

# The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37



## The Lawyer's Question

- ❑ On one occasion, an expert in the law<sup>1</sup> asked Jesus a question. Read Luke 10:25-28.
  1. The lawyer asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (10:25)<sup>2</sup> How does Jesus respond?<sup>3</sup> Why do you think Jesus responds this way?
  
- ❑ The lawyer 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’ (10:27).<sup>4</sup>
  - We are to love God with our whole being. We are to be devoted to God, and delight in Him above all else. And if we truly love God, we will also love others (1 John 4:20-21).
- ❑ Jesus replied to the lawyer, “You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live” (10:28).
  2. Is Jesus saying we can earn eternal life by “doing” something? How do the commands to love relate to the gospel (good news of Jesus Christ) and faith?<sup>5</sup>

## The Lawyer's Question (Round 2)<sup>6</sup>

- ❑ After Jesus replied, “Do this (that is, ‘love God with all your being, and love your neighbor’), the lawyer asked a second question. He asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (10:29)
  3. Why do you think the lawyer asks this question?<sup>7</sup>



<sup>1</sup> “expert in the law” (*nomikos*) – lawyer; educated in Jewish law, including the written law of Moses (Scripture) and oral law. Lawyers studied, interpreted, and taught the law; and applied their interpretations to life and judicial cases.

<sup>2</sup> The lawyer wanted to “test” Jesus – either to test his knowledge or possibly to challenge or trap him. In this context, “eternal life” (*zōēn aiōnion*) refers to the blessings of the righteous in the future kingdom (less precisely “heaven”).

<sup>3</sup> Jesus points the lawyer to the Law (God’s written revelation), which is their shared source of authority. Of course, anyone who asks such questions should be pointed to God’s written revelation – the Bible.

<sup>4</sup> The lawyer quotes from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Deut 6:5 is part of *the Shema* (Deut 6:4-9), which devout Jews recited at least twice a day (in morning and evening prayers). Also see Matt. 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-31.

<sup>5</sup> We cannot earn eternal life. It is a gift of God’s grace received through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). What we “do” is believe the gospel and trust in Christ for salvation. However, love is central to true faith. The offer of eternal life is based on God’s love (John 3:16), and love is essential to true faith (1 John 4:7-8; 1 Cor. 8:3; Gal. 5:6; James 1:12). Eternal life is found only in Christ, who loved us and died for us (Eph. 5:1-2). Eternal life is realized only in a loving relationship with God.

<sup>6</sup> This passage involves two rounds of questioning. After the lawyer asks a question to Jesus (10:25, 29), Jesus asks a question to the lawyer (10:26, 36). After the lawyer answers Jesus’ question (10:27, 37), Jesus finally responds to the lawyer’s initial question (10:28, 37). In both rounds, Jesus’ final response demands action on the part of the lawyer.

<sup>7</sup> The lawyer wants “to justify himself.” He realizes that Jesus has just guided him to answer his own question. He wants to regain control by asking him another question. At the same time, the lawyer wants to excuse himself from loving some people by defining “neighbor” in a narrow sense. Jews commonly excluded Samaritans and foreigners from the category of “neighbor” (*plēsion* – “one who is near”). In Lev. 19:18, “your neighbor” appears to be “one of your people.” However, Lev. 19:33-34 says, “When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living among you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt” (NIV).

## Jesus' Response: The Good Samaritan

- ❑ Rather than directly answering the lawyer's question, Jesus replied with a parable. Read Luke 10:29-37. There are four characters in the parable (excluding the innkeeper):
- † Man in need – Victim of robbers; stripped, beaten, and left “half-dead” by the side of the road.<sup>8</sup> His ethnicity is not identified.
  - † Priest – Minister in the Jewish temple. He would be considered a very religious man.
  - † Levite – Worker in the Jewish temple. He could be thought of as a priest's assistant.
  - † Samaritan – A man from Samaria. Jews generally despised Samaritans, who were considered impure half-breeds with a corrupted religion.<sup>9</sup>
4. Describe the actions (or inactions) of the priest and Levite. What can we say about them?<sup>10</sup>
5. The Samaritan “took pity” on the man in need. In what ways (and to what extent) does the Samaritan show compassion to the man in need?<sup>11</sup>



## Jesus' Question

- ❑ Read Luke 10:36. Jesus turned the lawyer's question around. Instead of defining our neighbors (limiting whom we may or may not serve), we are to *be* a neighbor (serving where there is need). As T.W. Manson said, “love does not begin by defining its objects: it discovers them.”<sup>12</sup>
- ❑ In response to Jesus' question, the lawyer had to answer, “The one who had mercy on him” (10:37a). So Jesus told the lawyer, and he tells us today, “Go and do likewise” (10:37b).
6. What lessons can we learn from the parable of the Good Samaritan?<sup>13</sup>
7. What are some specific ways we can be a neighbor to those in need?<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The road “from Jerusalem to Jericho” descended about 1,040 meters (3,400 feet) over a distance of 27 km (17 miles). Much of it was rocky, providing good hiding places for robbers. Robbery was common on this road.

<sup>9</sup> When the Assyrians captured Samaria in 722 BC, they deported all Israelites of substance, and settled the land with foreigners (2 Kings 17:23-24). These foreigners intermarried with the surviving Israelites, resulting in a mixed religion. When the Jews returned from exile, they refused the Samaritan's help in rebuilding the temple. In about 400 BC, the Samaritans built their own temple on Mt. Gerizim, but the Jews later destroyed it. Thus they despised one another.

<sup>10</sup> Many people have attempted to identify the reasons for their lack of helpfulness. Reasons might include: risk of becoming ceremonially unclean (in case the man was dead); reluctance to help a sinner; or fear of also being robbed. However, their reasons are not given in the text. The main point is this: They avoided helping the man in need.

<sup>11</sup> The Samaritan 1) went to him and administered first aid; 2) transported him on his own animal to an inn; 3) took care of him (staying overnight); and 4) paid for his lodging and care, and promised to return and cover the full expenses. He gave of himself, and took risks in doing these things (especially if the victim was a Jew).

<sup>12</sup> *The Sayings of Jesus as Recorded in the Gospels According to St. Matthew and St. Luke* (London: SCM, 1949), 261.

<sup>13</sup> God's children are called to love others. This love is characterized by compassion for those in need, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, social standing, etc. True compassion results in action. Of course, the needs around us can be overwhelming. We cannot give ourselves to every need we see or hear about. However, we should be sensitive to needs, and be truly willing to help as the Holy Spirit leads. This attitude (and behavior) requires a heart of humility, faith, and love. The desire and ability to love (as God commands) comes from God through abiding faith in Jesus Christ.

<sup>14</sup> Besides the needs that we encounter unexpectedly, think of Christian ministries that help the needy.