

SESSION 3

loving our neighbor

*“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.”*

Luke 10:27



We can make things so complicated, but Jesus boiled down true spirituality in a few simple concepts—loving God and loving others and being responsive and open to the people God puts right around us.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus modeled how to be a loving neighbor. He always had an open ear and a healing touch. He dined with sinners and welcomed the children to be with Him. Jesus was never too busy or too tired to engage with someone and show kindness and love. He allowed His life to be disrupted by the needs around Him. He was the ideal good neighbor—and, if we want to follow Him, we also need to make room in our lives for the people around us.

share your story

Open your group with a brief prayer asking God for insight as you study. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during your discussion.

Then, begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking:

How did you “glow in the dark” since our last session?

All of us can probably think of a neighbor in our past or present who was great and others who were difficult. What makes a good neighbor good? What makes a bad neighbor bad?

watch the video



NOTES FROM THE SESSION

hear God's story

READ LUKE 10:25-37

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 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.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

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. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 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. 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 expense you may have.'

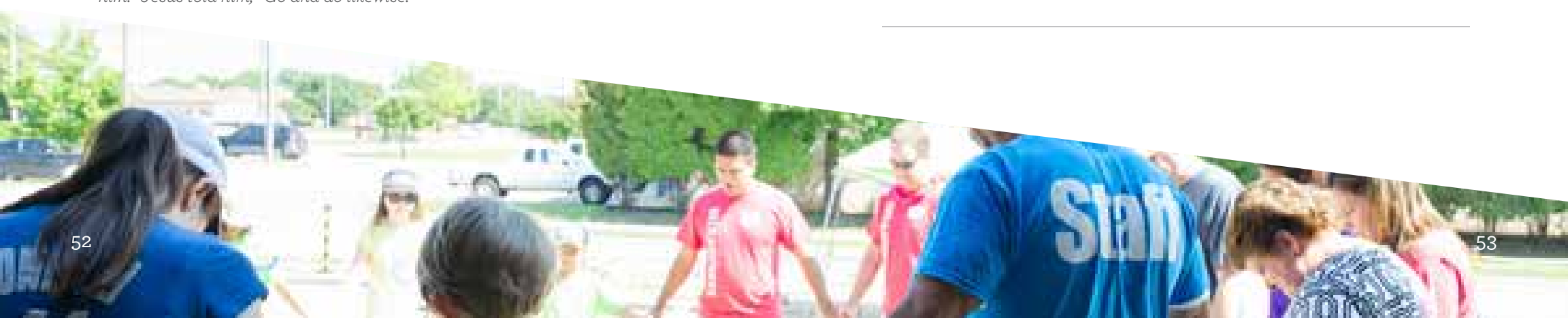
"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Why do you think the "expert in the law" asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" How did he want to justify himself?

Why did we expect the Priest or the Levite to help? Why did they pass by the other side and ignore the man who was attacked?

Why was Jesus' audience shocked that the Samaritan helped the man? What did they expect him to do? Why did Jesus choose the Samaritan to show neighborly love to the man on the ground?

Do you think the "expert in the law" was really the one testing Jesus? With what challenge does Jesus leave him?





Study Notes

The reason Jesus set up the Samaritan to be the good neighbor is because of the long-standing conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans. The origin of this disagreement started after the death of King Solomon when the Kingdom of Israel split into two parts. “When all the Israelites heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. Only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the house of David” (1 Kings 12:20). Read the whole chapter of 1 Kings 12 as well as 2 Chronicles 10 to better understand this conflict.

It is interesting that the parable of the Good Samaritan is not the only time in the Bible the Samaritans are mentioned. In John 4:1-42, Jesus met a Samaritan woman at a well and asked her for water and the first thing she said to him was, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” Jesus then offered the woman living water, and she and many other Samaritans came to believe in Him.



create a new story

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you've learned from the teaching and Bible study. Then, think about practical steps you can take in the coming week to live out what you've learned.

What does it mean to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind?

Who do you identify with in this story? Who do you want to identify with?

What does it mean to be a good neighbor?

How aware are you of the needs of your neighbors? Does your schedule allow you to be disrupted when you come across a need? Do you need to make any changes?

What steps will you take this week to grow in your relationship with God? If you've focused on prayer in past weeks, maybe you'll want to direct your attention to Scripture this week. If you've been reading God's Word consistently, perhaps, you'll want to take it deeper and try memorizing a verse. Tell the group what you plan to try this week, and talk about your progress and challenges when you meet next time.

Give each person an opportunity to share prayer requests. If you'd like, you can write these on the Prayer and Praise Report on page 92.

Close your meeting with prayer.

for additional study

Take some time between now and our next meeting to dig into God's Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own. Jot down your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. You may even want to use a Bible website or app to look up commentary on these passages. If you like, share what you learn with the group the next time you meet.

READ MARK 10:17-27

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

In what ways is this story similar to the story of the Good Samaritan? And how is it different?



Why was the rich man unable to do what Jesus said? What does it look like to be generous? Could you be more generous? What hinders you?



READ JOHN 8:1-11

“Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.

Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

How is this story related to being a good neighbor?

Do you think one sin is worse than others?

Which is easier for you: to accept Jesus’ grace for your life or to extend grace to your neighbor?

daily devotions



Day 1

READ ROMANS 12:9-11

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord."

REFLECT

Don't be fake and pretend to love but truly let the Lord transform your heart so that you can love genuinely. Why does Paul say to "honor one another above yourselves"? Why is this important?



Day 2

READ LUKE 6:35

"But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."

REFLECT

Just like the Good Samaritan loved the injured Jew, we are called to love the people we don't even like! Who are those people in your life? How can you start loving them?



Day 3

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

REFLECT

Don't worry about keeping up with your neighbors (co-workers, friends, relatives) by trying to impress them with your house, your car, or your kids. Rather, show interest in their life and look for opportunities to serve them.

