

Wednesday "Messy People"
Who's my neighbor?

[Luke 10:25-37](#)

"All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." Tertullian, an early church theologian, boasted in one of his works that this statement of Jesus had become a fact. Even their enemies, writes Tertullian, marveled, saying, "Look how they love one another." But unfortunately the church has not always been marked by compassion and self-sacrifice. Far too often we speak of love but fail to back our words with deeds of kindness and mercy. We need to drink deeply from the simple but profound message of the story of the good Samaritan. Its familiarity has so weakened its impact that it is seen as an exception rather than the norm for the citizens of the kingdom of God. As you read this passage, imagine that you are hearing it from Jesus himself for the first time.

1. Think of a Christian you consider compassionate. What stands out to you about that person?
2. Read [Luke 10:25-37](#). What do you learn in [Luke 10:25-29](#) about the expert in the law?

In particular, what does his reply to Jesus in [Luke 10:27](#) suggest about his knowledge of Scripture?

3. The expert in the law quotes from [Deut. 6:5](#) and [Leviticus 19:18](#). How do these two commands summarize the essence of what God desires in our lives?
4. In reply to the question "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus tells a story ([Luke 10:30-35](#)). Reread this story using these modern day words:

An innocent man was traveling down the road when he was attacked by thieves. They stripped him (of his dignity), beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. By chance a local preacher came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A woman in charge of the church prayer team and a part of the deacon's council walked over and looked at him lying there, but she also passed by on the other side. Then a despised half-breed Christian (you know the type- the ones who "belong to that OTHER denomination across town. Who call themselves 'christians' but live way different than you and I") came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the worldly half-breed Christian helped the innocent man by cleaning his wounds and then putting the man into his car and taking him to a local hospital where he would receive the proper care. He paid the hospital fee and gave his address for any future bills his stay might incur. "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the innocent man attacked by thieves?" Jesus asked.

5. Suggest possible reasons why the priests and Levites (the church leaders) may have passed by on the other side.

What are some ways we tend to pass by those in need?

6. Considering the racial and religious tensions that existed between Jews and Samaritans, why is the response of the Samaritan (the half-breed Christian) particularly surprising?

7. How do you react to people who are hurting who are different than you? Do you get involved or do you “pass them by” and hope someone else will help them out?

8. In what ways does “prejudice” often keep us from interacting with and helping “messy people”?

9. How did this story challenge and confront the Lawyer’s self-righteous attitude about how well he kept the commandments? How did this story challenge the Lawyer’s understanding of WHO he was required to love? Who is Jesus telling us our “neighbor” is?

10. What things keep you from not only seeing but also acting in response to the needs of those around you?

How can you begin to be more of a neighbor to these people?

LifeGuide Topical Bible Studies - Christian Character.