened version of the original phrase, “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” We use the phrase when we want to express that the goodness or quality of something must be judged by experiencing it or seeing results from it.

At its core, the phrase is about integrity: what’s inside shows up outside. This goes for us as well. What’s inside us will come out eventually.

In today’s session, God’s Word is going to challenge us to love God and love others—and to do it well. How can we know how well we are doing? If we apply the phrase, “the proof is in the pudding,” we’ll realize that our love for God is inextricably connected with the way we love others. In other words, if we truly love God, that love for Him will overflow in our relationships with other people.

Love for God and love for people aren’t at odds and can’t be pitted against one another. Jesus’s parable shows it plainly: our love for God is proven by our love for people. Love without action is not love. Action without salvation from Christ is not the gospel lived out.

Loving Others is the Overflow of Loving God // Luke 10:25-28

Most of us have watched either a sports press conference or a political press conference. We know the person asking the question sometimes has an agenda. It’s so common that politicians and sports figures often decline to answer. Luke’s account of a lawyer asking Jesus a question suggests the lawyer had an agenda, but instead of refusing to answer, Jesus used it to teach about the importance of loving God and others.

Luke tells us that the question, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (v. 25) was asked by an expert in the law. We’re also told the question was designed “to test Him.” In other words, he had an agenda. We don’t know precisely the nature of the agenda, but it’s obvious that the expert in the law was looking for Jesus to contradict or undermine the law in some way.

Jesus wisely answered with His own questions: “What is written in the law? . . . How do you read it?” (v. 26). The expert answered by quoting a portion of the Shema (Deut. 6:4-5), a Scripture passage that Jews recited daily. He also added a quote from



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Leviticus 19:18 that calls for God's people to love one's neighbor. In reply, Jesus affirmed the answer and said, "Do this and you will live" (v. 28).

We may wonder why Jesus didn't point to Himself when answering a question about inheriting eternal life. Yet, if we grasp the concept behind loving God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, we will eventually arrive at the right destination: Jesus. Loving God with all we've got means listening to Him, seeing Him work, and yielding to Him with unwavering allegiance. What we sometimes overlook is that this God whom we love, became flesh, went to the cross, died the death we deserved, and defeated death three days later. We love God when we love Jesus, and that relationship gives us the gift of eternal life.

As we look at the lawyer's answer, the order of it is significant: he began with loving God. Loving God is the basis for all things spiritual, which includes living the Christian life. Part of living the Christian life is loving others and that flows from our love relationship with God. Loving Him means we obey Him, we follow Him, and we become like Him. And we are most like Him when we love others.

HOW DOES LOVING GOD ENABLE BELIEVERS TO TRULY LOVE OTHERS?

Love Overcomes Partiality // Luke 10:29-32

The conversation between Jesus and the lawyer was going well until the expert tried to show off his expertise in the law. Luke gives us insight into the lawyer's motivation by noting that he asked his next question "wanting to justify himself" (v. 29). He said, "And who is my neighbor?" As an expert in the law, this man was skilled in finding and exploiting loopholes. His question wasn't just about gaining knowledge—it was an attempt to narrow the definition of "neighbor" in a way that would make him appear righteous.

Before we quickly dismiss this lawyer as legalistic looking for an excuse for his attitude toward others, we should take a moment and think about ourselves. When it comes to loving others, do we sometimes justify our unwillingness to see, help, and serve others? We may be ashamed to admit that not only do we sometimes justify our unwillingness to love others, we don't feel guilty about it either. Does this sound familiar?

The parable described the attack and robbery of a man traveling on the road to Jericho. After the attack, a priest and a Levite passed by, but neither stopped to help the man. What can cause believers to look past or ignore those who are in need? The reasons aren't valid, but they can be powerful, and they can



DIGGING DEEPER OVERCOMING ANIMOSITY

The animosity between the Jews and Samaritans in Jesus's day had deep roots, extending to centuries beforehand. When the Assyrians conquered the northern tribes of Israel more than 700 years before Christ, they took many people away as captives but left some in the land who later intermarried with outsiders. Over the centuries, cultural and religious divisions festered between the Jews living in the area and those they deemed to be half-breeds. Jesus did not endorse this animosity, however. Instead, He upended the prevailing cultural norm by telling the parable of the Good Samaritan. The story undoubtedly shocked Jesus's original Jewish audience. Jesus also broke with traditional cultural (and gender) norms by meeting and talking with a Samaritan woman at a well (John 4). Jesus serves as an example to us today. He refused to allow longstanding animosity keep Him from doing the work God sent Him to do.

How can you reach out to those who differ from you culturally, economically or spiritually?



negatively influence us against coming to the aid of others. Here are some reasons that we use to pass by on the other side:

- **Time.** Our schedules can be crammed full of activities and commitments that keep us busier and more distracted than we should be. Why is this an issue? Loving others takes time.
- **Fear.** It's an understatement to say that our world is a dangerous place. Loving others that we have never met before or have any knowledge of is seen as risky behavior.
- **Feeling overwhelmed.** The sheer scope of work necessary to meet the needs of others can overwhelm us. If we don't know where to start, we might opt for not starting at all. After all, considering all the people who are needy in the world, how can our efforts really make a difference?

The unmistakable point behind the lawyer's question was this: There are people in this world who don't qualify as "my neighbor"; therefore, I am not obligated to love them. His bias toward others influenced his interpretation of the law.

Many of our churches say everyone is welcome to attend. Unfortunately, the unspoken reality is that people are welcome as long as they fit in with the church's culture and behave in the proper way. But what happens when outsiders don't follow the rules? When they don't dress like we think, "talk right," or have a murky past.

Jesus taught that our love for others must look beyond any biases we might have. The parable shows clearly what love for others looks like. It is free from preconceived opinions and prejudices. Skin color, political allegiances, smell, age, lifestyle, social status, or spiritual beliefs are not part of the equation we use to decide whether or not to love someone. If we allow these or any other characteristics to sway our decision to love others, we have allowed our biases to influence our interpretation of Jesus's teaching—and that is a serious error.

HOW CAN WE BE MORE AWARE OF BIASES OR PREJUDICES WE MIGHT HOLD?

Love has Extravagant Mercy

// Luke 10:33-37

Then Jesus said the unthinkable: A Samaritan stopped and provided aid. It's not easy for us today to experience the shock and surprise that was felt by the original audience when Jesus got to this place in the parable. Expectations would have placed a good-hearted Jewish layman in the role of hero, but not a Samaritan.

The animosity Jews had toward Samaritans was deep and long-standing. The Jews regarded the Samaritans as half-breeds who had betrayed the covenant and the worship of Almighty God.

This twist was unexpected, but it was the key to Jesus's teaching about loving God and loving others. The lawyer implied that there were certain people he considered "non-neighbors," and because of that, he believed he was not obligated to love them. And at the top of his list titled "non-neighbors" there was this entry: Samaritans. But Jesus placed a "non-neighbor" in the role of hero.

Jesus's description of the Samaritan's kindness toward the man was exemplary. The Samaritan went the extra mile and then some. His care for the man showed true mercy and compassion. It's obvious that the Samaritan's goal was for the man to be restored to health.

We know this is a parable, but it does have real-life applications. One of the things we see demonstrated by the Samaritan's actions is that

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loving others will be costly. Let's quickly survey the cost or sacrifice made by the Samaritan as he cared for the man.

- Caring for the man interrupted the plans the Samaritan had.
- The Samaritan had to bandage the wounds of the man.
- The Samaritan spent the night with the man at the inn to take care of him.
- The Samaritan paid the inn keeper to care for the man.

At the end of the parable, in verse 36, Jesus asked the lawyer, "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" Do you see what Jesus did? He took the lawyer's question, and changed it into this question: "Are you a neighbor?"

Maybe that's a question we need to answer honestly today. Maybe we need to stop trying to figure out who our neighbor is, and instead, be a neighbor to whomever we meet who is in need. It may take sacrifice, but we have been called to do this: love God and love others.

WHAT SPECIFIC ACTION CAN YOU TAKE THIS WEEK TO BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR TO SOMEONE?

DID YOU KNOW?

Christians come in all types: different races, ethnic groups, nationalities, and social classes make up the body of Christ. These differences make our faith even more vibrant and reflect God's love for diversity. What unites us is greater than what threatens to divide us, because we are bound together by our belief in Jesus. As we seek to follow Jesus's example, we see that no difference should hinder us from working to build the kingdom of God. If we love God and want to do His will, we will look at other people as He does. No one is too far away for God's love to reach them. When we understand this, we will be motivated to be neighbors to whomever we encounter. Like the good Samaritan, we will assist those in need without worrying about whether they deserve our help. This is the ideal, and while we continue to strive to reach it, we operate under the power of the Holy Spirit to do so.

Biblical Truth: "There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female, since you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

What would it look like for you to love your neighbor this week?

LIVE IT

What can you do this week to be a good neighbor?

Have we spent time looking for loopholes that let us off the hook of loving others? There aren't any. Jesus makes it clear that our love for God is tied to our love others. When we think about how Jesus showed his love to us, we can't help but spread that love to those we meet. Review the activities below that can help you grow in your calling to show love more intentionally.

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- **Confess.** If your life has followed the pattern of the priest or Levite in the parable, confess it to the Lord in prayer. Confess not only avoidance but also resentment, fear, or compassion fatigue. Ask God to make you aware of the needs of others and to help you to take action.
- **Assess.** Prayerfully examine your daily habits and your attitudes. Determine what are the main obstacles for you to love others. Make the appropriate changes and look for someone who needs a neighbor.
- **Express.** Use creative ways to express your love for others. Send a card or a text; invite an acquaintance to lunch or coffee; have a simple conversation. Just be a good neighbor!

DAILY READINGS

1. SHOW ME THE LOVE// JOHN 13:35

When the love of God is demonstrated in our daily actions, it leads to powerful outcomes. Lives are changed. Hope is restored. Faith is activated. The demonstration of the love of God compels us to treat others with compassion and mercy. When we treat others with compassion and mercy, they receive the love of God. Living a habitual lifestyle of righteousness and peace models Christian principles that build and not break down. Whether we realize it or not, there are many who are observing our Christian lifestyle. As believers, we must demonstrate that we care about the plight of others. We show the world that we are His by intentionally showcasing His love.

When we are motivated by His love, we love as He does.

2. LOVE IS AN EQUALIZER// GALATIANS 3:28

Everyone matters to God. Many people question their own self-worth and wonder if their life is important. So many battle against culturally influenced conditions, standards and expectations that rob them of their joy and sense of belonging. Others strive to conform to unrealistic images that they hope will garner acceptance from their peers or colleagues. As people wrestle with unrealistic expectations and standards, it is important that we demonstrate the love of Christ. Just as the love of Christ has led us to freedom from bondage, we are called to freely share His love with others. The love of Christ levels the playing field and shows that we are all equally important to Him.

God's love is not conditional – it sets us free.

3. NOT MY WAY, HIS WAY// JOHN 15:13

What are you willing to do for someone else? Jesus teaches in John 15:13 that one of the greatest forms of love is “to lay down his life for his friends.” He is not suggesting that a person literally gives up his life for someone else. Instead, He teaches that love will lead to extraordinary acts of kindness and

sacrifice for others. When we love God, we should be willing to stretch beyond our normal parameters to advance the cause of Christ. This extension past our own thoughts and feelings, elevates God above our motives and agendas.

Our love for God shows when our actions align with His Word.

4. GOD'S LOVE BRINGS HOPE// ROMANS 5:5

Many people are concerned about the future. Economic uncertainty and shifting morality leave some feeling a sense of hopelessness. Some question the future of faith in an ever-evolving cultural landscape. The Word of God teaches that trials and challenging times lead to hope. We are reminded that God cares about us so much that He has given us His Holy Spirit to fill us with His love. It is this Godly love that floods us with hope. Living with the contentment of hope empowers us to share the Good News of Christ despite resistance. We can be confident in addressing sin because the heart of the Father is not to condemn the world but to lead the lost to salvation.

God's love brings assurance to the world that hope is not lost.

5. SPIRITUALLY EFFECTIVE// GALATIANS 5:16

Jesus taught that every day we must take up our cross and follow Him. Every person at some point in their life has experienced the tug of war between wanting to do things that are Spirit-led and the pulling of the flesh. Although some people battle with substances and illicit behavior, others struggle with matters of the heart like pride, gossip, arrogance, lying and deceit. A willing commitment to regular study of God's Word and a passionate prayer life builds our spiritual strength. We develop that fortitude to overcome sinful thoughts. When we partner these effective habits with the adornment of our spiritual armor, we become effective kingdom believers.

When we overcome the flesh, we experience the joy of authentic Christian living.