

Jacob's Well**Lesson Title:** Stories from the Savior—The Good Samaritan**Key Concept:** Jesus often spoke in parables, stories with both spiritual insights and practical applications. The parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates that loving your neighbor as yourself emulates God's compassion and mercy.**Scriptures:**

²⁵One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" ²⁷The 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!" ²⁹The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"
(Luke 10:25–29 *New Living Translation*)

Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.
(Matthew 7:12 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Luke 10:25–37; Leviticus 19:18, 33–34; 21:1; 2 Kings 17:24–41**Lesson Thoughts:**

The parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates so clearly what loving one's neighbor means that it is impossible to miss the point. When faced with a religious lawyer who was trying to test him, Jesus told this story and chose a Samaritan as the hero, and a priest and a Levite as the unheroic characters. To first-century Jews, this would seem backwards because the Samaritans were the despised enemies, while the priests and Levites were the respected religious leadership. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans socially, religiously, or culturally. Samaritans were low class, outcasts. In contrast, the priests and the Levites were symbols of the Jewish faith as holy men of God and temple keepers.

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So, when the priest and the Levite encountered the half-dead man and crossed the street to avoid him, the audience hearing Jesus' story might have thought that was an expected response. They were just observing the laws of purity and holiness to keep themselves clean and undefiled for temple duties. It was possible to justify that they "passed by" the injured man because they were keeping the law. Then the story took a twist. A Samaritan came along, saw the injured man, and approached him. With compassion, he tended to the man's wounds, put him on his donkey, brought him to an inn, and paid for the cost of his care with a promise to reimburse the innkeeper for any additional expenses.

Jesus set up the story so that the lawyer was forced to answer his own questions, "What should I do to inherit eternal life?" and "Who is my neighbor?" That is, the one who fulfilled the requirements of eternal life and the one who was a neighbor to the injured man was the despised Samaritan. There was no social, religious, cultural, racial, status, or other bias that caused the Samaritan to consider if the man was deserving of mercy. Instead, he acted with unconditional love by taking care of the man in need. Jesus instructed the lawyer to "go and do the same."

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a universal lesson on obeying the law of God. We achieve this not by merely following religious habits, but by emulating God's central characteristics of holiness and mercy. This parable calls us to examine and properly align our religious practices with the attitude of God.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Who is your neighbor? What is your biblical responsibility toward your neighbor?
- 2) How would you extend unconditional love to your enemy? Would you receive help from someone you didn't like? Why or why not?
- 3) How can our faith convictions and practices keep us from helping others?
- 4) How can helping your neighbor transform you?

Next Lesson: The Unforgiving Servant

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Notes and Reflections

- 1) Read 2 Kings 17:24–41 for a little background on the conflict between the Jews and Samaritans.
- 2) Do a slow read of the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37. Think about the role of each character in the story: the half-dead Jew, the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan. Was there a time when you were the injured person? Who helped you? Who passed you by? Was there a time when you were the priest or the Levite? Did you justify avoiding a person in need? Was there a time when you were the Samaritan? Who did you approach? How did you offer help? What changes are needed to show mercy and love to your neighbor as modeled in this parable?

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Notes and Reflections, cont.