



Who is My Neighbor?

Text: Luke 10:25-37

Care and Bridging Pastor Dan Slagle

1. What does the phrase, “Going Above and Beyond” mean to you, especially in the context of faith?
2. Read Luke 10:25-37.
 - a. How did the man summarize what God’s Word commands God’s people to do, as affirmed by Jesus?
 - b. According to the parable, who is our neighbor?
 - c. What is significant about it being a priest and a Levite who pass by without helping the man? Why do you think they passed him by without stopping?
 - d. How do you see yourself in the priest and the Levite?
 - e. What is significant about the fact that the man who stopped and helped was a Samaritan?
 - f. According to the parable, what does it mean to be a neighbor?
 - g. What characteristics do you see that define the Samaritan?
 - h. How was the Samaritan a neighbor to the injured man?
3. What would being a good neighbor look like in your life?
 - a. Who are you mostly likely to cross the street to avoid?
 - b. Compassion, mercy, service, generosity, and love defined the Samaritan in his actions toward the injured man. How do you see those in your own life?
 - c. Where could you grow?

Challenge: How do you feel challenged to go above and beyond in being a good neighbor in our community, our nation, and/or around the world?

Prayer: God, give us eyes to see the people around us. Give us eyes to see our own shortcomings. Help us see the way we avoid certain types of people, or don’t engage out of fear, or don’t have a heart that is generous towards other people. We confess that we get in our own bubbles, thinking about our own needs, and we miss the needs of others in our circles, in our community, and in our world. God, we ask that you show us where and how we can be neighborly. Show us what you are calling us to give and do that is above and beyond our normal status quo. Thank you for the way Jesus went above and beyond. He gave His entire life for us, keeping nothing for himself. Let us grow to be more like Him. In Jesus name, Amen.

<http://faithbridge.org/news/news-feed/above-beyond/>

STUDY DEEPER

How to Be a Good Neighbor
by Todd Carey

We all want good neighbors, but it's hard to know how to be the kind of neighbor our neighbors want. What makes a good neighbor? How can we become better ones?

The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of Jesus' most well-known parables. But why did He give it? To learn the parable's context and the lesson Christ was teaching us, watch this video presented by Dave Myers, Foundation Institute instructor.

What does it mean to be a "good neighbor"? A major insurance company has a slogan that begins with these words: "Like a good neighbor." The message the company wants to convey is that you can count on it in times of need, just as you can count on a good neighbor.

Being neighborly

Many people today, particularly those who have grown up with Facebook and Twitter, have amassed relationships with people around the globe. But at the end of the day, how many are real friends? Friends and friendship mean different things to different people. So it is with being a good neighbor. Being neighborly means different things to different people as well.

In an article titled "Being Neighborly Without Being Nosy," Rose Alexander explained it this way: "Depending on your personal preferences, being neighborly might mean staying invisible except for a quick wave while getting the mail. Or you might think of someone being a good neighbor when he or she is available to help out with any unexpected need, whether it is to lend an egg or give your child a ride to soccer practice when your car won't start."

What kind of neighbor do you want to be? If you're going to be a good neighbor, what does that entail?

We might begin by examining our own personalities. Are we reserved or outgoing? Are we shy or bombastic? That will play a part in what kind of neighbor we are. But the next thing to remember is that not everyone in our neighborhood will be like us, which means it is important to get to know the people in our neighborhoods.

This can start even before we move to a new neighborhood. We can seek whatever information we can find about the new neighborhood. If we have children at home, we'll probably check into the schools they would attend. Not only does all this help us get to know the neighborhood, but it may also reveal some common interests with those who already live there.

Learning about and getting to know our neighbors can help us become better neighbors.

But first, let's define who our neighbors are. What about people who live outside our neighborhood? Do we have a responsibility to be neighborly to those who live on other streets or in other towns or cities? A long time ago, someone posed this question to the greatest Teacher to ever walk the earth.

Who is my neighbor?

You may be surprised that the Bible has much to say about neighbors. In fact, Jesus presented an entire parable to show how important it is to be neighborly; and not only that, He showed how being a good neighbor figures into inheriting eternal life!

A lawyer asked Jesus Christ what he needed to do to receive eternal life.

Jesus, knowing that it was the lawyer's duty to be familiar with God's law, answered the lawyer with a question of his own.

"He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?' So he answered and said, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself'" (Luke 10:26-27).

The lawyer answered correctly, and Jesus advised him to do this (verse 28). But the lawyer, wanting to justify himself, asked, "Who is my neighbor?" (verse 29).

Jesus took the opportunity to explain the answer to his question with a parable. To understand the parable, it is helpful to get some background of that day. According to Albert Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, regarding Luke 10:29, the Pharisees held the belief that they were only obliged to be neighborly with their own people. Barnes wrote, "The Pharisees held that the 'Jews' only were to be regarded as such, and that the obligation did not extend at all to the Gentiles."

Being a good neighbor involves compassion

The parable of the Good Samaritan (verses 30-37), reveals the answer to the lawyer's question—"who is my neighbor?" The parable tells of a certain man attacked, robbed and left injured on the side of the road.

The first two travelers who saw the injured man may have truly felt bad for the man and may have wished him well in their hearts, but they simply had no time or inclination to become involved with him. Sadly, they were a priest and a Levite—men who should have been setting an example of what it is to be a good neighbor.

However, when the Samaritan (despised by those in the community) passed by, not only did he feel bad for the victim, he had compassion—and that compassion moved him to action! Having dressed the victim's wounds, he then took him to an inn where he told the person in charge to do whatever was necessary to ensure the man got the best of care. He paid the bill and said he was willing to pay more if needed.

In this story, we see no mention of the Samaritan being concerned about the identity, race or nationality of the wounded person. His caring actions were not portrayed as payback for some good deed that had been previously done to the Samaritan. Nor does the account suggest that the Samaritan was hoping his good deed would cast his people in a different light—to improve the Jews' low opinion of the Samaritan people. He simply treated this unfortunate person as a neighbor.

No doubt the lawyer was feeling a little uncomfortable, especially when Jesus asked him to render a judgment on which of the three passersby was a good neighbor to the injured man. “And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him’” (Luke 10:37).

The lawyer answered correctly again, but perhaps a little more contritely this time. Jesus told the lawyer, “Go and do likewise.”

We wonder, What kind of neighbor was the lawyer after this gentle correction?

Back to the present

Now fast-forward to the present. If we want to be good neighbors, we must seek a comfortable balance with our neighbors, as much as is reasonable and safe. Part of the balance is learning about some of the traditions of our neighborhoods or regions. In some parts of the world it is customary to bring a specially prepared meal for people moving in or when someone has lost a loved one. Opportunities such as these help sow the seeds of conversation that can develop into mutual respect, admiration and even friendship.

Becoming a good neighbor during good times is often simpler than during a crisis or natural disaster. If and when a crisis does arise, requesting help or providing help will be so much easier because of the relationships that have been forged.

The Golden Rule and neighbors

When we’re not really sure how to interact with our neighbors, we can just turn the situation around. When it comes to giving any good gift, Jesus said, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). This scripture is commonly referred to as the Golden Rule.

A good neighbor is one who is there for his or her neighbors. God does not use the term lightly, nor does He restrict it to one’s local community. A good neighbor is one who helps and serves in good times and bad.

King Solomon wrote, “Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,’ when you have it with you. Do not devise evil against your neighbor, for he dwells by you for safety’s sake” (Proverbs 3:28-29). That safety includes looking out for the well-being of those who are around us while being respectful of their personal privacy and the property.

It may start with something as simple as sharing some sugar with a neighbor, yet a small kindness can lead to so much more. The apostle Paul wrote, “For the commandments ... are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:9-10).

Even if those around us don’t understand or value being good neighbors, we certainly can. For more information on making friends and being a good neighbor, read the article “How to Make Friends.”

<https://lifehopeandtruth.com/relationships/friendship/how-to-be-a-good-neighbor/>