



SESSION 4

INTENTIONAL LOVE

▶ **The Point**

Go out of your way to love others.

▶ **The Passage**

Luke 10:25-37

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

What do the following have in common?

- ▶ Alexander Fleming found mold in a petri dish had killed all the bacteria around itself. We now have penicillin.²
- ▶ Percy Spencer walked in front of a magnetron and the peanut butter candy bar in his pocket melted. This led him to create the microwave oven.³
- ▶ On a hike, Georges de Mestral noticed burrs clinging to his pants. This gave him the idea for Velcro®.⁴

All these discoveries were made by accident; they stumbled onto a discovery that would shape part of history going forward. These may have been happy accidents, but we can't approach the Christian life that way. Following Jesus does not mean stumbling around in the dark hoping for a good result; following Jesus is an intentional act of obedience. If we desire to be a welcoming people, we won't get there by accident. We will only get there through intentional acts of love. It's a standard of love that goes the extra mile.

▶ **The Setting**

The time of Jesus' earthly ministry was drawing to a close. Therefore, Jesus determined that it was time for Him to journey to Jerusalem, where He would suffer, die, and rise from the dead. (See Luke 9:51; see also vv. 21-22,44.) During this journey, an expert in the law (a scribe) approached Jesus, asking Him what he (the scribe) must do to inherit eternal life.

What does the Bible say?

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

Priest (v. 31)—A class of male Jews descended of Aaron who was 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.

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

Compassion (v. 33)—The Greek term is related to the noun for a person's "inward parts," the seat of one's emotions. An attitude of mercy toward others.

Luke 10:25-37

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"

27 And 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 answered correctly; do this, and you will live." 29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, 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, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.

34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'

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

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

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes



Notes

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 37 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **“When has a wrong turn led to a pleasant surprise?”** Allow time for each person to respond.

GUIDE: Direct group members to **“The Bible Meets Life”** on page 38 of the PSG. Emphasize the importance of intentional acts of love by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to **“The Point”** on page 38 of the PSG: **“Go out of your way to love others.”**

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Direct class participants to pair up, ideally with someone they don’t know extremely well. Explain that the partners will have four to five minutes to have intentional conversations to discover some new things about one another. Encourage them to talk about where they were born, where they grew up, the craziest thing they have ever done, any interesting hobbies or pets, their favorite foods, and/or other things some people may not know about them. After five minutes, call time. Ask for volunteers to share one thing they learned about their partner that they didn’t already know. **Ask:** What is one thing you could take away from this activity to help you get to know others?

PRAY: Transition into the study by asking the Lord to help us love others the way He loves us. Thank God for His incredible acts of love.

Dotted lines for taking notes.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Luke 10:25-28

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" 27 And 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 answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Luke 10:25-28 on page 39 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 39 of the PSG: **"When has your love for God prompted you to love other people?"**

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 40 of the PSG. Our love for others should have these qualities:

- ▶ **We love others unreservedly.** We should not withhold our love for someone based on external appearance, familiarity, or any other reason.
- ▶ **We love others sacrificially.** God was willing to back up His love with action.
- ▶ **We love others proactively.** God's love is not an ivory tower kind of love.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How does Jesus' answer seem to differ from what the expert in the law had in mind?

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity, "Finding Margin," on page 41 of the PSG to help them plan for opportunities to display love for others.



Sometimes, it is our own schedules that get in the way of being able to serve at church, minister to others, or even find time to read the Bible and pray. In the space provided, list your typical daily schedule during the week. [The PSG has a weekly calendar.] Mark the places you might use to intentionally display love for others. List some options for ways to best spend that time ministering to others, then prioritize them from 1-3 based on which you are most likely to be able to accomplish this month.

TRANSITION: Our love for God is tied to our love for others. In the next verses, we see that we fail to love when we are indifferent to others.

Luke 10:25-28 Commentary

[Verse 25] Our love for God is tied to our love for others. A **lawyer** addressed Jesus with a question. A Jewish lawyer in the day of Christ was an expert in Old Testament law and would have been called on to interpret it in various situations. The lawyers (also known as “scribes”) were most commonly associated with the Pharisees. His concern was, “**what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**” “Another way of wording this is, ‘What must a person do to enter the kingdom of God?’”⁵ (See Luke 18:18,24-25.) This was a common question among the Jews. While the lawyer’s question appeared 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.

The lawyer called Jesus “**Teacher.**” Jesus was referred to by this same term on many occasions in the Gospels. Jesus also referred to Himself as such. (See John 13:13-14.)

[Verse 26] Jesus responded to the question by the lawyer with a question of His own in return. “**What is written in the Law? How do you read it?**” Jesus’ question showed the lawyer that his answer was found in Scripture. 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 and everyone else. And second, we must love our neighbors 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 have 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 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.

By saying these particular words, we can assume that Jesus intended to elicit an admission from the man that he had not kept God’s commandments perfectly, and as a result inquire about how he might gain the strength, knowledge, or ability to do so. However, as we will see in the next verse, this is not how the lawyer responded.



STUDY THE BIBLE

NOTES

Luke 10:29-32

²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, 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."

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Luke 10:29-32 on page 40 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the Commentary on the next page of this Leader Guide to help group members understand the context for the parable of the good Samaritan.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 42 of the PSG: **"In what ways do we sometimes justify not helping others in need?"**

RECAP: Although Jesus answered the man's question he was not satisfied. He wanted a further qualification from Jesus. If this man were to love his neighbor, then he wanted to know specifically who that was.

At the bottom of any excuse we offer is a simple failure to love. This is the dirty truth of indifference—it is not an attitude of neutrality; it is an outright denial of the call to love others as God loves them.

We would do well to recognize our tendency to find excuses. Once we recognize our own internal pull toward indifference, then we will be more prepared to actively fight against such indifference. And we fight indifference through intentional—and many times uncomfortable—acts of tangible love.

TRANSITION: The next verses show us that we are commanded to love even when it is costly or inconvenient.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How does our church answer the question, "Who is my neighbor?"

Luke 10:29-32 Commentary

[Verse 29] We fail to love when we are indifferent to others. 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 attempting to justify his actions to Jesus with the question, **“Who is my neighbor?”** In an attempt to convince Jesus that he was blameless with respect to his actions toward God and others, the lawyer changed the course of the conversation by asking Jesus what the meaning and extent of the word **neighbor** was in the law. He mentioned nothing more about loving God, but questioned the second part of the command about who his neighbor was because it depended on how Jesus defined that word.

The lawyer made an error in thinking he had fulfilled the law of loving God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind. It is impossible for sinful human beings to do this perfectly. Another error was thinking it was possible to fulfill the command to love God totally while not loving his neighbor. If we can choose who our neighbors are, then we can all fulfill the law. But if we have a broader definition of the word, it is much more difficult and we all will fall short. Scripture states that if we say we love God but hate our brother, we are liars. (See 1 John 4:20-21.)

[Verse 30] Jesus told the lawyer a parable to answer his question and show him the full extent of whom a neighbor is. The parable was a simple story, but a powerful one. **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 is seventeen miles to the east of Jericho. The route between the two cities was a treacherous road that was infamous for crime, so it probably wasn't surprising to the lawyer or the others listening that Jesus set the illustration on this particular road. Thieves hid in locations provided by the natural landscape that made it easier to rob individuals as they passed by. People usually traveled this road in groups for protection. The man in the parable had obviously made a bad decision to make the trip alone, and as a result, the robbers took all that he had, beat him up, and left him for dead.

[Verses 31-32] The parable continues by having first a **priest** and then a **Levite**—both categories of Jewish religious officials—pass by the injured man on the road. Both the priest and the Levite 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 also 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 certainly would have been expected to offer assistance to this individual, a fellow Jew, injured to the extent that he was half dead. Yet they neglected their duty in order to avoid the situation because they did not want to get involved.



15 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

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GOOD SAMARITAN RETOLD

Ask four members of your class to read the following script.

Parable Teller: On a desolate road, a car apparently drove off the highway into a ditch. The driver-side door was open. The driver, a middle-aged man, was bleeding from the head and seemed to be unconscious. Three different men came upon the scene. Here is the first man's response to the incident.

Person 1: Oh, man. I wonder what that guy did to get so messed up. If I had to guess it was probably some gambling debts or a gang thing. I'd better lock my door. Maybe somebody will stop or call the police. This community is so violent I'm so glad I decided not to move here, where there's so much violence.

Parable Teller: There's a second driver stopped and he thought to himself:

Person 2: Now that just breaks my heart. If I didn't have fifteen things to do tomorrow before Sunday School I'd help. Believe me, I've got to return my loan before I teach. God has empowered me to minister to the needs of my poor class, pay for the truck, and eat dinner to the glory of God!

Parable Teller: The wounded man had little hope. A few minutes later a third man drove up. He was obviously an immigrant, because of his dress and the strange music coming from his car. But it was obvious that when he saw the wounded man his heart went out to him.

Person 3: Thank You God, this is the mission You have for me today. Let me see Your hands and feet. My car is Your car. My money is Your money. My time is Your time. Maybe You have brought me to this place to save this one man's life.

Parable Teller: The Samaritan took the injured man to the emergency room, paid himself as the emergency contact person, and committed to pay for all of this man's expenses while in the hospital. Now which of these three do you think acted as a neighbor to him? The answer is obvious. Now go and do likewise.

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ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What obstacles stood in the way of the Samaritan demonstrating love for his neighbor?

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Luke 10:33-37

33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?' 37 He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' And Jesus said to him, 'You go, and do likewise.'

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Luke 10:33-37 on page 43 of the PSG.

LEADER PACK: Before your meeting, make copies and distribute **Pack Item 4**, the "Good Samaritan Retold" handout, to four group members. After reading the verses, have these group members perform the skit.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 43 of the PSG: "When has someone taken risks or made sacrifices to demonstrate God's love to you?"

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 43 of the PSG. As we look at the intentional acts of love and mercy the Samaritan showed, we are to do the same.

- ▶ Be people of awareness.
- ▶ Be people of compassion.
- ▶ Be people of margin.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 43 of the PSG: "How can the truths of these verses help our group be more welcoming?"

GUIDE: Refer back to "The Point" for this session: "Go out of your way to love others."

Luke 10:33-37 Commentary

[Verse 33] We are commanded to love even when it is costly or inconvenient. Jesus probably surprised those listening by saying that the third man who passed by and stopped to help the beaten traveler was a **Samaritan**. Jews and Samaritans hated each other—both racially and religiously.

The despised Samaritan would have been expected to detest the Jewish man and not give another thought to passing him by. The injured man was from a different nation and had different beliefs; in addition, there was the mutual animosity the Jews and Samaritans shared for each other. So, although the Samaritan was the last person who would have been expected to help the injured Jew, the Samaritan had **compassion** on the injured man when he saw the situation.

[Verse 34] The Samaritan's compassion led him to give of his time and resources to aid the injured man. He bandaged the wounded man's injuries and poured **oil** and **wine** on his wounds. The Samaritan then put the injured Jew on his own **animal** and walked with him to the first inn he could find, where he even took time to stay with the injured man overnight.

[Verse 35] The next morning, the Samaritan continued to care for the man by giving two denarii to the innkeeper and instructing him to care for the man. The denarius was a coin in Roman currency that equaled a day's wage. The Samaritan promised that if the innkeeper were owed any additional money for his time or trouble beyond that amount, the Samaritan would repay it upon his return.

[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 the three men acted like a neighbor toward the injured man? The answer was obvious, of course, and there was no proper response for the lawyer based on the evidence other than the man who had shown **mercy**.

The lawyer could not bring himself to say, "the Samaritan," so instead he replied, "**The one who showed him mercy.**" In speaking the truth, the lawyer was calling attention to his own mistaken idea that his "neighbors" only included those that he cared about. The parable revealed his own prejudices and no doubt affected him with regard to his own duty as a neighbor now that he understood that a neighbor was anyone he came in contact with who had a need. Because of Jesus' illustration, the expert in the law could no longer justify his way of thinking. Jesus' words to him indicated that the expert in the law was asking the wrong question. Instead of being concerned about "Who is my neighbor?" the lawyer should be asking himself, "How can I be a good neighbor?"

After the lawyer's response, Jesus did not lecture him on his mistaken thoughts on neighborliness; in fact, He only said a few words: "**You go, and do likewise.**" In other words, the lawyer was to act like the Samaritan in this parable and meet the needs of others he came in contact with, no doubt in the process of doing so finding that neighbors can be found in surprising places!



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 44 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the following applications.



Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Get to know someone.** How intentional are you when you come to worship? This week, intentionally seek someone out you aren't familiar with and ask that person a few questions to get to know him or her.
- ▶ **Trim your schedule.** How much margin is in your life? Evaluate your finances and schedule, and cut back so that you have room to meet the needs of others God brings your way.
- ▶ **Encourage someone.** Who is one person you know that is struggling, but to whom you have been indifferent? Schedule a time to sit down with that person this week.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the final paragraph from page 44 of the PSG:

Let's gear our lives so that we are ready to intentionally take advantage of opportunities God brings our way to express His love to others.

PRAY: Conclude by thanking God for having gone out of His way to love us the way He has. Ask Him for boldness and passion to love others with that same intention—the kind that can only come from His Holy Spirit at work in us.



Free additional ideas for your group are available at BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra