

## Welcome and Reminders

Welcome to any visitors and welcome back to the group members. It is important to remember that everything said and done in this group is confidential. The expectation is that there will not be discussion about our conversations to anyone outside of the group that is represented here and now. We understand that sometimes personal insights or information may be shared by someone who feels comfortable doing so in this group and not around others. Let's be respectful of that and carry our commitment to confidentiality as we leave this group. *(Pass out the confidentiality reminder to anyone who has not yet received one).*

## Prayer and Praises

---

---

---

---

## The Sower

**Luke 10:25-37**

*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

*"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"*

*He answered, "'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, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

*"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."*

*But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

*In reply Jesus said: "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."*

- *Why were Jews and Samaritans enemies?*
- *Why would the priest and the Levite have avoided the victim?*
- *Retell the story in a contemporary setting with modern counterparts for the victim, the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan.*

Apparently the lawyer of our story is a man who wants to keep God safely at arm's length. He is neither the first nor the last person to have used religion as a buffer between himself and God. The word *religion* comes from a Latin root meaning "to bind back together," but all of us know that sometimes we use religion to hold God or others at a distance. So it was with the first-century lawyer.<sup>1</sup>

- *What does religion mean to you? What, do you think, is the aim of religion? the purpose?*

The lawyer was a practical man. He wanted a measure for love. After all, the law regarding honoring the Sabbath by not working had been refined by the rabbis until it was measured in how many steps could be walked and what particular deeds could be done. Perhaps this new teacher from Nazareth could come up with an exact standard for love.<sup>2</sup>

- *How do you describe love?*

In the parable, instead of moving to the other side of the road, the Samaritan "went to him" and began caring for the victim. He bound up the wounds, pouring on the items he had in his baggage, oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own beast and brought him to the nearest inn. The Samaritan watched over the wounded man through the night. The next morning the Samaritan gave the innkeeper the equivalent of about two days' wages and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend."<sup>3</sup>

- *What was the Samaritan's motivation for his actions?*

One thing that strikes us about this parable is that Jesus did not directly answer the lawyer's question. The lawyer had asked, "Who is my neighbor?" The story Jesus told answered the question, "To whom

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Ellsworth Kalas, *Parables of Jesus*, 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-59.

can I be a neighbor?" Jesus changed "neighbor" from object to subject. Identifying my neighbor is not difficult when I am willing to be a neighbor.<sup>4</sup>

- *How did Jesus define neighbor?*
- *Who are some contemporary examples of neighbors?*

The lesson of true neighborliness is far more significant in our day when the boundaries of our neighborhoods are so much wider. Our grandparents could limit their practice of neighborliness to a relatively small area. That is no longer possible for you and me. Modern communication and high speed transportation have made most of the world into one giant neighborhood.<sup>5</sup>

- *Does knowing about the plight of people halfway around the world connect you as a neighbor?*
- *In what ways can we be neighbors to people outside the immediate circle of our church or our daily friendships?*
- *How can we be neighbors in any significant way to people in other parts of the world?*

The Samaritan could have reasoned that little would be accomplished in the grand scheme of things by aiding one unknown traveler. His action would not decrease the threat of war in the world, would not relieve the oppression of the Roman government, and probably would not even improve relationships between the Jews and Samaritans. In other words, it would contribute nothing to solving the world's overwhelming problems.<sup>6</sup>

- *Have you ever philosophized away opportunities to be a good neighbor?*

In our world of great issues, all of us have to remember that no issue is more important than the human individual. Mother Teresa became an example to us through her ability to understand this fact. She had made it her commitment to Christ to rescue newborn infants from the trash cans of teeming cities and to carry dying people from the streets. A large percentage of those she rescued died within a few days, so some people asked Mother Teresa why she bothered. She answered that a human being has a right to die in a setting of love.

As in many of the parables, the story Jesus told was open ended, not really completed.<sup>7</sup>

- *Make up one or more alternate endings to the parable. What new insights or possibilities arise?*

But, of course, the point of the story for you and me is not how the lawyer responded or how any of the fictional characters might have acted in a continued version of the story. The point is how we respond. The temptation for hearers of a story of this kind is to settle for an insight or to be intrigued with the

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 62.

artistry of the parable or with new knowledge about the circumstances surrounding it rather than plumbing it for new depths of faith and spiritual insight.<sup>8</sup>

We may also see this parable from the perspective of the victim rather than from the perspective of one who is scrambling to understand if the Samaritan helped appropriately or if the priest and Levite could justify having turned away.<sup>9</sup>

- *Look at the story from what might be the victim's point of view. How would the victim have felt at the approach of the priest and Levite? How would he have felt at their passing by? How would he have felt at the approach of the Samaritan? How would he have felt at being rescued by the Samaritan?*

A good exercise this week would be to ask God in our daily prayers to help us see where our "neighbor" might be, to ask for the sensitivity to understand whatever wounds our neighbor has received at our hands, and to pray for healing of our own injuries and for renewed trust in our neighbors.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 66.