

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

DAY 1: DON'T TEST GOD (LUKE 10:25)

In the 18th century, gold prospectors used acid tests to determine whether a metal was actually gold. Gold is known as a “noble metal,” meaning it withstands the effects of acids, so during the gold rush prospectors were able to apply acid to gold to test its purity. If the metal withstood the effects of the acid, the prospectors could conclude that the metal was gold.

Read Luke 10:25. In the Greek, the word for “test” can also be translated as “tempted,” and is used to mean putting God’s power or character to the test (see Mt. 4:7). When we test something, we put ourselves in a position of power over it, and we sit in judgement over it. Of course, we can “taste and see” the Lord is good (see Ps. 34:8), but we must not *test* and see. The difference lies in our motives. To taste and see the Lord’s goodness is to approach Him expectantly, hoping to enjoy His goodness. However, to *test* the Lord is to demand something from Him in order to prove Himself.

Like an acid test to determine the purity of gold, when the lawyer stood and questioned Jesus, he was testing Him, putting himself in a position of judgment over Jesus. We are to approach Jesus with humility, not superiority.

DAY 2: STOP TRYING TO JUSTIFY YOURSELF (LUKE 10:26-28)

Consider this scenario: Your parents say to you, “You’re grounded. You can’t go out with your friends while we’re away.” So instead, you throw a party at your house while your parents are gone. That’s okay, right? After all, you didn’t go out with your friends. Your parents didn’t say anything about not throwing a party. Do you see the problem here? Although you are technically following your parents’ instruction to a “T,” you are ultimately ignoring the overall spirit of the command.

Read Luke 10:26-29. This lawyer would have been an expert in the law, so he was familiar with Scripture and quick to answer Jesus’ question. However, after Jesus’ response, the lawyer wanted further clarification regarding who his “neighbor” was. This was a good question, but the lawyer asked with the wrong heart. We know that because the text tells us he wanted to “justify himself.” He wasn’t simply asking to gain wisdom; he was asking because he wanted Jesus to give him an answer that justified the way he was living.

Like a child who secretly throws a party because his or her parents said he or she couldn’t go out, this lawyer was looking for a loophole. He wanted to justify himself, his behavior, his lifestyle.

What behavior in your life are you trying to justify?

DAY 3: THE LORD EXPECTS COMPASSION (LUKE 10:30-32)

You have probably heard the troubling stories of pastors and other Christian leaders falling short, publicly stumbling. In some cases, pastors have stolen money from the church or even bullied church members. Often times, these stories leave believers feeling directionless and lost, because these leaders are supposed to be our pacesetters. They’re supposed to be setting examples for the rest of us to live by.

Read Luke 10:30-32. In order for us to feel the full impact and weight of Jesus’ words, we must understand the context of this parable. Biblical commentators have pointed out that the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was dangerous, and it would have been common for people to fall victim to muggings. However, the element of the story that would have initially captured peoples’ attention is that the priest and Levite, these two men of God, these religious leaders, denied help to a dying man. The first scandal of this parable is that these men, who had been entrusted with God’s commands and therefore fully understood that the Lord expected compassion from them, mismanaged this opportunity to care for someone in dire need.

What excuses might the priest and Levite have used to avoid stopping and caring for the dying man? Also, what excuses do we use to avoid helping those in need?

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DAY 4: OFFER COMPASSION WITHOUT CONDITION (LUKE 10:33-35)

In 2010, an earthquake hit Haiti affecting 3.5 million people, taking the lives of approximately 220,000, and injuring more than 300,000. Incredibly, the Red Cross raised half a billion dollars to build homes for those who were hardest hit by the earthquake! But despite the successful fundraising, the Red Cross only built 6 homes. Unsurprisingly, when this story made the news, the Red Cross had a lot of explaining to do.

Read Luke 10:33-35. Most Samaritans and Jews hated one another, so this part of the story would have shocked Jesus' listeners. The fact that a Samaritan man stopped to help after the priest and Levite didn't would have been the second scandal in Jesus' parable. Notice that there were no conditions given by the Samaritan. He didn't tell the innkeeper to care for the man's needs so long as the man was friendly and expressed gratitude and promised to live a godly life. No, there were no stipulations to the Samaritan man's compassion and care.

The Red Cross was given much, and therefore much was expected from them. So, when they raised half a billion dollars and only built a handful of homes, they were expected to give an account for that failure. Likewise, the Lord has given each of us some measure of resources, time, and abilities, and therefore He expects each of us to use these blessings to bless others.

Why do we sometimes put stipulations on our compassion and care?

DAY 5: GO AND DO THE SAME (LUKE 10:36-37)

Scott Harrison was a club promoter before spending two years working in Liberia. During that time, he was able to trace many of the needs and problems facing the people in that area back to one source: the need for clean drinking water. After seeing the need before him, Scott Harrison established *Charity:Water*. As of today, his charity has helped fund nearly 20,000 water projects in 24 countries.

Read Luke 10:36-37. The message of Jesus' parable was clear. So clear, in fact, that even the Jewish lawyer, who would have grown up learning to resent Samaritans, could not deny that the "neighbor" in this story was the Samaritan man. But for Jesus, it was never enough that people sat and listened to His teachings and parables. They needed to respond with obedience. They needed to apply His teachings. In that spirit, Jesus closed His parable with a call to action: *go and do the same*.

It would have been difficult for a Jewish man to hear that he should emulate the behavior of a Samaritan. It might sometimes feel overwhelming for us as well, but when we see the helpers in the world—people like Scott Harrison, for instance—let's learn from them.

Upon reading Jesus' instruction to "go and do the same," who in your life comes to mind? What people can you serve this week?