

A TWO-FOLD FOCUS FOR LIFE
PART 2—LOVE FOR OTHERS
MATTHEW 22:34-39; LUKE 10:25-37

Introduction

If I were to ask you how are we to love our neighbor, we all could probably give the right answer (at least I hope so!).

Jesus said here that **we are to love our neighbor as ourselves.**

That's great, but what does it mean? Let's keep it simple.

Loving our neighbor means that we do for him whatever we would want someone else to do for us if we found ourselves in a similar situation as our neighbor.

If we had a **real need** in our life, no doubt **we would want someone to have mercy on us and help us with our need.**

We don't have to be taught how to love ourselves. It comes naturally. In fact, we are experts at it. The key is to **keep self-love from becoming selfishness!**

We need to be constantly reminded that **as we love ourselves, so we are to love others!**

In our text, we find that Jesus illustrates what He means about loving our neighbor with what we know as *"The Parable of the Good Samaritan."*

This is one of the most familiar parables in the Bible. It doesn't need a lot of explanation, it just needs **examination, contemplation,** and then **activation.**

I. LET'S EXAMINE THE MAN IN NEED. (Vs. 30)

The Parable begins with just a certain man.

A lot of things that some folks might consider important **are not** mentioned here.

We are not given **his name** or **his standing in society.** The assumption is that he was a Jew because he is traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho.

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The only thing we really know about him is that this very difficult circumstance of life (that could happen to any of us) left him in need.

Let me ask a couple of questions at this point:

*Do you find yourself judging the worth of a person **before** you decide whether you are going to help them?*

*Do you **only** feel comfortable helping those who are similar to you?*

Do you let the color of their skin, the length of their hair or the style of their clothing determine who you are going to love as you love yourself?

II. LET'S EXAMINE THE MEN WHO SAW THE NEED.

A. The Priest Who Viewed Him With Contempt. (Vs 31)

This priest obviously placed his **religious work and ceremony before the welfare of the man.**

He did not even make a move toward helping the man.

He "passed by on the other side" which implies that he rushed away.

Priests were supposed to avoid impurity from a corpse. Contact with a corpse made them ceremonially unclean.

The Pharisees thought that even if one's shadow touched the corpse it would make them unclean.

Like the man who had been robbed, this priest was *"going down,"* so that means he was heading from Jerusalem to Jericho (which was a downhill journey) and did not have to worry about being unable to perform duties in the temple.

But rules are rules, right?

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Although the **rule of mercy** would take precedence if the man were clearly alive, the man looked as if he might be dead, and the priest did not want to take the chance.

The task seemed better to be left to someone else.

How often do we stand behind flimsy excuses and leave an opportunity for ministry that God puts before us to someone else?

The Priest Who Viewed Him With Contempt.

B. The Levite Who Viewed Him With Curiosity. (Vs 32)

Levites were descendants of Levi but not of Aaron, and they assisted the priests in the temple.

Rules for Levites were not as strict as for priests, but the Levite also wished to avoid defilement.

This Levite was touched with enough feeling to at least walk over and look at the man. Nevertheless, in this parable, he shrank from helping.

We are not told why, but...

- Perhaps he feared being identified with the robbers.
(Afraid of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.)
- Perhaps he feared that the robbers might still be lurking behind the shadows of the surrounding cliffs and felt he needed to get out of there in a hurry to save his own skin.
- Perhaps he felt that getting involved was just too much bother. (It might take **too much time, too much effort,** and **might cost him something.**)

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C. The Samaritan Who Viewed Him With Compassion. (Vs 33-35)

Jews and Samaritans traditionally had no love for each other. And although violence between Jews and Samaritans was the exception rather than the rule, **there was an attitude of hostility toward each other.**

So Jesus' illustration would likely have offended Jewish listeners, striking at the heart of their patriotism and prejudices.

The difference in these three men is that the last one **had his feelings or emotions touched, and he responded to those feelings.**

This Samaritan placed **compassion before his prejudice, before his opinion, before his schedule—before everything!**

The parable of The Good Samaritan teaches us beyond question who our neighbor is. i.e. **Who needs us to be a neighbor?**

This Samaritan gave **his heart, his compassion, his all** in order to help a desperate, hurting man.

He was a man who saw another man—not as a Jew and not as an enemy. This was most strange, because the Jews cursed the Samaritans, and there was even the likelihood that this injured Jew would curse the Samaritan when he had recovered.

However, despite all that, this Samaritan saw a fellow human being in desperate need, and he was moved with compassion for him.

This Samaritan gave **his time, energy, and money** to help this man. Note what he did. **Each step is significant in showing how we are to love our neighbors.**

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- a. He went to him.
(i.e. He went and reached out personally to help.)
- b. He bound up his wounds.
(i.e. He personally cared for him.)
- c. He poured oil and wine into his wounds.
(i.e. He gave of his own goods.)
- d. He set him on his own beast.
(i.e. He sacrificed his own comfort.)
- e. He provided rooming for him.
(i.e. He provided the basic necessities.)
- f. He took care of him.
(Again, he personally looked after him.)

Note the time, energy, and money involved in all of this.

Showing love to one's neighbor is putting love into action and putting love into action requires time, energy, and money.

1 John 3:16-19; James 3:15-16

Loving our neighbor is not just an idea or a feeling toward someone. It involves **commitment** and **practical acts** to help those who need help.

This Samaritan saw to it that **continued compassion and care were given.**

Two pence amounted to two days wages, a considerable sum.

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And note too that this Samaritan said that if it cost more, he would pay it when he returned.

This Samaritan saw a desperate need and did all he could to help.

Note that there is no mention of the victim's response to the kindness of the Samaritan. Why?

Because loving our neighbor isn't contingent on his sense of appreciation. We are to just do it!

Conclusion

Loving our neighbor requires more than our feelings, it requires our action.

It's not enough to be concerned. It's not enough to feel compassion. We have to get involved. We may have to get our hands dirty or even get some blood on us. We may have to invest some of our time and money.

Whatever it takes we must be willing to do for others in desperate need as if we were taking care of ourselves.

Loving God—really loving Him, means living out His commands no matter what. It may cost us something. It may be an inconvenience. It may even go against our own interests.

How is your love for God?

How is your love for Others?