

October 18
Lesson 7 (NIV)

LOVE FOR NEIGHBORS

DEVOTIONAL READING: [John 5:1–15](#)

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: [Leviticus 19:18, 34](#);
[Luke 10:25–37](#)

LUKE 10:25–37

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ He answered, “‘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, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

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

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where

the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

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

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”



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KEY VERSES

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

—[Luke 10:36–37](#)

LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER

Unit 2: Inclusive Love

LESSONS 5–8

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Define *neighbor* as Jesus does and provide current examples.
2. Explain the importance of how Jesus shifts the focus from legalism to true obedience.
3. Make a plan to proactively love a neighbor he or she has historically preferred to avoid.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

A. Good Samaritans at Altitude

B. Lesson Context

I. Questioning (Luke 10:25–29)

A. Regarding Eternal Life (vv. 25–28)

B. Regarding Neighbors (v. 29)

Won't You Be a Neighbor?

II. Storytelling (Luke 10:30–37)

A. The Victim (v. 30)

B. Two Potential Heroes (vv. 31–32)

C. One Actual Hero (vv. 33–35)

How Unexpected!

III. Directing (Luke 10:36–37)

A. Short Review (vv. 36–37a)

B. Lifetime Call (v. 37b)

Conclusion

A. Looking for a Loophole

B. Prayer

C. Thought to Remember

HOW TO SAY IT

Lucan Lu-*kehn*.

picaro pee-*kah*-ro.

Samaritans Suh-*mare*-uh-tunz.

Introduction

A. Good Samaritans at Altitude

Late in September 2018, Joshua Mason and his girlfriend, Katie Davis, flew from Texas to Colorado. The next day Joshua took Katie on a hike in the mountains northwest of Denver. After hiking about eight miles, they reached the nearly 13,000-foot summit of Jasper Peak. Joshua was hoping to find an isolated and beautiful spot to “pop the question.” Jasper Peak provided such a location, and Katie said yes to the surprise proposal.

But then things took a turn. Because they didn't leave the trailhead till about noon and the trail to Jasper Peak isn't clearly marked, the newly engaged couple became lost and disoriented when it started to get dark. Far from cellphone service, they weren't equipped or dressed to camp overnight in the cold of the high country, and they only had a little water. Coming to a cliff and unable to go any further, they began yelling for help.

About midnight, a camper who was hiking in the area heard their screams. When he

discovered Joshua and Katie, they were showing signs of altitude sickness and severe dehydration. He led them to a group of his friends who were camping at a nearby lake. The campers provided the couple with water, food, and shelter in their tent, trying to help them get warm. But recognizing the seriousness of the situation, one of the campers hiked down to her vehicle and drove to where she could call 911.

Rescue crews reached Joshua and Katie about 4:30 a.m. Determining that they needed to move to a lower altitude immediately, the rescuers escorted them down to the trailhead.

This story includes several Good Samaritans who went out of their way to help Joshua and Katie. Today we will consider the Scripture passage that prompted that now-common term.

B. Lesson Context

In his Gospel, Luke recounts Jesus' ministry in three major sections: (1) events in and around Galilee (Luke 4:14–9:50); (2) Jesus on his way to Jerusalem (9:51–19:44); and (3) the events of Jesus' final week in Jerusalem (19:45–24:53). Luke's Gospel is unique in its central section, which begins shortly before our lesson text. The majority of the parables found in Luke are located in this section, the first being the parable in our text.

A primary theme of Jesus' ministry in Judea was God's love for the lost and lowly: sinners (example: Luke 15), outcasts (exam-

ple: 14:15–24), Samaritans, and the poor (example: 16:19–31). Jesus' countercultural teaching in last week's lesson text, Luke 6:27–36, challenged us to demonstrate inclusive love even toward our enemies. Today's text calls us once again to practice inclusive love. In the passage just prior to our text (10:1–24), Jesus sent out 72 of his followers in pairs to proclaim, through word and deed, that "the kingdom of God has come near to you" (10:9). Both Jesus and his 72 emissaries rejoiced at God's power working through them (10:17–21).

Immediately preceding our lesson passage, Jesus spoke with his 72 followers at the conclusion of their fruitful mission (Luke 10:17–20). Although some commentators view Jesus' interaction with this "expert in the law" (10:25) as an interruption of his debriefing discussion with the disciples, the exact time and place of this scene is unspecified.

This parable is unique to Luke, but its subject matter and setting are similar to texts found in Matthew and Mark. Matthew 22:34–40 and Mark 12:28–34 are clearly parallel to one another, but the connection to Luke is less certain (compare Luke 10:27, below). The Lucan event appears to be a separate incident covering the same theme.

I. Questioning (LUKE 10:25–29)

A. Regarding Eternal Life (vv. 25–28)

25a. On one occasion an expert in the

law stood up to test Jesus.

This *expert in the law* was a scholar educated in the Old Testament law and the Jewish traditions surrounding it. The fact that the law expert *stood up* indicates that Jesus was speaking and his listeners were sitting. This was a typical, respectful pose when listening to a rabbi teach.

The idea of testing is the same as in Jesus' temptation (Luke 4:1–13), which can be appropriately also considered a test. Evidently the expert in the law wasn't sincerely seeking to be taught by Jesus as much as he was interested in how Jesus would answer. We have to wonder if this man was hoping to show up Jesus.

25b. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

By calling Jesus *Teacher*, the law expert at least wanted to give the impression that he respected Jesus. His question conveyed a perspective of salvation by works. Yet his response to Jesus' own question showed that the man knew that mere works without faith are dead (compare James 2:14–26; see commentary on Luke 10:27 below).

The scholar's question likely has its basis in the connection between obedience to the law and gifts of inheritance and life (see Deuteronomy 6:16–25). In the Old Testament, obedience to God is often associated with his blessings while rebellion against him is similarly associated with curses (example: Deuteronomy 28). The law expert may have wanted to be able to identify Jesus with either the Sadducees, who denied any resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22:23), or

the Pharisees, whose emphasis on keeping the law frequently resulted in outward actions that did not reflect a heart yielded to God (example: 23:13–36). The law expert would be well acquainted with both groups and likely had some level of affiliation with one or the other.

26. “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

Instead of answering immediately, Jesus asked his own questions. Given the fact that the questioner is a Jewish scholar, it is fitting that Jesus asked him *how* he *read* and interpreted *the Law*.

27. He answered, “‘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, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

The scholar's reply alludes to the great Shema of Deuteronomy 6:5, which Jews recited daily: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” To that the legal expert adds the law of neighbor love found in Leviticus 19:18: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” These answers showed that the scholar knew mere rule-keeping was not the path to life. Instead, *love of God* expressed as love for *neighbor* leads to life. This combination of loving the Lord your God and loving your neighbor as yourself has become known as the “great commandment.”

28. “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

Jesus' seemingly final word to the law expert was this commendation of the man's

correct answer.

B. Regarding Neighbors (v. 29)

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

The expert in the law found himself challenged (see commentary on [Luke 10:25a](#), above) and so looked *to justify himself*. Although the man acknowledged previously that [Leviticus 19:18](#)—“Love your neighbor as yourself”—is a summary statement of the law (see [Luke 10:27](#)), he took advantage of the ambiguity of the word *neighbor*. In the original context of [Leviticus 19:18](#), love for neighbors is love for fellow Israelites, although that love was to be extended to any “foreigner” who came to Israel from another land and lived among them (see [Leviticus 19:33–34](#)). The land of Israel in Jesus’ day under Roman occupation was comprised of many who were not Israelites.

With his question, the scholar clearly seemed to be trying to create a distinction, making the point that some people are neighbors (and thus required to be loved) and some people are not. The notion that some people are *not* neighbors is what Jesus addressed in his parable.

What Do You Think?

Under what circumstances, if any, should Christians ask questions regarding who should be helped and who should not?

Digging Deeper

How do [Matthew 5:45](#); [10:16](#); [2 Thessalo-](#)

[nians 3:10](#); [1 Timothy 5:3–12](#); [2 John 9–11](#); and [3 John 5–8](#) help frame your answer?

WON'T YOU BE A NEIGHBOR?

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood began airing in 1968 and ran for 895 episodes. Dressed in his signature cardigan sweater, Mr. Rogers invited children to visit his neighborhood with his theme song, “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?”

Fred Rogers trained to be a Presbyterian minister but decided to go into television because he hated the medium of TV! While children’s programming typically featured animation and frantic action, Rogers labeled those features as “bombardment.” He did not play a character as did his contemporaries like Captain Kangaroo and Soupy Sales. Rogers believed that being one’s honest self was one of the greatest gifts one person could give to another.

Fred Rogers was not afraid to expand his neighborhood. During a time of racial segregation, Mr. Rogers was shown cooling his feet in a pool on a hot day with Officer Clemmons, an African-American policeman. In addition, Rogers championed children with disabilities on the show, including having a young quadriplegic boy demonstrate how a wheelchair worked. Rogers did not ask, “Who is my neighbor?” He knew!

—J. E.

II. Storytelling

II. Storytelling

(LUKE 10:30–37)

A. The Victim (v. 30)

30. In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

Rather than answering the scholar’s question directly, Jesus told a story. Like other Jewish teachers in his time, Jesus used a parable to explain a Scripture text—in this case, [Leviticus 19:18](#). Since the details of parables were true to life, we can increase our understanding of the parable by exploring the historical and cultural contexts supporting it.

Although Jesus’ audience likely assumed the opening character to have been a Jew, Jesus never specified his identity. The man remains anonymous throughout the story.

Since *Jerusalem* is about 2,500 feet above sea level and *Jericho* is about 800 feet below sea level, a traveler setting out from Jerusalem certainly would have gone *down* to Jericho. Winding its way through rocky desert, this 17-mile road was infamous for its danger. The caves along the way presented *robbers* with opportunities to ambush travelers.

Jesus focused on the violent mistreatment the man received at the hands of the robbers. They were not content to simply take *his clothes*; the robbers left him *half dead*. One would hope that these evildoers were

the only characters in the parable to show such callous disdain for human life.

B. Two Potential Heroes (vv. 31–32)

31–32. “A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

Priests, who were descendants of Levi and Aaron, served as God’s representatives to the people; Levites served as assistants to priests ([2 Chronicles 13:10](#)). So, why didn’t these servants of God serve the wounded man? Some speculate that they feared that whoever attacked the man was lurking nearby and might attack them as well. Or perhaps they feared becoming ritually unclean, and thus unable to fulfill their religious duties, by touching what appeared to be a dead body (see [Leviticus 21:1–4](#); [Numbers 5:2](#); etc.).

The latter argument has been countered by geography: to go *down* from Jerusalem indicated that they had completed their temple responsibilities and were heading home. In addition, the Jewish practice was to bury a dead person on the same day. This should have compelled both priest and Levite to investigate the victim’s status with regard to that requirement.

But before getting too deep into the weeds of speculative mind-reading, we remind ourselves that this is a fictional story—a parable to make a point. Since no motive is stated by Jesus, there is no motive

to be discerned. The characters of negligent priest and Levite serve as the stark backdrop to what comes next.



Visual for Lessons 6 & 7. Use this visual to discuss the overlap between enemies and neighbors. Ask the class if there is any overlap with friends as well.

C. One Actual Hero (vv. 33–35)

33. “But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

When the northern kingdom of Israel was exiled to Assyria centuries earlier, some Israelites were left behind. The intermarriage of these Israelites with the Gentiles who were brought into the land (see [2 Kings 17:24](#)) resulted in the population known as Samaritans.

The Samaritans accepted only the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy) and asserted that God must be worshipped on Mount Gerizim rather than Jerusalem (consider the question in [John 4:20](#)). The Jews in Jesus’ day despised the Samaritans and refused to associate with them ([4:9](#)). And of

course the feelings were mutual. Needless to say, a Samaritan would be the last person a Jew would expect to show *pity* to another Jew.

What Do You Think?

What has experience taught you about compassion that is *reactive* (sees a problem happen, then helps) versus *proactive* (anticipates a problem, then helps before it happens)?

Digging Deeper

In which type of compassion can you help your church improve most?

34. “He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

In stark contrast to the inactivity of the priest and the Levite, the Samaritan actively ministered to the needy man. Both Jews and Greeks appear to have used *wine* and *oil* widely for medicinal purposes. Wine would have been used to clean the man’s wounds, the alcohol having an antiseptic effect. Olive oil would ease the man’s pain. The Samaritan then *put the man on his own donkey*, which means he himself now had to walk. Inns were places of potential danger, not just for theft but also potentially murder. But from beginning to end, the Samaritan considered the *care* of the injured man of greater value than the risk involved.

What Do You Think?

inform your response?

If you saw a car broken down on the side of the road, would using a cell phone to call for assistance be the same as stopping to offer help personally? Why, or why not?

Digging Deeper

If stopping to help personally meant risking your own safety in the process, would you do it?

35. “The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

Some scholars estimate that *two denarii* would have been sufficient for two months of room and board in an inn. By entering into such an open-ended arrangement with *the innkeeper*, the Samaritan was running the risk of being a victim himself—of extortion. As Jonathan interceded with his father, King Saul, on David’s behalf (1 Samuel 19:1–7; see lesson 5), here the Samaritan interceded on the wounded man’s behalf. Both Jonathan and the Samaritan demonstrated faithful love—Jonathan in the context of an existing covenant and the Samaritan in his obvious regard for human life.

What Do You Think?

Under what circumstances is it better to help others through efforts of group ministries rather than personally?

Digging Deeper

How do the changing procedures of Acts 2:45; 4:32–35; 6:1–6; 1 Timothy 5:3–11

HOW UNEXPECTED!

The English language doesn’t have a word that completely captures the idea of an “unexpected hero,” such as we see in the case of the Good Samaritan. Various words have been proposed—words such as *antihero* and *picaro*—to only partial success. The problem is that those words and others bring with them nuances that may not apply to the unexpected hero who is under consideration. A *picaro*, for example, is a societal outcast, but that status is due to his or her own roguish behavior. The Good Samaritan was a societal outcast as well, but that status was due to no behavior of his own! Rather, it was an issue of bloodline.

Jesus used unexpected heroes in parables to challenge contemporary thinking. In addition to that of today’s text, we are drawn to the parables of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32), the shrewd manager (16:1–12), and a penitent tax collector (18:9–14). We have a choice when we read these: the unexpected hero in each can be a model for us or we can be the contrast to the unexpected hero in each. It’s our choice.

—J. E.

III. Directing
(LUKE 10:36–37)

A. Short Review (vv. 36–37a)

36. “Which of these three do you think

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

Having finished his parable, Jesus countered the law expert’s question with one of his own. The man had asked, “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). Jesus changed the question and shifted the focus to “Who acted like a neighbor?” In Jesus’ view, trying to identify whom one is called to love is an obvious attempt to relinquish responsibility. To do so is to reveal one’s motivation of trying to find ways to avoid obeying God rather than embracing the call to love as God loves.

37a. The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

The expert in the law cannot bring himself to say the word *Samaritan!* As a Jew, he couldn’t fathom the notion of a good Samaritan. But at least the man grasped the point of Jesus’ parable, recognizing the mercy and action that set the Samaritan apart from the priest and the Levite. Just as the law expert gave the right answer in the first exchange (Luke 10:27–28), so he answers correctly here. However, his refusal to name the Samaritan likely reveals that, in his heart, this man still considered some people neighbors and others unworthy of that relationship.

B. Lifetime Call (v. 37b)

37b. Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Here is Jesus’ final word (compare Luke 10:28). The lawyer appeared to be hoping

that he could limit his responsibility by being a neighbor to only a select few. With this profound parable, Jesus conveyed that rather than calculating who is a neighbor and who is not, the expert in the law should heed Jesus’ call to *be* a neighbor to whoever crosses his path.

This is the only reference to this man in the Bible. We don’t know how he responded to Jesus and the gospel later on. He heard Jesus’ message. Did he embrace it and act on it? Did he remember it whenever a foul joke was told about Samaritans or he encountered one on the road to Jericho?

Conclusion

A. Looking for a Loophole

By asking the question “Who is my neighbor?” the law expert in our lesson text was looking for a loophole—a loophole of being able to choose whom he was responsible to care about and care for. Surely God didn’t intend for him to love *all* people. Surely some people did not merit his time and resources.

What Do You Think?

Case study: Your next-door neighbor, who is a single mother, calls you from jail asking you to post her \$5,000 bond. You have the money, but discover that that’s only the 10 percent cash portion required. The other 90 percent must come from the court’s putting a lien on your house. What do you do?

“How can I be a neighbor?”

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with [NIV Bible Student](#) (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the [NIV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition](#)).

Into the Lesson

Write this question on the board:

On a scale from 1 (very easy) to 10 (almost impossible), how difficult is it for two people from very different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds to develop a neighborly relationship? Why?

Have learners work in groups of three to wrestle with this question. After a few minutes, reconvene for whole-class discussion of results. Explore issues of differences in wealth, race, age, gender, religion, etc., that can interfere with a neighborly relationship.

Begin a transition by asking two questions (if participants have not already done so):

- 1—What definition of *neighborly* did the groups work from to reach their conclusions?
- 2—At what point does wrestling with the definition cross the line from being useful to being hair-splitting and legalistic?

Use learner responses to the second question to complete the transition to the next segment. (Allow responses to the first ques-

Like the law expert, we can be guilty of looking for a loophole. When we hear the Bible’s teaching about loving our neighbors as ourselves, we can grasp the meaning in principle that we are to love and serve people everywhere in need. But it’s tempting to embrace that as a theoretical concept in a way that leads to no tangible action. Or we can be tempted to care for those neighbors who look like us, speak like us, or share our social status, and we fail to care for those who are different. How could Jesus possibly mean that *every single person* is someone we should strive to love?

Jesus’ parable leaves no room for self-justification. If we are looking for a way out of loving that person who is too difficult, or in too much trouble, or frankly probably wouldn’t help us if the tables were turned, then we betray our hearts that do not love as God loves. Instead of looking for loopholes, let us search for opportunities to use what God has given us to bless *all* our neighbors.

B. Prayer

Thank you, Father, for giving us the great commandment for your glory and our fulfillment. We want to love you with all that is within us. And we want to love our neighbors—whomever you place before us—in the same way we love ourselves. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

Good Samaritans ask,

tion before posing the second—don't ask both in the same breath.)

Into the Word

Have four volunteers read the text of [Luke 10:25–37](#) aloud: one each as narrator, Jesus, the law expert, and the Samaritan. After the reading, ask participants to close their Bibles as you distribute 15 index cards you have prepared in advance, each card having one of the following 15 statements:

- 2—I attacked people;
- 3—I knew the law of God;
- 4—I said to love God with one's entire being;
- 5—I told him do similar;
- 6—I was not willing to become unclean;
- 7—I selflessly served a stranger;
- 8—I robbed him of everything valuable;
- 9—I thought no one was going to help me;
- 10—I saw an injured man, but I passed on by;
- 11—I knew I needed to bandage his wounds;
- 12—I wanted to know the definition of *neighbor*;
- 13—I put the injured man on my donkey;
- 14—I tossed the lawyer's question back to him;
- 15—I was left half dead.

After distributing the cards as evenly as possible, write these possible answers on the board:

Lawyer / Victim / Robber / Priest / Levite /

Jesus / The Samaritan

Going in numerical or randomized order (your option), have the learner with the card in question read aloud what is on it, followed by the question “Who am I?” Repeat for all cards, pausing each time to allow a different participant to answer. Before beginning, however, offer these two ground rules: (1) some cards can take more than one answer and (2) no one is allowed to give a second answer until everyone has given a first answer. Finish by leading the class in a discussion of insights gained.

Into Life

Ask students to identify patterns of values that can make it challenging to overcome biased thinking in terms of whom we will help and whom we won't. (*Option.* Precede this discussion by distributing copies of the exercise “Your Actions: A Case Study” from the activity page, which you can download. Have class members work in groups of three to process the variables as indicated.)

Close with a minute of silence during which time learners write to themselves the challenge of one change they are willing to make in order to serve others as Christ would have them. (*Option.* Enhance this segment by distributing copies of the exercise “More Compassion, Less Rationalizing” from the activity page. Have learners complete it during the closing minute of silence, then take it home for further reflection.)

To print the reproducible activity page, simply click the highlighted text below to create a pdf file on your hard drive. Then open the pdf file in Acrobat Reader and print.

Activity Page (October 18: Love for Neighbors)

LOVE FOR NEIGHBORS

Lesson 7, Luke 10:25-37, NIV

YOUR ACTIONS: A CASE STUDY

You are driving along an interstate when you notice a car pulled over to the shoulder with its hood up and four-way flashers on. You realize you have at least three options:

- You can stop and offer help
- You can use your cell phone to call for help while you keep driving
- You can ignore the situation

What difference, if any, would these variables make in your decision?

- Time of day: light vs. dark
- Appearance of the driver: scruffy vs. well-dressed
- Location: desolate vs. well-traveled
- Passenger(s) in your car
- State of the weather
- Type of car, its age, condition, and bumper stickers

MORE COMPASSION, LESS RATIONALIZING

From Jesus' story—

A surprising insight for me is . . .

One way I plan to be less like the lawyer, less rationalizing, is by . . .

One way I plan to be more like the Samaritan, more compassionate, is . . .

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