

What is Love Part V: Know Your Neighbor, Love Your Neighbor

1. Overview of our series –
 - a. We learned to identify REAL love as defined by God and not just by what we want it to be.
 - b. We learned what false love is (lust, manipulation, worldly love)
 - c. We have seen that performance, (trying to earn love) is useless.
 - d. Today, we will learn not just what it means to “Love your neighbor” but also practical ways to do so.
2. Luke 10:25-37
 - a. *25 One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?" 26 Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" 27 The man answered, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind." And, "Love your neighbor as yourself." 28 "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!" 29 The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*
 - b. *30 Jesus replied with an illustration: "A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes and money, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. 31 "By chance a Jewish priest came along; but when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. 32 A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. 33 "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt deep pity. 34 Kneeling beside him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with medicine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two pieces of silver and told him to take care of the man. 'If his bill runs higher than that,' he said, 'I'll pay the difference the next time I am here.'*
 - c. *36 "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. 37 The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."*
3. Retell the story –
 - a. Jesus places his story on a notorious road that ran between Jerusalem and Jericho known for its crime rate. He tells of a Jewish man who is attacked, stripped, robbed and beaten and left for dead along side the road. He tells us “by chance,” “by coincidence” or “by accident” a Jewish priest came along.
 - i. I wondered why Jesus used this word for “coincidence or accident” in this story and found the answer is in WHO came upon the man.
 - ii. You see, any person could have come upon the man but in this case, the first person to come upon him is a Priest. Just by chance (if you believe in such a thing) a priest is the first person to come across this man in need.
 1. Now I don’t want to explain the entire story right yet, but you need to realize that if you are the first person on an accident scene, if you there is a car crash in your

front yard, if you happen to be the first person to come across someone in need, you must realize that there is no such thing as a coincidence in God's plan.

2. In fact, you most likely will be God's answer to someone's need or prayer.
 - a. (Illust. Of the haircut in seminary story from SEC)
 - iii. The story tells us that this priest passes up this divine appointment and makes sure that he isn't contaminated by the apparently dead or soon to die.
 1. There is an undertone, a subplot in this story about religiosity. While the priest was commanded by law to help someone in need or to bury a corpse if he came across it, he also knew that if he touched a dead man that he would be unclean and unable to serve in the temple for several days. In other words, he couldn't go to church and be with his friends and "WORSHIP" God.
 2. A mistake we often make is thinking that we could fulfill the commandment to love God with all we have and not fulfill the command to love our neighbor.
 - a. If someone says, *"I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.* (1 John 4:20-21)
 3. Do you see the hypocrisy in this? It would be like passing up someone in need on your way to church because you didn't want to miss worship services. It would be like Debbie & Lynn passing by a person who had a flat on Sunday morning because they didn't want to get their clothes dirty and thereby not be able to lead us in worship.
 - iv. The story goes on to tell us about a Temple Assistant or a Levite doing the exact same thing. His motives may have been the same as the Priest's. Or he may have been afraid of getting robbed himself. I will cover some of their possible excuses in a few minutes, but the bottom line is that they rejected this divine appointment in favor of self.
 1. Remember our **definition of lust or self-love: "meeting my needs at the expense of someone else"**
 - a. We can choose our own agenda over the inconvenience of helping someone else. That costs the other so we can make our schedule?
 2. Contrast with the **definition of love..."meeting someone else's needs at my own expense"**
 - v. The story climaxes with the encounter of a hated Samaritan, a heretic as far as the Jews were concerned, who sees this person in need, and takes care of him at his own expense.
 - vi. When Jesus asks the lawyer "who was the neighbor" the lawyer had to sheepishly admit it was the "one who showed him mercy" even though he couldn't bring himself to say the word "Samaritan."
4. I would like to examine several **Elements of Loving Your Neighbor**
 - a. **Seeing** (Greek word: perceives, knows or becomes acquainted with).

- i. All three of these people SAW and understood what they saw. I wonder if the first two did what they could so that they wouldn't have to RECOGNIZE what they saw.
- ii. Do you avert your eyes from a person's needs? I have.
 1. I am embarrassed to share this story of when a beat up car pulled up in the parking lot a month or so ago and a woman stepped out I closed my office door so that my secretary would handle it. But as I heard the conversation outside my door, the tears and the sorrow, I opened my door and we led this woman to Christ. I didn't want to be "bothered" by the need. Thank God He got through my thick head and heart to hear the need anyway.
- iii. I read a statistic this week that said that America has lost the concept of neighborhood because of a trend called "cocooning" that leads us to build fences and retreat behind the safety and isolation of the walls of our homes. The statistic said that the typical American knows less than 3 neighbors well enough to have a meaningful conversation about their dreams, hurts, needs or desires.
 1. Do you think that it is an accident that you live in the neighborhood you live in?
 2. Do you think that because you do not "know" your neighbor that it excludes you from the need to love them?
 3. We must be willing to look deeply into their lives, to get to know them sufficiently so as to know their needs and be able to converse with them because of our intimate familiarity with them.
 4. Don't refuse to see, don't refuse to get to know – take advantage of the opportunities, the "coincidences" that God has given you!
 5. You cannot love who you do not take the time to know.

b. **Feeling**

- i. Looking and seeing and even knowing a person is not enough.
- ii. The Jewish priest & the Temple Assistant saw this man in need.
 1. They may have even known him.
 2. But something (which we will talk about in a few minutes) kept him from FEELING something for the man in need.
- iii. "I don't know him" often becomes our EXCUSE for not having to love.
- iv. *33 "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt deep pity.*
 1. The word that describes what the Samaritan felt after seeing the man in need is translated compassion or pity.
 2. The Greek word used here– Splagchnizomai -to be moved as to one's spleen or bowels, the bowels were regarded as the seat of the passions, and the seat of the tender affections such as kindness, benevolence, compassion.
 3. This sounds like what happens after you eat Mexican Food at Taco Bell.
 4. But it isn't. It is more like how your stomach, your heart feels after looking at the photo of a child born with a cleft palette in a magazine.
 5. It tears you up so much that you want to do something about it!

- v. Don't avoid feeling something.

c. Risking

- i. What is risk? Risk is a function of a perceived cost or gain weighed against the probability of occurrence.
 - 1. It carries with it a possibility of incurring loss or misfortune.
 - 2. We all evaluate risk every day. We control our speed, we decide when to pass and when not to pass a car on a two way street.
- ii. When did you last do something bold?
 - 1. (I went whitewater rafting 3 years ago).
- iii. The alternative to not taking risks can be like the sign along the Alaskan (ALCAN) Highway that reads, "Choose your rut carefully, you'll be in it for the next 200 miles."
 - 1. A lot of folks live their lives like that sign. Especially the spiritual dimension of their lives.
- iv. The Samaritan goes to the side of the road, the ditch if you want to call it that, where the sunlight doesn't really shine, near the bushes and brambles that line the road where more robbers and muggers might be hiding to pull this beaten man to safety.
 - 1. Why does he do this? Does he just ignore the risks or does his compassion cause him to evaluate the risks and overrule the fears associated with them?
- v. What causes a person to dive into a burning car to free the accident victims from the flames when the risk of explosion is imminent?
 - 1. We call actions like that heroic.
 - 2. What causes a person to overcome their fear of meeting their neighbors and to knock on their doors?
 - 3. **What do you fear? What risks come between you and meeting someone's need?**
- vi. I don't think I am guilt sticking you here, but I dare to stretch you out of your comfort zone. If you are willing to stay where you are then you may be missing what God is doing!

d. Sacrificing

- i. The expert in the Law wanted to justify himself (that is look good) so he asked Jesus "And who is my neighbor?" In other words, "To whom do I owe this kind of love?"
 - 1. The Jews split hairs over this question and excluded from "neighbor" Gentiles and especially Samaritans.
 - 2. So here was his loop-hole. A neighbor to the Jews was what they called "a near dweller," but the Jews made racial exceptions.
 - 3. Lawyers then were no different then than they are now.
 - 4. They argue about the finest points of laws so as to find the gray area that exempts someone.
- ii. We are like this too.

iii. **We all are looking for a loop hole when it comes to sacrifice because sacrifice and love are incredibly uncomfortable.**

1. We too say, but Lord, “my neighbors don’t have any needs I can meet.”
2. Because we don’t know their needs of course – because we have no relationship with them that would earn us the right to learn their needs
3. (oh insulation is a comfortable thing!).
4. In fact, facing the possibility of sacrifice, causes people to make excuses, not unlike the Lawyer who was looking for the loop hole. Here are a few excuses anyone could have used in their position:
 - a. “its his own fault that he was mugged, he should have known this road was dangerous (or not have traveled alone in the dark.)
 - b. "This road is too dangerous for me to stop and help the man."
 - c. "He might be a decoy for an ambush."
 - d. "I've got to get to the temple and perform my service for the Lord."
 - e. "Someone really should help that man."
 - f. "If I'm going to serve at the temple I can't get my clothes bloody."
 - g. "I don't know first aid."
 - h. "It's a hopeless case."
 - i. "I'm only one person; the job is too big."
 - j. "I can pray for him."
 - k. "He never asked for help"
5. These are simply excuses. "*I never knew a man refuse to help the poor who failed to give at least one admirable excuse.*" (Spurgeon)

iv. **What did it cost the Samaritan?** How did he show sacrificial love?

1. Instead of passing by, the Samaritan loved him with a sacrificial love.
2. He didn't wait to be asked, for to see the need right in front of him was enough to compel him to action.
3. He gave freely of both his time and his resources.
4. To set him on his own animal means that the Samaritan himself walked
5. He takes him to an inn, cares for him long enough for him to be out of danger, pays for his expenses, (two days wages...how many of you would sacrifice two days wages?) and promises to pay for any further expenses sacrificially out of his own pocket.

v. **Loving your neighbor will require sacrificial action.**

1. It will cost you something. Time, money, convenience, pride, comfort, discomfort, pain in coming out of your shyness.

5. **Who is your neighbor?** (question asked of Jesus with the implication of “what is your responsibility to him?”)

- a. We don’t know our neighbors, and we don’t really know how to get to know them.

- b. Most of us as Christians are more likely to drive hundreds of miles to go on a mission trip than to minister to our neighbors.
 - i. Most Christians would rather try to fulfill this commandment with anyone OTHER than their own neighborhood.
 - ii. We would do a backyard bible club, a bible study at work, or go on a mission trip to Guatemala before we would reach out to a neighbor a few doors down that we don't know.
 - iii. We think of Outreach, which implies we're in and their out, as an obligation. We target them for something, like the gospel, and then we move on.
- c. Remember the definition of *Cardiac Christianity last week? It burns in our heart and is in it for the long haul.*
 - i. *Adrenaline Christianity is event driven and short term in nature.* It doesn't require love to do, just a short burst of energy.

ii. We have far too much adrenaline Christianity in our culture and not near enough Cardiac Christianity.

- d. Jesus really never answers the message "who is your neighbor?" that is, who do you owe love to.
 - i. Instead he responds with what it means to "be a neighbor."
 - ii. **Love is a verb.** The Jews got caught up on definitions and missed the entire commandment. They wanted to analyze who was a neighbor...did they live no more than ¼ mile from you? Were they white like us? (if they didn't fit the criteria, they weren't their neighbors.)
 - iii. But Jesus twists the question around. He wants us to realize that it isn't "who our neighbor is" but who we will be a neighbor to.
 - iv. *36 "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. 37 The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."*
 - v. Jesus tells him if he wants to fulfill this commandment, he must BE A NEIGHBOR and stop making excuses.

6. Steps to BEING a neighbor:

a. Stop making excuses

- i. Remember our list of excuses we had earlier? What are some we have about our neighborhood?
 - 1. I don't know them, or they don't seem approachable.
 - 2. They don't seem interested.
 - 3. I pray for them sometimes.
 - 4. They never ask me for help.
 - 5. They might take advantage of me.
 - 6. We have different interests, they like beer and I don't.
 - 7. I don't really have time.
 - 8. I am shy, I don't meet people very well, and I don't know how to talk to strangers.

b. **Get involved in others lives**

- i. We get involved in others lives through **intentionally** making choices that will allow us to encounter them.
- ii. The Deacons and I have a TOOL that will help you do this.
 1. But you will have to come back tonight to hear more about it.
 2. Let me simply say that it will revolutionize your relationships, your neighborhood and the way that you are used by God.
3. If you don't come back tonight to hear more, then I have to assume that you aren't willing to take the risks, or to make the sacrifices to love your neighbor.
4. You cannot love them if you don't know them, and you certainly won't have compassion upon them as long as you don't know them. You can't pray for needs you don't know about.
- iii. There is a yellow bulletin insert in your bulletin that describes this. There is a brochure you can pick up on your way out to find out more information. And tonight we will listen to a tape and a testimony and answer questions.

c. **Begin to live sacrificially**

- i. Put others needs ahead of your own.
 - ii. *Love meets the greatest need and pays the greatest cost.*
 - iii. Are you willing to take up your cross and follow Jesus?
7. We SAY we love our neighbor, but if it all ended today, our neighbors would go to hell and would our excuse be... "I didn't know them" or "I didn't know they were lost."?
8. Some of you may remember the Rock Opera "Tommy" about a deaf dumb and blind kid who is a pinball wizard. There is a very moving moment in one of the songs that tugs on the heart of every person who listens to the song or watches the opera. It is the line that screams out "*See me, feel me, touch me, heal me, heal me, heal me.*"
- a. Folks that is the cry of our neighbors. It is the cry of our world. They are crying out for Jesus and we have Him. They need to get to know us so they can get to know Him.
- b. Let's pray.