



Who is my neighbour?

Luke 10, Matthew 25 – Leaders version

For a one hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

What does the passage say and mean?

90 minutes

*1. **STICKERS** Who do you think is your neighbour?

Read out the answers but don't comment on them.

2. **SHOUT-OUT** How do you think you should treat your neighbour?

Write their answers on the flip-chart, but don't comment on them.

Then explain that we are going to look at Jesus' definition of 'neighbour' and think about how that should affects our definition.

3. Read Luke 9:51-56. What impression do you get of how Samaritans felt about Jews and how Jews felt about Samaritans in Jesus' time?

Samaritans were hostile to Jews, v53, and Jesus' disciples (Jews) were eager to call down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans (v54)!

Explain that there was history between these two groups of people – long ago they were one nation, but about 400 years before Jesus' time, they all came back to Israel from other countries, and the people who had been one nation split into two. The New Testament Samaritans lived in the North of Israel and the Jews in the South. The Jews said that only they were the true followers of God. The Samaritans did not read the whole OT, so knew little of God (NIVSB 1993, p1569 John 4:22 footnotes). The two races didn't mix and were hostile to each other.

*4. Read Luke 10:25-28. Why does this expert in the law ask Jesus a question?

To test him. He's either trying to work out Jesus' understanding of the law (OT) or deliberately trying to trip him up on a point of law in order to discredit him (and presumably make himself look good in the process...).

*5. Jesus points the expert in the law back to the Law (Old Testament). How does the expert summarise the Law?

'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 neighbour as yourself.' Jesus sums up the Law in exactly the same way in Mark 12:29-31. NB Law = 10 C's, not UK law.

6. Jesus tells him he's right and to go away and get on with it. What's the problem? (v29)

The man wants to justify himself – to defend or validate himself. So he asks another question, 'And who is my neighbour?' Is he trying to clarify exactly who Jesus expects him to help?

*7. What do you think he imagines Jesus is going to say? (v29-30)

Your neighbour is... Other experts in the law? Other people of good social standing? People who are rich and influential? People you like? People who smell nice and have had a bath recently?

Questions 8-10 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. You need to write them on flip-chart sheets for the group to work on in pairs.

*8. **SDL** Read Luke 10:30-35. The first person to come along is a priest. What does he do and does this surprise you?

Note, this is a parable, not a historical event. Jesus has a point to make. We don't know who the man is who is beaten up – his identity obviously doesn't matter.

The priest walks by on the other side of the road. Maybe he's ceremonially clean and can't touch a sick / dead person. Even if he wasn't, touching a dead person would make him unclean and there seems to be a dead person on the side of the road.

*9. **SDL** What about the second person to come down the road? What does he do?

A Levite, another religious person, also walks past on the other side of the road. We would expect religious people to do something to help, but both of these have done nothing – they haven't even gone for help.

*10. **SDL** Who does help and how much help does he give?

A Samaritan (travelling in enemy territory, v30). He doesn't do the minimum required, he does everything – he treats the man's wounds, puts him on his donkey, takes him to an inn, cares for him and covers his costs!

11. Why do you think Jesus chose this person to be the rescuer in his story?

The last person the expert in the law is expecting Jesus to have as the hero is a Samaritan because he knows what Jews think of Samaritans, and most Jews wouldn't help a Samaritan who was lying on the side of the road.

*12. In v36, Jesus asks the expert in the Law which of the three men was a neighbour to the man in the road. What does the expert in the law say in v37 and how do you think he feels about the point Jesus is making?

It seems he can't bring himself to say 'The Samaritan', so he says, 'The one who had mercy on him'. He understood Jesus' point but was so horrified by it that he couldn't say it!

If you're only doing the starred questions, you need to explain about the relationship between Jews and Samaritans, see the answer to Q3.

Explain that Jesus tells him to 'Go and do likewise.', v38. This would have been a shocking thing to hear!

*13. Back to our original question, who does Jesus say is your neighbour?

Everyone. However we feel about them, whatever they have done, wherever they are.

14. Why do you think Jesus has such a big definition of neighbour?

Let the group discuss. If they are stuck, ask them what would be the problem if his definition of neighbour was narrowed down to e.g. people from your country, people who speak your language, people you like etc.

? How does Jesus' definition of neighbour change things for you?

Let the group think this through together – there may be individuals or groups that they are struggling to identify as neighbours.

*15. Read Matthew 25:35-40. What does Jesus say here about loving our neighbour?

He says that when we care for others, in this instance particularly those in need, we are caring for him. Our love for them is a demonstration of our love for him.

16. **SHOUT-OUT** In what ways do you think Jesus expects us to love our neighbour?

Make sure the list includes forgiveness, compassion, help, justice etc.

? In what ways can you put this into practice this week?

Encourage the group to think of concrete examples of new ways of loving their neighbours, or people that they didn't consider to be neighbours before.

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