

## Challenge How You Love Others

### “Practice What Jesus REALLY Preached”

#### Luke 10:25-37 (New International Version)

### CONSIDER

As we prepare to discuss the scripture today, we acknowledge that some may be confused by some of the religious undertones in the text.

In this passage, one of the main characters is the expert of the law. This expert is not a lawyer as we understand today. He is instead a knowledgeable religious person. The law identified in the text is a reference to the Old Testament Law of Moses (Leviticus 26:46, Joshua 8:30-35).

The Samaritans were a people rejected by the Jews of the New Testament. Some theologians understand them to be the descendants of the Northern Kingdom from the Old Testament, who were exiled and destroyed by the Assyrians in 722BC. While the Southern Kingdom worshiped in their capital city in Jerusalem, the Northern Kingdom worshipped in their capital city in Samaria (1 Kings 16:24), thereby potentially bringing forth the New Testament Samaritans. Others understand them to be racially Jew and Gentile mixed people who were descendants of the Israelites left behind after the Assyrian exile (2 Kings 17:24-40). Though connected to the Jews by family origin, the Samaritans were despised by the Jews, and the Jewish people were told to avoid them at all costs. To make matters worse, the Samaritans defiled the Jewish temple court on one Jewish Passover, which sealed the hostility between the two.

**Discuss why you believe Jesus would choose a dishonorable person who society looks down upon to do a noble act.**

Religion is about having information, but Jesus is calling out not being able to apply that information. Heart knowledge is necessary to live out what God desires, not only head knowledge. The Samaritan shows us what it means to understand to the point of application. Compassion, which religion often lacks, is necessary to move us from sympathy to empathy. Empathy is not just feeling sorry for someone. It is willingly placing yourself in someone's situation and thinking about how you would want others to respond. Compassion also deals with the actual felt pain. Religion often knows the right things to say and not the right things to do. Thus, one must go beyond just praying for someone or encouraging them with a scripture. They must recognize the obvious problems and bring aid to their wounds.

**Share ways you have seen religious people (church folks, campus ministries, etc.) ignoring obvious hurt, pain, and suffering, instead of bringing the healing expected by the sufferer.**

*Religious hurt prevents many from seeing the beauty of Jesus's desire for all to receive and experience His love and mercy. When questioned about who one should treat as his neighbor, Jesus used the story of a marginalized and rejected person as the symbol of what it means to truly live out His desires for His followers. We invite you to enter into the text with an honest awareness of who you may be in the story, and open yourself to receive the mercy extended to both the religious leader and the man who was beaten.*

## READ

<sup>25</sup> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>26</sup> “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” <sup>27</sup> He 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.’” <sup>28</sup> “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” <sup>29</sup> But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”



<sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expenses you may have.’

<sup>36</sup> “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” <sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

## DISCUSS

- When Jesus was first asked about the greatest of the Law of Moses (Matthew 22:34-40), He quickly pointed to love for God and for one’s neighbor as the foundation upon which all the other laws were based. This religious leader appeared to understand the importance of this love, based on his response. However, when he tried to question the identity of his neighbor, he showed his real intentions in questioning Jesus. The leader’s focus was on not making sure he lived his life in a way that pleased God and drew others to the Lord; instead, the leader was trying to limit who he was required to love. Religious people at times try to use scripture to justify themselves, even when they know their actions are not aligned with what the Lord desires. **Why might the religious leader be trying to look to Jesus to justify who he is to love? Who have you overlooked or rejected through your own justifications?**
- The victim was going from Jerusalem, the religious epicenter for the Jews, to Jericho. Thus, it is reasonable to assume this was a Jewish man who was attacked. Also, considering he was coming from Jerusalem, it is possible that both the priest and Levite in the story attended the same worship service earlier that day. View yourself as the stripped one (meaning you are naked), who is experiencing a beat down at the hand of strangers. You are laying half dead, and the beat down is exacerbated psychologically and emotionally because those who are supposed to help ignore you. **Discuss your thoughts and feelings in this moment as you identify with the beaten man.**

- As a Jewish man, the expectation of those hearing this story would be for the priest or Levite to provide assistance. Yet both men completely separate themselves from the situation by crossing to the other side of the road and continuing their journey. The Law says anyone who touches a human corpse will themselves be unclean for seven days (Number 19:11). Thus, if these religious people tried to assist the man and he was dead, they would be unable to worship or connect with their community for a week. **Taking the Law and the people's positions into consideration, do you think the priest and Levite are justified in their actions? Why or why not? Knowing the Law of Moses given by God the Father in the Old Testament, why would Jesus use the priest's and Levite's responses as an example of what not to do? Who are marginalized people whom the church, today or throughout history, have justified as ignorable or avoidable by using the scriptures? How could Jesus's parable bring healing to the marginalized beat down by religious hurt?**
- Imagine the greatest level of racial hostility between two people groups, and then multiply it to the highest level plausible. This high level of hatred would best describe the hate between the Samaritans and the Jews. However, even with this high level of hostility, it was the one who the beaten Jewish man would have also called enemy that showed the man mercy. Mercy as modeled by the Samaritan, included both compassion (what would I want someone to do for me) and presence (caring enough to see the other person better even at one's own expense). The Samaritan came to him, saw him, took pity on him, bandaged him, anointed him, and took care of him with no limitations. **Consider one of the people you identified above as someone you have overlooked or rejected. What would it look like to show both compassion and be present for them in a time of pain and suffering?**
- Whereas the religious people viewed their "brother" as someone who would cause them to be unclean and outcasted from the community, the Samaritan viewed his "enemy" as someone who was his neighbor that needed his love. The Samaritan went over and above in making sure the man was restored to full health. The victim, as a result, felt cared for as a person to the point where not only was his health restored, but also his humanity. **If you identify most with the beaten down man in this parable, how might this community love on you in a way that you experience total restoration for your mind, body, spirit, and soul? If you identify with religious leaders in this story, how might God be inviting you to recognize everyone as your neighbor to whom you must show love? As we practice what Jesus really preached, how can we use this parable to rewrite what it looks like to be a loving and merciful follower of Jesus?**

## RESPOND

*We invite you to respond in a way that speaks to transformation and affirmation of Black culture, turns your attention to your Black campus community, and focuses on your impact on your home community.*

Deculturalization is the stripping or removing of one's culture (i.e. connections to their homeland, their language, their sense of knowing God, and ultimately their identity). The culture was not only stripped, but Black people were beaten through the infliction of a toxic culture that is the polar opposite of where we came from. We see the effects of this with Black people all around the world, on our campus, and in

our home environments. Jesus desires for our people to experience total restoration through His love and mercy. This requires us not to ignore the wounded and beaten, like the religious priest and Levite, but to be present and show compassion like the Samaritan.

As we recognize the stripping and beating done within **Black culture**, below is an identification of the results from stripping Black culture and an opportunity to consider a response in alignment with the Samaritan's response in the passage.

African culture is about oneness and deep relational connections, but slavery destroyed the concept of family and divided us by elevating the need to compete for the master's attention. This led to infighting, separation, and individuality. To add insult to injury, those who professed to be religious did not help and often added to the suffering, causing many black people today to reject Christianity.

Integration and Colonization in black communities around the world turned the focus of black people from wanting to be included in all spaces to completely losing our connection with our own communities. We took more pride in being assimilated into the dominant culture and ran away to the majority who was imposing the stripping and beating.

African Americans moved out of the historically black neighborhoods, abandoned the historically black sports leagues, enrolled outside historically black schools, and turned away from historically black businesses.

Africans thought the majority values were better than theirs to the point that they became embarrassed or began to devalue their own culture. As a result, many of their athletes play in leagues outside their home country, their educated strive to go to colleges and universities outside their home country, and their differences were magnified, bringing forth tribalism.

Having our rooted culture removed, polluted, and/or destroyed, has left many Black people around the world searching for a restoration of their humanity. **Discuss the Samaritan response which could bring corrective action to the pain inflicted on Black culture around the world.**

As we recognize the stripping and beating done to **Black college students and/or faculty**, below is an identification of examples of how we beat one another within the Black community on campus and an opportunity to consider a response in alignment with the Samaritan's response in the passage.

Rape Culture - women (and sometimes men) who are the victims in most cases, and yet many people try to justify the offender and vilify the victim

Greek Culture - prospects for various organizations who, when the wrong personalities are running things, take away one's desire to want to do things by compromising one's principles

Academic Culture - students who are treated by their professor in a way whereby they feel inadequate to participate in college courses

Religious Culture - one who does religious things in religious spaces very well, but when it comes to living out what you were praising about, you aren't very productive

Black campus culture is disrupted from every angle including in student's relationships, social/community service connections, educational requirements, and spiritual life. **Discuss the Samaritan response for each category where one has compassion on the individuals beat down in these areas and are shown mercy.**

As we recognize the stripping and beating done to our **home community**, below is an identification of some people needing our presence and compassion in our families and an opportunity to consider a response in alignment with the Samaritan's response in the passage.

Black Sheep of the Family (i.e. LGBTQIA, alcoholics, non-believers, addicts, etc.)

Single Mothers/Incarcerated Fathers

People "Not" Living up to Family Expectations

Those we have justified as being non-neighbors for our own reasons are most in need of God's love and mercy. **Discuss the Samaritan response where one brings healing to the felt need of the pain and suffering this person may be experiencing.**

## CLOSE

Assess who is in your current "Neighbor" circle. Considering who is inside and outside your circle, in what ways is God inviting you to challenge how you love others? In an effort to practice what Jesus REALLY preached, pick one person (or people group) who you justified as not being your neighbor and identify one act of compassion or presence you will complete for them this week. Detail what you will do and then spend some time reflecting on the lesson as one source of encouragement for your follow-through.