



**Sunday School Lesson for August 21, 2005.
Released on August 17, 2005.**

"Extending Our Love"

**Printed Text: Luke 10:25-37.
Devotional Reading: Matthew 22:34-40.
Background Scripture: Luke 10:25-37.**

**Time: A.D. 29
Place: Judea**

Luke 10:25-37

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 neighbor 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 neighbor?

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, 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 neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?

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

Today's Aim

Facts: to show how the good Samaritan saw a need and then did all he could to meet that need.

Principle: to show that we must extend our love to anyone who is in need.

Application: to teach students to seek to meet the needs of all those whose needs they can meet.

How to Say It

DENARII. *dih-nair-ee* or *dih-nair-eye*.

LEVITE. *Lee-vite*.

SHEMA (Hebrew). *shih-mah*.

Introduction

Too Busy to Help!

"I can't help people because I am too busy, and besides, it can be dangerous." What a statement! We no longer stop and help people stranded alongside the road because of the *potential* risk involved. We might like to lend a helping hand to an elderly person, but we just have so many other commitments.

Of course we love the Lord and would do anything for Him, but finding the time to help people is just too hard anymore. After all, I have my problems as well, and I don't ask anyone to help me! So why should anyone expect that I would help them?

And how about all those government social programs that I support with my taxes? Can't they "help" like they're supposed to?

Does any of this sound familiar? Are we too busy, too self-involved, too wary of possible dangers, too much given to rationalizing that we no longer see the needs around us? Have we forgotten that as we show acts of kindness to people, we are doing it as unto the Lord? Remember the lesson two weeks ago where Jesus said: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

Lesson Background

Today's text reminds us of the importance of loving God and loving others. The very familiar story of the Good Samaritan encourages us to see the needs of others, take the time to become personally involved, and demonstrate our love for God through love for others. As Jesus spoke these words, He was modeling the very principles He was advocating.

Inquiry About Eternal Life (Luke 10:25-29)

1. What was the lawyer's attitude and intent in asking the question about inheriting eternal life (Luke 10:25)?

A "certain lawyer", or what we could call an expert in religious law, attempts to trap Jesus. He wants to see if he can ask a question so difficult that Jesus will become confused or perhaps say something that would put Him in trouble with the religious authorities. Instead, the lawyer stumbles across life's most important question: *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

This lawyer is not the only person in the pages of Scripture to ask this essential question. In Mark 10:17 a young man comes to Jesus and asks, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" A jailer in Philippi asks Paul and Silas the question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Knowing and then following the answer to this question is the difference between eternal life and eternal damnation.

2. How did Jesus respond to the lawyer's question (v. 26)?

Jesus answered this law expert with two questions of His own. First, He asked, "What is written in the law?" (v. 26). Jesus was not about to be pushed into a conflict with the religious leaders. If this man had an answer from the Mosaic law, it would be impossible for them to contradict him, and Jesus could build His response on what he said. Second, He asked, "How readest thou?" This was a question regarding how the lawyer interpreted what was written there. The burden of response was now on him and not on Jesus.

3. How did the lawyer respond to Jesus' question, and where did he get his answer (v. 27)?

The lawyer wisely quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. It probably surprised him when Jesus responded with a question, but he remained on safe arguing territory by not straying from the Scriptures.

The lawyer first makes reference to Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. This is known as the Shema, which is the basic confession of the Jewish faith. It is called this because 'shema' is the word for "hear" in the Hebrew language. It is a clear declaration that there is just one God and that He is the God of Israel. As such, the Israelites were challenged to respond to God with deep devotion and love, involving their whole heart, soul, and might. This indicates a wholehearted commitment to Him, leaving no room for disloyalty.

With every part of our beings we are to love God. We cannot be divided in our affections-saying one thing but doing another. It is hypocrisy to say we love God and then proceed to disobey Him. If we love God in our *heart*, it will be demonstrated by how we live and the things that we do.

The second part of the lawyer's answer is originally found in Leviticus 19:18: "Thou shalt ...love *thy neighbor as thyself*: I am the Lord." The Lord commanded us to love others as we do ourselves. So let us do the same for others as we would want done for us!

4. How did Jesus respond to this, and what did this response cause the lawyer to attempt (vs. 28,29)?

Jesus then responded to the lawyer's answer with an answer of His own: "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:28). He was not indicating that eternal life comes from doing certain works but rather that when salvation and eternal life are already part of a person's being, the evidence will be love for God and one's neighbor. Such love is possible only if one has faith in God. This is what the lawyer missed.

Jesus treated this man with respect. He knew he had studied the law thoroughly and would have an answer for His questions. He also knew the man possessed a head knowledge without a heart application.

Now the lawyer found himself in an embarrassing situation. He himself had declared that the way to life is love for God and love for his neighbor. But he certainly knew he did not love everyone. He thus raised a question that was often debated among the Jews: "Who is my neighbour?" In reality the question was only an attempt to justify his own attitudes and thus allow him to "keep" the law without loving everyone.

If the lawyer could narrowly define who his neighbor was, he would have an excuse for not being concerned about anyone who fell outside that definition. The Jews believed that only righteous people were to be considered neighbors. Tax collectors, harlots, and others despised by society were not among them. They certainly did not consider Gentiles, and specifically Samaritans, to be their neighbors. They were unclean and not deserving of such status. This is the standard the lawyer

undoubtedly followed. His attitude revealed the very disloyalty the Shema spoke against.

5. From trying to trap Jesus, the lawyer finds himself on the verge of being trapped. He needs to "justify himself." What difficulties have you seen arise as a result of someone's trying to "justify himself"? What should one do instead?

We must remember that when someone poses a questions to us, they might not necessarily be in search for the truth. Perhaps they might be in search of our approval in order to ease their guilty conscience.

Trying to justify ourselves distorts our perspective. We diminish our faults and exaggerate those of others. We attempt to manipulate the system or the law to find an advantage. We make our own welfare more important than anything else-even the truth. Instead of justifying ourselves, we need to seek the truth and align ourselves with it. Remaining objective as much as possible, we can even arrange to have a friend help us "see ourselves as others see us."

**Illustration About Love
(Luke 10:30-34)**

6. What happened to the man Jesus told about, and why was this a possible scenario in real life (v. 30)?

When Jesus challenged him to live by what he had quoted, the lawyer should have admitted his inability to do so and asked Jesus how he could successfully fulfill the commands rather than try to justify himself by asking who his neighbor was. Jesus did not directly answer the lawyer's question but told what is probably the most familiar parable in Luke's Gospel. This is the beginning of what is called the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It is about a man, presumably a Jew, who traveled from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Jesus offers several specifics in this story, including an interesting point of Bible geography. The text says the man was going *down from Jerusalem to Jericho*. The Scriptures are consistent in noting that one always goes "up" to Jerusalem, and "down" when departing from that city. The reason for this is that Jerusalem is built on a hill. It does not matter from what direction you approach the city-you are going to go up to get there. The reverse is naturally true as well: you always go down as you leave the city. The elevation drops approximately three thousand feet from Jerusalem to Jericho.

As this man made his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, he was attacked. Traveling alone by foot or by donkey in the open countryside is dangerous. What happened was much more than just having a wallet stolen. The *thieves* took his clothing along with whatever valuables he may have possessed. They beat him up and left *him half dead*. The thieves may have intended to murder him. Perhaps they assumed that he was indeed dead as he lay there unconscious.

The thieves had a mentality that still is with us today. It's a mindset of "what's yours is ours and we'll take it because we're stronger." This man was easy prey. Life was of no value to the thieves. They cared only for what they could get from him. If he died, that was no concern of theirs. Obviously, this is not a godly attitude! This is about as far away from love and concern as you can get!

The injured man presents the issue that Jesus wants to address. Here is a man with a tremendous need. His personal possessions are gone, he is beaten and bloodied, and perhaps he will die without the intervention from a "neighbor." Who will rescue this man and love him as he does his own self?

7. Who were the first people to see the victim, and what did they do in response (vs. 31,32)?

After the thieves made their getaway, a *priest* came by and later a *Levite*. The priest would have been a fellow Jew and would have had every reason for being concerned about the hapless victim. He was a representative of God, after all, so he should have been a primary example of love. Jesus said the priest passed that way "by chance." It was an unplanned encounter, which should not have made any difference since he was a priest. Pastors' lives today are filled with such unplanned events, often making it necessary to reach out to hurting people at a moment's notice.

Levites were priests' assistants, so this Levite also was in the Lord's service and should have sensed an obligation to help someone in need.

Both certainly had read Leviticus 19:18 many times, but they had not made the personal application of what they had read. Why did they not stop and render assistance to the man?

There is a possible answer to this question: they may have been so concerned about "serving God" that they were unwilling to help this man in need. Temple service demands that those who officiate be clean from any sort of defilement. If the priest and Levite became unclean, they would be disqualified from serving in the temple until they were again considered clean. One thing that makes an individual unclean is coming into contact with a dead body (see Leviticus 21:11; Numbers 5:2; 9:6; 19:11, 13).

However, the priest was going *down* on that road, in other words away from the temple in Jerusalem. He should have been less concerned about ceremonial defilement if his service in the temple had concluded. Yet he walked by *on the other side* as if to say, "There is no way I will become defiled by you." The Levite likewise offered no assistance to the man. How callous could so-called "men of God" be not to at least investigate if the distressed man were alive or dead?

8. What makes us reluctant to help someone in need? What can break down barriers to make us willing to help?

Like the lawyer who raised the question, we are often quite willing to help those whom we like—those whom we see as our "neighbors." But it's easy to make excuses for not helping strangers or people with whom we don't get along well. We may be "too busy," or the situation might be dangerous. "Surely there are others more qualified," we think. It all comes down to the issue Jesus was trying to teach: love. Those whom we love we help.

Of course, there are times when giving help may not be the proper thing to do. Sometimes what looks like help is really enabling a destructive lifestyle. For example, giving money to one who has not learned to budget and live within his or her means is probably only enabling the person to continue to practice poor stewardship. We need to consider the situation and potential outcomes of our actions before we offer to help in some way.

9. Who was the third person who came along, and why might he have been expected to show no concern (v. 33)?

Jesus has a way of introducing unexpected elements into His teaching. This story is no exception. The word *Samaritan* would definitely make the listeners pay special attention. And when the word *compassion* is used in association with the Samaritan, that certainly causes even greater surprise. The reason for the shock would be the hatred and distrust that Jews and Samaritans have for each other. In John 4:9 we are given the note that "Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

What is striking, then, is that this Samaritan looked beyond racial and religious differences, saw a man with a tremendous need, and knew he had the ability to help. And he didn't just have the resources to help, he also had the willingness to actually do something. He didn't just wring his hands and say, "My, what a shame; someone really should do something." Rather, he stopped, got involved, and helped his neighbor—a man whom he had never met. The Samaritan alone displayed the kind of love God feels toward those in great need.

10. What did he do to help (v. 34)?

Instead of moving away from the man, this Samaritan went over to tend to him. He bandaged the man's wounds after pouring oil and wine into them, put him on his own animal, took him to an inn, and personally took care of him. Oil and wine were probably carried by many travelers, apparently as a kind of emergency kit for incidents such as this. Oil was used for soothing and healing, while wine was used as a disinfectant. These were the common household remedies of the day, so it was not unusual for the Samaritan to have them in his possession.

What the Samaritan had done was display his sincere love for a fellow man in practical ways. He did what anyone should do, let alone those who were in the service of God.

Example To Be Followed (Luke 10:35-37)

11. What did the Samaritan demonstrate by his actions (v. 35)?

It is one thing to sacrifice a little time, another thing to sacrifice a little comfort, but now this Samaritan has sacrificed money! He has already used his oil and wine on the man's wounds, but now he is putting a significant amount of financial resources into the man's care as well. *Two pence* in the original language is two denarii, or two days' wages. We are not talking about just a couple of pennies or dollars!

The Samaritan then does still more: he makes a legally binding agreement to pay extra, if need be. The injured man was someone he had never met, and he could have said, "That's all I'm able to do right now."

This Samaritan is rightly described as a man having concern, compassion, and love for people. His attitude can be described as, "What's mine is yours, and I'll share it." This is far different from the robbers who stole and the priest and Levite who would not get involved. The Samaritan demonstrated by his actions the compassion that lived in his heart.

12. How did this parable answer the lawyer's initial question (vs. 36,37)?

Jesus had now arrived at the moment of instruction, and He posed a very pointed question to the lawyer: "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" The lawyer could not bring himself to use the word "Samaritan" and so responded by saying, "He that shewed mercy on him." The lesson had been presented clearly: love demonstrates itself in a willingness to meet the needs of a fellow human being regardless of his race, color, or nationality.

To his credit, the lawyer does not try to slip out of the question by "blaming the victim." This would be something like, "Well, that beaten man should have known better than to be on a road that is well traveled by robbers." Instead, the lawyer answers forthrightly. It is apparent that the priest and the Levite were not neighbors to the injured man. It is only the Samaritan who demonstrated the qualities of a good neighbor that we should display.

At the beginning of this conversation, the lawyer had asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. In pointing out that he should love God with all his being and that he should have a completely unselfish love for others, Jesus revealed that such attitudes were evidence of true salvation.

Jesus challenges the lawyer-and He also speaks to our generation-when He says *Go, and do thou likewise*. Each day we will encounter neighbors whom we can assist. We must look beyond those people we know well and see others that still need the help we can supply.

Conclusion

Helping Those in Need

John wrote, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:20, 21). The lawyer wanted to know how to be saved. In his mind he knew the correct answer: Love God and love others.

Unfortunately, the lawyer had much to learn about loving his neighbor. The old chorus says, "And they'll know we are Christians by our love." Our faith in God our Savior is demonstrated as we love our neighbors. We must be willing to help those neighbors we find in need.

Prayer

Father, we confess that we have not always been Your hands and feet in our love for others. Convict our hearts that we will be a "good Samaritan" to someone today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thought to Remember

Put hands and feet to your love.

Anticipating Next Week's Lesson

Our lesson next week encourages us to go out into the world and bring people to Christ. Study Background Scripture **Luke 14:7-24**.

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