

LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR

Lesson Scripture: Leviticus 19:18, 34; Luke 10:25-37

Focus Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

Key Verses: "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." Luke 10:36-37 (NRSV)

LUKE 10:25-37 (NRSV)

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

27 He answered, "You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself."

28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

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

30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.

34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. 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

LUKE 10:25-37 (KJV)

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host,

him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'

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

37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

KEY TERMS

- **Pentateuch** (Pen-ta-teuch) – The first five books of the Bible, given by God to Moses (Exodus 24:12).
- **Talmud** (Tal-mud) – An abstract noun meaning "study" or "learning"; a compilation of Jewish commentaries, opinions, and teachings that are passed from one's predecessors to successive generations; includes interpretations of legal portions of the Pentateuch; oral teachings of Moses' written law.
- **Torah** – Hebrew word meaning "teachings" or "instruction"; a Jewish title for the Pentateuch; also referred to as the "Book of the Law" (2 Kings 22:8-13).

INTRODUCTION

Our Key Verse today discloses the fact that Jesus is now extending his lessons on love to include neighbors. Lawyers are well known for tendencies to ask questions for which they believe they

already have the answer. The Jewish lawyer, in this lesson, was no different. His intent was to test Jesus, apparently to see if Jesus might refute or denounce Jewish laws regarding love. Remember, Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). Fulfillment of the law is evident in Jesus' interactions with the lawyer. By questioning Jesus, the lawyer set himself up for a huge paradigm shift that would challenge, and hopefully transform, his beliefs about how to inherit eternal life.

The Lawyer's Tests for Jesus, Luke 10:25-29

Addressing Jesus as "teacher" (v. 25) was obviously pretentious. The lawyer was more interested in demonstrating his own knowledge and sense of righteousness than learning anything new from Jesus. Jesus astutely switched roles with the lawyer. Jesus became the questioner! He quizzed the lawyer about his own understandings regarding his question. The lawyer sounds quite scholarly as he accurately recalled scriptures from

the Pentateuch (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18). Legal aspects of the lawyer's answer were correct, and Jesus confirmed the accuracy. However, the lawyer still "wanted to justify himself," as he apparently felt a need for a legalistic definition of the word "neighbor." So, he asked "and who is my neighbor?"

The Law of Love Is Fulfilled, Luke 10:30-37

Although the lawyer's prior answers were correct, they were incomplete! With that answer, legalism took precedence over love for humankind. As was his custom, Jesus did not define "neighbor" for the lawyer. Instead, he used a parable to guide the lawyer through a self-discovery learning process. The lawyer's

own analysis resulted in his gaining new insights that would enable him to answer his own question. The lawyer learned that "loving one's neighbor" is infinitely superior to laws that would justify loving and serving predetermined individuals or groups. Because of his encounter with Jesus, the lawyer obviously

experienced an epiphany or revelation. His perceptions of love suddenly aligned with Jesus' teachings. In essence, the lawyer concluded that a neighbor is anyone of any race, creed, religion, or social background who is in need.

SANKOFA

In 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt issued executive orders mandating desegregation in defense programs

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and the end of discriminatory hiring and promotion practices in all federal agencies. These actions opened doors to new career opportunities for many African Americans. Among them were three African American women: Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Dorothy Vaughn.

Despite these legal protections, the movie *Hidden Figures* illuminates various ways in which these women were subjected to exclusionary, racially biased employment practices.

Hidden Figures also highlights the skills and contributions of these three women. They made significant contributions to America's space program. Without the aid

of computers, these women successfully used slide rules, adding machines, and pencils to develop accurate mathematical calculations that were essential to America's successful launch of rockets that propelled astronauts into space. Despite their integral roles, these women were relegated to use separate bathrooms and work in obscure, isolated locations, away from the spotlight and worldwide publicity that celebrated their male colleagues. They were also never included in our history books. Except for the movie *Hidden Figures*, most Americans would probably have never heard of them. Sadly, they were still omitted from mainstream media attention during the July 2019 celebrations that commemorated the 50th Anniversary of America's inaugural moon landing. Nevertheless, these trailblazers crashed through barriers that could have prohibited them from using their intellect and superior abilities to influence the origins and successful continuations of contemporary space programs world-wide.

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CASE STUDY

The late Dr. Charles Drew (1904-1950) was and continues (posthumously) to be a renowned African American surgeon, physician, and educator, who benefits humankind collectively. Known today as the "Father of Modern Blood Banks," Dr. Drew was also the first African American to earn a Doctor of Science in Medicine Degree. His achievements

are innumerable. However, he pioneered modern methods for processing and storing human blood plasma for transfusions. He created two of the world's first blood banks. He developed the first blood bank for Britain during World War II and saved a lot of lives among their war casualties. Dr. Drew created the second blood bank for the American Red Cross in

1941. Its purpose was to save lives and minimize casualties among U.S. military personnel.

One of Dr. Drew's greatest stances for inclusiveness was expressed in his

protest against the practice of separating African American blood from that of Caucasians. Dr. Drew actually resigned from his prestigious position as director of the first American Red Cross Blood Bank because the agency would not end this discriminatory practice. He proved there was no scientific basis for doing so. Finally, in 1950, the Red Cross ended the practice.

There are unsubstantiated claims that Dr. Drew died because he was denied benefits of his own work with blood transfusions. What we do know is that he died as a result of an automobile accident. Dr. Drew's eulogist memorialized him as "one who had a life which crowds into a handful of years significance so great,

men will never be able to forget it." Dr. Drew's posthumous awards include having been featured in the United States Post Office's Great Americans stamp series in 1981, and having several schools in the United States bear his name.

LIFE APPLICATION

"Which of the three, do you think was a neighbor?" This is a part of Jesus'

question to the lawyer. The three to which Jesus referred were a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan. The fact that Jews hated Samaritans is well known. Jews generally believed themselves to be "pure" descendants of Abraham, and therefore superior to Samaritans. Samaritans were a "mixed race," descended from interracial marriages between Jews who were not deported to Assyria and

other racial groups during Israel's exile. Race was obviously an insignificant factor to Jesus. However, the lawyer most likely viewed the Samaritan through the lens of Jewish traditions that would justify despising Samaritans.

Excuses for loving some people, while rejecting others, vary from one individual to

another. For example, the priest and the Levite in Jesus' parable might have said they thought the man was dead. Therefore, they followed the Torah's teachings that prohibited touching dead bodies because "uncleanness" would result. However, the Talmud would have required them to bury the dead body. Hence, they would have realized the man was still alive. The preposterousness of legalism over the law of love is obvious!

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The Samaritan, on the other hand, immediately became actively engaged to help the injured man. Asking no questions about the man's background, or whether he deserved special attention and care, the Samaritan was concerned with helping a person in need. The Samaritan even invested his own money to help the man. Which of these three do you identify with most?

The lawyer's self-discovery is richly informative for us. Among many other scriptures, we can also examine ourselves with Matthew 25:31-46, which explains how Jesus will one day judge "all nations." In addition to total devotion to God, we are forewarned to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit those in prison. Again, motives matter! Our actions must emanate from love for God and desires to please God.

QUESTIONS:

1. What evidences of legalistic biblical interpretations do you see in our world today?
2. What encouraging lessons can we take away from the lawyer's encounter with Jesus?
3. How can this lesson be used to promote inclusiveness in our homes, churches, and communities?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: "Is Your All on the Altar?"
AMEC Hymnal #333

Devotion: Close by repeating (in unison) the Summary of the Decalogue.

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, in the name of Jesus, we ask for your forgiveness, and we pray that you will please bless us to remember your commands. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

October 12-October 18

Monday	Deuteronomy 15:7-11	(Help Your Neighbor in Need)
Tuesday	1 John 4:16b-21	(Love God and Brothers and Sisters)
Wednesday	Mark 12:28-34	(Adopt the First Commandments)
Thursday	Luke 17:11-19	(Jesus Accepts Thanks from Healed Samaritan)
Friday	Luke 9:51-56	(Samaritan Village Refuses to Welcome Jesus)
Saturday	John 4:1-15	(Jesus Offers Samaritan Woman Living Water)
Sunday	Luke 10:25-37	(Follow the Samaritan's Example)