





SPECIAL FOCUS

LOVE GETS INVOLVED

► **The Point**

Love for God includes a costly love for others.

► **The Passage**

Luke 10:25-37

► **The Bible Meets Life**

Our pastor recommended it. I tried it. It felt good. But it left me wondering. His suggestion: The next time you buy lunch at a drive-through window, pay for the person in the car behind you and leave a small card (provided by the church) with a note expressing God's love and information about the church.

I'd heard about people trying this approach, and I said, "I can do that." But a thought kept nagging at me: *What if the person behind me didn't really need any help buying lunch, but the car behind that one was filled with a hungry, homeless mom and three kids planning to split two kids meals?*

Is a convenient, easy, anonymous, and random act of kindness truly an adequate expression of God's love for someone else? Jesus told a parable in Luke 10 that helps us understand His perspective on how to express God's love—and who is the right recipient of that love. God's love for us is costly, and when we express it to others, no matter who they are, it will be costly for us.

► **The Setting**

The passage of Luke 10:25-37, usually referred to as "the parable of the good Samaritan," occurs in Luke's Gospel shortly after Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah (see 9:18-20) and Jesus' transfiguration (see vv. 28-36). After these events, Jesus turned toward Jerusalem, knowing that in Jerusalem He would be betrayed, crucified, and then rise from the dead (see 9:51; vv. 21-22, 43-44). Early in this final journey to Jerusalem, an expert in the law confronted Jesus with a question about eternal life in order to test Him (see 10:25). Jesus' response was powerful.

What does the Bible say?

Love (v. 27)—The complete devotion of one's entire being to God, not only in feelings, but in the actions of one's life toward God and other people.

Priest (v. 31)—A class of male Jews descended of Aaron who were in charge of the sacrifices, offerings, worship, and maintenance of the temple.

Levite (v. 32)—Descendants of Levi, the lowest of the three orders in Israel's priesthood, whose role was to assist the priests in their duties at the temple.

Samaritan (v. 33)—Considered "half-breeds" by the Jews, they were the result of intermarriages between the remnants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Samaria) and Gentile foreigners imported by the Assyrians after Samaria's conquest.

Luke 10:25-37

25 Just then an expert in the law stood up to test Him, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 "What is written in the law?" He asked him. "How do you read it?"

27 He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

28 "You've answered correctly," He told him. "Do this and you will live."

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

30 Jesus took up the question and said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and fled, leaving him half dead. **31** A priest happened to be going down that road. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side. **32** In the same way, a Levite, when he arrived at the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and when he saw the man, he had compassion. **34** He went over to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on olive oil and wine. 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 him. When I come back I'll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.'

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

37 "The one who showed mercy to him," he said.

Then Jesus told him, "Go and do the same."



GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

Notes



DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 121 of the PSG: **“When have you seen a random act of kindness?”**

Note: If group members share their own experiences of participating in a random act of kindness—or of receiving one—ask them to share how they felt during and after that experience.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 122 of the PSG. Introduce the theme of God’s costly love for us by reading or summarizing the

text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” at the top of page 122 of the PSG: **“Love for God includes a costly love for others.”**

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Help group members focus on that term “costly” by asking them to identify costly or expensive items in your meeting space. Encourage everyone to stand up and walk around in search of costly furniture, electronics, personal items, and so on.

Note: If it would be appropriate in your group setting, you could even encourage group members to estimate the value of each item. Ask everyone to work together to identify the most costly item in your meeting space.

LEADER PACK: Display Pack Item 10, “Higher Standard,” as a visual challenge and reminder for your group members to love others in a way that costs something.

PRAY: Transition into the study by thanking God for the high price He paid to show love to you and the members of your group. Ask for wisdom as you engage His Word.

TIP: Grow with other group leaders at the Groups Ministry blog. Visit lifeway.com/groupministry.



10 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Luke 10:25-28

²⁵ *Just then an expert in the law stood up to test Him, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"* ²⁶ *"What is written in the law?" He asked him. "How do you read it?"* ²⁷ *He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."* ²⁸ *"You've answered correctly," He told him. "Do this and you will live."*

READ: Luke 10:25-28 on page 123 of the PSG. Read the text out loud or ask a volunteer to do so.

GUIDE: Ask a volunteer to help set the context for this session's Scripture passage by reading the first paragraph on page 124 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 124 of the PSG: **"What is the relationship between loving God and loving others?"**

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

When have you been dragged into religious or cultural debates?

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity "Overcoming Obstacles" on page 125 of the PSG.



Which of the following obstacles most often hinder you from demonstrating God's love to others? Check all that apply.

- ☐ *I'm too busy. My schedule is full.*
- ☐ *I'm not even sure how to help. What can I do?*
- ☐ *My budget is too tight. I can't afford it.*
- ☐ *I never really notice anyone who appears to be in need.*
- ☐ *I don't want to damage my reputation.*
- ☐ *Other:*

What step can you take to move beyond one of the obstacles checked above?

TRANSITION: As we'll see in verses 29-32, this expert in the law couldn't let things go. As a result, Jesus told him a story.

Luke 10:25-28

[Verse 25] The passage begins with an **expert in the law** addressing Jesus with a question. A Jewish expert in the law during that time was an expert in Old Testament Law and would have been called on to interpret it in various situations. The experts in the law (also known as “scribes” or “lawyers”) were most commonly associated with the Pharisees. His concern at this point was, **“what must I do to inherit eternal life?”** Another way of wording this would be, “What must a person do to enter the kingdom of God?” (see Luke 18:18,24-25). This was a common question among the Jews.

While the lawyer’s question appears to have been a legitimate one, and outwardly he appeared to demonstrate respect toward Jesus, Scripture tells us that his real motive was to **test** Jesus.

[Verse 26] Jesus responded to the question by the lawyer with a question of His own in return. **“‘What is written in the law?’ He asked him. ‘How do you read it?’”** The lawyer was no doubt trying to justify himself by obeying the law and was trusting in his own good works. It is implied that Jesus, however, was attempting to lead him to a righteousness that was superior to what he could acquire on his own by being obedient to the law.

[Verse 27] The expert in the law answered Christ’s question well by responding that we must love God with every part of ourselves: heart, soul, strength, and mind. This means we must devote ourselves entirely to God and love Him above everything else. And second, we must love our neighbor as ourselves.

The expert in the law actually referred to two Old Testament verses here. The first, to love God completely, is from Deuteronomy 6:5. The second Old Testament verse, to love our neighbors as ourselves, is from Leviticus 19:18.

[Verse 28] Jesus responded positively to the lawyer. **“You’ve answered correctly.”** But then Jesus followed with a very difficult command: **“Do this and you will live.”** In this brief statement, Jesus appeared to be saying that to “do this” (to love both God and neighbor) produces an obedience to all God’s commands, even to the gospel, which Jesus at that time was preaching. Eternal life depends upon keeping the commandments of God. Therefore, every person desiring eternal life must either keep God’s commandments perfectly (an impossibility for sinful human beings), or accept Christ, who kept God’s commandments perfectly.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Luke 10:29-32

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

³⁰ Jesus took up the question and said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and fled, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down that road. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² In the same way, a Levite, when he arrived at the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

READ: Luke 10:29-32 on page 123 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the second paragraph on page 157 of this Leader Guide to provide some additional context for Jesus’ parable.

+ **SUMMARIZE:** Highlight the major points from page 126 of the PSG:

1. “Notice the legal expert’s question in verse 29: ‘And who is my neighbor?’ In this man’s mind, a neighbor was another member of the Jewish community.”
2. “We certainly can understand his viewpoint. We tend to steer clear of people whose values, beliefs, and lifestyles are contrary to God and His Word.”
3. “Again, Jesus didn’t answer the scribe’s question directly. Instead, He used a story to open the expert’s heart and mind.”

+ **DISCUSS:** Question #3 on page 126 of the PSG: “What situations and people might Jesus use to tell this story today?”

Note: If appropriate, encourage group members to consider this question in light of your community. Which types of people would Jesus use if this parable was set where you live?

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 126 of the PSG: “What prevents us from taking action to love others rather than just talking about it?”

TRANSITION: The conclusion of Jesus’ parable is very familiar today. But it would have created quite a shock among His original audience.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How would you answer the question, “Who is my neighbor?”

Luke 10:29-32

[Verse 29] Instead of being willing to admit that he had tried to fully love God and his neighbor but had fallen short, the lawyer instead responded by wanting to justify his actions. He changed the course of the conversation by asking what the meaning and extent of the word **neighbor** was in the law.

[Verse 30] Christ told the lawyer a parable to answer his question and show him the full extent of who a neighbor is. **A man** was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. Although the man is not described in any detail, the Jewish audience would naturally have assumed him to be a Jew.

Jerusalem sits approximately 2,500 feet above sea level; **Jericho**, which is 17 miles to the east, is about 800 feet below sea level. This was a treacherous road that was infamous for crime. Thieves hid in locations provided by the natural landscape that made it easier to rob individuals as they passed by. The man in the parable had obviously made a bad decision to make the trip alone; as a result, the robbers took all that he had, beat him up, and left him for dead.

[Verses 31-32] A **priest** and then a **Levite**—both categories of Jewish religious officials—passed by the injured man on the road. Both would obviously have been expected to stop and assist the injured traveler. But instead of doing so, not only did each of them pass by the man without stopping, but both went to **the other side** of the road as they passed in order to totally avoid the injured traveler.

Both of these men, a priest and a Levite, would have been expected to practice mercy and kindness. They would have certainly been expected to offer assistance to a fellow Jew, and especially to one who was injured to that extent. Yet they neglected their duty in order to avoid the situation.

They did not want to get involved.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Luke 10:33-37

³³ But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and when he saw the man, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went over to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on olive oil and wine. 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 him. When I come back I'll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.' ³⁶ "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" ³⁷ "The one who showed mercy to him," he said. Then Jesus told him, "Go and do the same."

READ: Luke 10:33-37 on page 123 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Ask group members to read the first paragraph on page 127 of the PSG in order to gain a sense of how Jesus' original audience would have reacted to the end of His parable.

Note: The first three paragraphs on page 159 of this Leader Guide provide additional information and context.



RECAP: Read aloud the final two paragraphs on page 127 of the PSG:

Jesus calls us to a higher standard than random acts of kindness that barely cost us the price of a lunch. His standard involves moving beyond religious behavior and self-justification.

Truth be told, there's nothing random about what Jesus calls us to do. We are to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. And we are to express that reality by showing love to our neighbors—those all around us. Doing so requires intentionality. In the end, love is costly, but it's always worth it.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How does Jesus' story challenge or inspire you?

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 127 of the PSG: "How do we move from random acts of kindness to an intentional lifestyle of costly love?"

GUIDE: Refer back to "The Point" of this session: "Love for God includes a costly love for others."

Luke 10:33-37

[Verse 33] Jesus surprised those listening by saying a third man who passed by stopped to help the beaten traveler—a **Samaritan**. Jews and Samaritans hated each other, both racially and religiously. The Samaritan would have had reason to detest the Jewish man and not give another thought to passing him by. Although the Samaritan was the last person who would have been expected to help the injured Jew, the Samaritan had **compassion** on him when he saw the situation. There's no doubt Jesus purposefully chose an outsider, a man from a hated group of people, to be the hero in this story. He wanted to make the point that being a neighbor to someone isn't dependent upon any parameters set by man.

[Verse 34] The Samaritan's compassion led him to give his time and resources to the injured man. He bandaged the wounded man's injuries and poured **olive oil** and **wine**—the closest thing to medicine in those days—on his wounds. The oil would have helped soothe the pain of the injuries and the wine would have served as an antiseptic for the open wounds of the beaten traveler. The Samaritan then put the injured Jew on his **animal** (some translations refer to the animal as a donkey) and walked with him to the first inn he could find, staying with the injured man overnight.


[Verse 35] The next morning, the Samaritan gave two **denarii** (two day's wages) to the innkeeper and instructed him to care for the injured man. It appears that the Samaritan thought that the innkeeper might possibly withhold what was necessary to restore the injured man to health if he had no promise of being repaid. So, he ensured this would not happen by promising to cover any future costs the innkeeper might incur.

[Verse 36-37] After finishing the parable, Jesus did not actually define who a neighbor is. Instead, He asked the lawyer a very simple question: **"Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"** The answer was obvious: the man who had shown **mercy**. It's interesting that the expert in the law could not bring himself to say, "the Samaritan." Although that would have been the most natural way to answer Jesus' question, he instead replied, **"The one who showed mercy to him."**

Jesus' illustration made it so that this man could no longer justify his way of thinking. Furthermore, by the way Jesus spoke He indicated that we should worry less about the question the lawyer had asked ("Who is my neighbor?") and should instead be more concerned with the question, "How can I be a good neighbor?" Jesus' final words were both simple and profound: **"Go and do the same."**



Notes

- ▶ **Homeless.** The next time you see a person who appears homeless and hungry, don't just hand over a dollar or two. Bring a nutritious meal and a clean, warm blanket. Go above and beyond.
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- ▶ **Homebound.** Volunteer to deliver meals to those who are homebound in your community through a program such as Meals on Wheels. Make a personal connection and extended visit with at least one of the people you serve.
- ▶ **Homeroom.** Connect with the administrators of a local public school. Ask about the persistent needs of children in that school, and then work with your church to organize an ongoing ministry that provides supplies, food, tutoring, and other items to meet those needs. (Don't forget the teachers!)

TRANSITION: Read or restate the Conclusion from page 128 of the PSG:

God's love for you is personal, planned, and costly. There's nothing random or affordable about it. Therefore, choose to respond by replacing your random acts of kindness with deliberate acts of love toward your neighbors. All of them.

PRAY: Conclude by asking the Holy Spirit to increase your awareness of those in need around you during the coming week. Ask for eyes to see opportunities to express God's love, and ask for the courage to take advantage of those opportunities.