

Who Is My Neighbor?

“The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’ But...the Good Samaritan reversed the question: ‘If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?’”

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., I’VE BEEN TO THE MOUNTAINTOP

Teacher and former pastor John Piper says, “I believe it would not be too much to say that all of creation, all of redemption, all of history hang on these two great purposes—that humans love God with all our heart, and that from the overflow of that love we love each other.”

First century Christians fed the hungry, believers in the Middle Ages cared for victims of the Black Plague—Christians have been pouring out their lives for their neighbor for thousands of years. Loving our neighbor is a distinction of who we are as believers. Today, there are unique challenges for believers as they live out this call. This study will look at the Biblical call to love our neighbor and the practical realities of this call.

Scripture

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.”

LUKE 10:25–37

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”

LEVITICUS 19:18

For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.

PSALM 72:12–14

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

PHILIPPIANS 2:3–7

Discussion

1. What was the heart condition of each person in the parable of the Good Samaritan?

2. How does the Samaritan’s response reflect what Jesus did on the cross?

3. Why did the Samaritan act when the religious leaders did not?

 Watch



VIDEO

“Who Is My Neighbor?”

Discussion

1. What are your initial impressions after watching the film?
2. Describe how Miss Pearl lives out God’s love for her neighbors.
3. How do both the Good Samaritan and Miss Pearl reflect the gospel?

4. How does relying on God’s provision and protection free us to love our neighbor?

5. What qualities in Miss Pearl’s approach to her neighbors were helpful in ministering to them?

6. How could demonstrating God’s love by meeting practical needs open doors to the gospel?

7. In the video, Glen Kleinknecht talked about systems that lead to flourishing. What are some examples of the systems that lead to flourishing?

 Practice

READ 1 Timothy 6:17–19, Luke 18:18–30, Proverbs 11:25 and Luke 14:12–14

PRAY Ask God to give you opportunities to love your neighbor.

JOURNAL Take time to write down your observations from these Scriptures and any opportunities you have had to love your neighbor.

DO Meet a neighbor, coworker or student you do not yet know. If you know all these people, take the initiative to talk with one you don’t know well and learn something new about them.