

The Parables of Jesus

Taking a deeper look

By Kipp Campbell

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Spiritual “equipment” for the contest of life.

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**COVER : Photography by Sarah McMurray. Farm field in central Indiana.
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Author's Note

I wish to thank my wife, Hollie, for her love, understanding, and encouragement in helping make this book a reality.

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The parables give us tremendous insight into our Lord's ability to communicate with the common man. By using modern day illustrations in His teachings He was able to reach out to those who otherwise may not have understood the spiritual truths He taught. It is my prayer that through study of this book, we will all come to both appreciate more and better understand the timeless teachings of the Master Teacher.

This workbook is written in such a way as to not focus upon the exact details of each parable. In this author's opinion, there is a tendency to focus too much upon the details of each parable, therefore causing the intended message to be missed. While specifics are pointed out when necessary, the aim has been to understand the general principle or biblical thought that is presented in each lesson.

If you are looking to grasp a better understanding of the Lord's parables, this study is for you. May God bless you as you strive to draw closer to the One who shows us the way to eternal life.

Kipp Campbell
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Lesson 1
Study of the Parables: The Good Samaritan
Luke 10:30-37

Theme: Compassion for Those Different from Us

We have all, at some point in time, been moved to compassion. Maybe it was the picture of starving children on the television or perhaps we witnessed some catastrophic event that moved us to help others. Our hearts yearn for those who fall on hard times and can not make ends meet. No matter the situation, we long to be in a position to help people who, at least during the present crisis, cannot help themselves.

The Text

Jesus, after being questioned by a lawyer as to who was his neighbor (verses 25-29), told a parable. A certain man was leaving Jerusalem and traveling to Jericho, verse 30. As he traveled, he fell upon some thieves who beat him, stole his goods, and left him for dead, verse 30. As the man lay there half-dead, a priest came upon him and after seeing him lying there, passed by on the other side, verse 31. Not long after, a Levite approached and he too passed by on the opposite side of the road, verse 32. However, shortly after, a Samaritan appeared; but instead of passing by, he stopped to lend his assistance, verse 33. Verse 34 tells us he poured oil and wine on the man's wounds, put bandages on the man, put him on his own beast, and took him to an inn to care for him. The next day, the Samaritan gave the innkeeper two denarii and told him whatever amount extra that was spent on his care, he would repay when he returned, verse 35. Jesus then questioned the lawyer by asking him which of the three characters in the story showed themselves to be a better neighbor, verse 36. Upon answering appropriately, Jesus tells the lawyer to, "Go and do the same," verse 37.

Background Information

Location of Jerusalem and Jericho. It has been alleged that this passage shows an apparent discrepancy in God's word. The idea that the person who was assaulted was going "down" to Jericho from Jerusalem is said to be impossible. If one were to look at a map, he would see that Jericho is located

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seventeen miles northeast of Jerusalem. However, we understand this passage to be both biblically and geographically correct when we realize Jerusalem is at a higher elevation than Jericho. Jerusalem is situated some 2,000 feet above sea level, while Jericho is located 1,000 feet below sea level. We can therefore realize there is no discrepancy in this account.

The terrain from Jerusalem to Jericho. The road between these two cities drops 3,300 feet. It is a desolate and sparsely inhabited area, with limestone cliffs and gullies on both sides of the road.¹ It has been given the name “the path (ascent) of blood,” a testament to its dangerous reputation.² Stories of robbers hiding behind the limestone rocks and confronting travelers have long been recorded.

The priest and Levite. It seems probable that the beaten man in this parable was a Jew. While we are not told his nationality, it makes sense that if he were anything else, the point of the parable would be somewhat lost. Both the priest and Levite have always been castigated for not stopping to help the man lying by the side of the road. Most people reason that because these were “men of God,” in that they were supposed to know the Law, they should have made use of the opportunity to render aid to someone who needed it, Deuteronomy 15:7, 11; Leviticus 19:33, 34. We cannot know for certain why these two did not stop to aid the beaten man. It is plausible that they thought he was already dead and being confined by the Law not to touch a dead body (Leviticus 21:1) decided not to even try to be of any assistance. By doing so the Levites would have left themselves open for criticism and inconvenience. In violating the Law, they would have been rendered unclean, forced to bear the burial costs, and would have been barred from priestly and Levitical services.³ Whatever their reasoning, the bottom line is they simply failed to offer any mercy whatsoever.

Relationship between Jew and Samaritan. That the Jews and Samaritans did not get along would probably be an understatement. It is a well known fact that these two groups of people did not care much for each other. The Jews thought the Samaritans to be “half-breeds” which arose through the existence of foreigners in the land during the period of captivity. The Samaritans were just as ornery and often just as hateful to the Jews. It is said the Samaritans desecrated the temple area sometime between the years 6 B.C. and 9 B.C. by scattering human bones across the courts of the temple.⁴ The inclusion of the Samaritan as the one rendering aid makes this parable even more dramatic.

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The cost of care. The Samaritan used his own “First Aid Kit” by applying his own oil, wine, and bandages to comfort the many wounds on the man’s body. The oil was used to soothe the wounds while the wine would serve as antiseptic.⁵ He also offered the innkeeper two denarii to cover the cost of the beaten man’s care. One denarius was equivalent to one day’s wage. This amount of money would have been sufficient for a few days care.⁶

Application for Us

Our care of those less fortunate has an impact on our salvation. No matter what excuse the priest and Levite had to offer, in the end they violated the very Law they were trying to uphold. Namely they forgot to “love their neighbor as themselves,” verse 27. In the end it was not them that was praised for their actions, but rather the one who took the time to look after the one in need. Jesus had a similar thought in mind when He taught that when we care for others, we care for Him, Matthew 25:35-46. We often are faced with circumstances similar to the priest’s and Levite’s. We see them in the person on the side of the road holding the sign and asking for money. The opportunity exists when we see the broken-down-car in need of immediate attention. Often our phone rings with people begging for assistance. Perhaps the opportunity is there when the need does seem genuine, but we refuse to get involved and help. We, too, make excuses and rationalizations as to why we cannot help. We think the person by the road is going to use it for alcohol, drugs, or something other than what it is intended. Now I realize we want to be good stewards of our money, but how often have we allowed our “good stewardship” to keep us from doing anything at all? There are ways to meet a need without dealing directly with the person involved. We can pay the hotel bill (grocery bill, light bill, etc.) in person. Sometimes the problem can be handled with a simple phone call. You see we can help those in need, and thereby fulfill our duty as Christians by simply taking the time to get involved. Even if we are “taken for a ride,” they will be the ones to answer for their deeds. Our Christian duty is to care for those who are without, Matthew 10:42; 25:35-40. It is not by accident that the Samaritan was the only one praised for his behavior at the end of the Lord’s parable.

Everyone is our neighbor. This is the main focus of Jesus’ teaching in the parable. When we think of our neighbor, we think about those who live closest to us. Yet, He clearly shows us that the concept of “neighbor” goes much deeper and farther than that. We often have no problem helping those people we know or those who “look like us.” The dynamics change though when someone different than us is brought into the situation. They may be of

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a different nationality, race, language, or economic class, so therefore we are not as inclined to treat them the same way we do our “neighbors.” Sadly, this sort of attitude exists today, even within the Lord’s body. Yet, Paul said within Christ there are no such distinctions, Galatians 3:28. Whether we like it or not, we are neighbors of one another. As such, we are expected to care for those different than ourselves. Love and compassion should be active forces in our lives today. It should not matter who may need our help. If a lowly Samaritan can stop to aid a beaten Jew, should we not be willing to do the same?

Action is required. At the end of His teaching, Jesus said, “Go and do the same,” verse 37. He spent time educating those around Him and now it was time to put the lesson into practice. Compassion is no good to anyone if it remains bottled up. I can think of all the ways I want to help someone in their time of need, but whom does it help if it remains only in my mind? It is not enough to know what to do. It only becomes sufficient when we actually do it, James 4:17.

Conclusion

Compassion is not a characteristic our Lord expects us to be careful with in using. Imagine the world we could live in if people treated each other with compassion instead of taking up arms or throwing punches in order to deal with a situation. The problems of the world would be solved if we would only apply the lessons of this humble Samaritan.

Questions

1. Which of the main characters in our parable best describes you: priest, Levite, or Samaritan?
2. Why do you think the priest and Levite did not stop to lend assistance to their beaten countryman?
3. Were they in violation of the Law by not stopping to assist?

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4. Even if they were not in violation of the Law, do you think they were still obligated to stop? Why?
5. Geographically speaking, what is the significance of Jerusalem being located higher than Jericho in elevation?
6. What kind of relationship did the Jews and Samaritans share?
7. To what lengths did the Samaritan go to care for the beaten man?
8. Does our care of those in need impact our salvation? If so, how?
9. What excuses do we often make to not get involved?
10. Are they valid excuses or just simply excuses?
11. Consider some scenarios where we may be called to be compassionate.
12. What are some ways we can show our compassion to those in need?
13. Who is our neighbor?
14. Are there distinctions in the body of Christ? Why or why not?
15. Is it enough to be moved with compassion or must we actually follow through with it?

Point to Ponder

1. What are some things you can do to be a more compassionate person?