

# STUDY 2 HOW TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

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## HOW THIS STUDY FITS YOU'S DISCIPLESHIP PLAN

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### **Build Relationships.**

Love is the key building block to establishing, encouraging, and strengthening our relationships. To put it another way, our efforts to build relationships come to nothing if we do not ground our words and actions in love.

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## Writer Bio

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## A BIBLE STUDY ON HOW TO DEEPLY LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR?

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Growing up I was always a fan of music. Music seemed to make life make sense to me. However, there was a popular song by Tina Turner called “What’s Love Got To Do With It” that I never understood why people liked. This song was a bit sad and caused suppression of the true feelings of love. There was another song I remember that encompassed true love. The song’s title spoke of the kind of love that God has for us. A love that can and will stand the test of time. You may have already guessed that the song title is “Endless Love” by Lionel Richie and Diana Ross.

This song touched me because it not only spoke about enduring love, it spoke about actually sharing love. This is the ability to let others feel what you feel. Please understand, sharing love does come without sacrifice. However, it is not hard when the love is true and not clouded with selfishness. This defines a special that God has placed in each of us.

In this study, we will discuss “true” love, which is God’s love. Unlike the love expressed in many songs, God’s love is unconditional. This means God loves us and He never asked us to give Him anything first or in return. God loves us just because of who He is—He is love (1 John 4:16). The only thing we are really responsible to do in response to God’s love is to share God’s love with others.

We will finish this study with an understanding of how to love people near and far called our neighbor. We look at the following:

- Who Is Your Neighbor?
- What Does Love Look Like?
- Pray for Your Neighbor
- Honor Your Neighbor
- Forgive Your Neighbor
- Share Christ with Your Neighbor

When we love our neighbor, we are loving God.

# WHO IS YOUR NEIGHBOR?

Leader pages on pp. 134-137

**THE POINT:**  
LOVE COMPELS US  
TO BE THE NEIGHBOR  
OTHERS NEED.

## LUKE 10:25-37

MEMORY VERSE

<sup>25</sup> Then an expert in the law stood up to test him, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>26</sup> “What is written in the law?” he asked him. “How do you read it?” <sup>27</sup> **He answered, “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.”** <sup>28</sup> “You’ve answered correctly,” he told him. “Do this and you will live.”

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<sup>29</sup> But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” <sup>30</sup> Jesus took up the question and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and fled, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down that road. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> In the same way, a Levite, when he arrived at the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

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<sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and when he saw the man, he had compassion. <sup>34</sup> He went over to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on olive oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him. When I come back I’ll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.’ <sup>36</sup> “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” <sup>37</sup> “The one who showed mercy to him,” he said. Then Jesus told him, “Go and do the same.”

KEYWORDS

**To inherit eternal life (v. 25)**

–This shows that many Jews thought their eternal destiny was based on their Jewish bloodline and their good deeds.

**Heart . . . soul . . . mind (v. 27)–**

These terms are sometimes used interchangeably in Scripture. In this passage, they are not

intended to speak of separate aspects of human existence. Rather, they describe the total person.

**From Jerusalem to Jericho (v. 30)–**

The road was a distance of 17 miles. It was a dangerous route through desert country. It had many places where robbers could lie in wait.

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A NEIGHBOR?

Love. It's the fulfillment of all God's laws. It's greater than any spiritual gift you could have. It's part of why you are on earth. A demonstration of love is even what Jesus said would confirm that we are His disciples.

Let's be honest. It's not always easy to love those around us. We live in an "age of rage," a time when social media controversies are part of life and people regularly spew harsh and hateful words to one another. Yet, the follower of Christ is to be different. Scripture's command to love one another sets Jesus's followers apart from those who don't know Him.

Join me for this six-session study that builds on the great commandment to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Prepare to ask yourself the tough questions. Prepare to practically serve and love others in your family, your church, and your community. Prepare to grow in God's love.

## Love Others As Myself //

Luke 10:25-28

We're going to visit one of Jesus's more familiar stories, the parable of the good Samaritan, but let's catch an important detail: Jesus told this parable in response to a pointed question. The man who asked Jesus this question was a Pharisee, "an expert in the law." We usually think of the Pharisees and religious leaders in the Gospels as the "villains" of the New Testament because they were so antagonistic toward Jesus, but we forget that these men were considered to be among the most morally upright in the community. They had spent years studying the Torah (the first five books of our Old Testament). This man was a teacher, considered an expert in Scripture. He knew all about God's laws. He even memorized them.

Except he completely missed the point.

**WHAT DOES THIS MAN'S QUESTION REVEAL ABOUT HIS UNDERSTANDING OF GOD?**



## THE POINT: LOVE COMPELS US TO BE THE NEIGHBOR OTHERS NEED.

Just look at his opening question: “Teacher, what must I do?” He was focused on outward actions, but the real purpose of the law was to show us that we can’t do anything to be right with God, any more than we can fly to the moon. The law is meant to point us to a Savior beyond ourselves: Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:19-26). The very law this religious leader knew backwards and forwards should have led him to cry to God for mercy, knowing he could not possibly live up to God’s perfect law, much less be worthy of eternal life with God.

But this expert in the law still wanted to give it a shot.

Jesus, in a method as old as the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8-13), began to draw out the truth by questioning him. And, of course, being the expert in the law that he was, the man “answered correctly.” He knew what was written in the law, and he zeroed in on the two commands that Jesus had identified earlier as the two greatest commandments, when another “expert in the law, asked a question to test him: . . . ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matt. 22:35-39).

Now came the challenge: Jesus told him to obey the law. “Do this and you will live.” Knowing what God’s Word says matters little if we choose not to follow it. In fact, the more we know, the more responsible we are for obeying what we know. This religious leader knew very well what God’s commandments required, and he was responsible for obeying—or not.

### See Their Needs // Luke 10:29-32

This religious leader wanted “to justify himself” and be righteous on his own. His plan was to scrupulously follow the law (which is impossible). Therefore, he wasn’t looking for information when he asked, “And who is my neighbor?” He was looking for exoneration—an acquittal and an excuse for his behavior. The truth is, his neighbor—and our neighbor—is not limited to those who live nearby; our neighbor is every other human being. But this expert in the law wanted to find a way to get out of fully obeying. He wanted to know what Jesus would inspect to make sure he’d obeyed “properly,” not what Jesus would expect of His followers. This expert showed us how



### DIGGING DEEPER SAMARITAN POWER

We have often heard the story of the Good Samaritan, but did we understand the true power behind it? Samaritans were not looked upon as good people by Jews. Samaritans were actually hated by Jews, and Jews of the first century believed that Samaritans were “fake Jews.” Samaritans had a holy book, the Torah, the first five books of Moses. However, the Samaritan Torah wasn’t the same as the Jewish Torah. If you compared them side-by-side, there were several differences. The Samaritans claimed they had the “right Torah”, and the Jews had the “wrong Torah.” And of course, Jews said exactly the opposite. So, one can imagine how disturbing it was for them to hear about how a Samaritan would carry himself better than a Jewish Rabbi. This is why Christ drove home the point that your actions and relationship are more important than who you.

**Where do you stand in this parable?**



easy it is to know, believe, study, and devote ourselves to the things of God, but still not be a follower of Jesus Christ.

The reason this religious leader missed the point of God's law is because the law is entirely fulfilled through love. And without love for God and others, our outward acts of obedience will be empty, and as deceptive as a neat and tidy house with messy closets and drawers. God wants to completely transform our hearts to be His home. And He wants to give us hearts that don't settle for what He inspects, but hearts that pursue what He expects.

Jesus's response to the man's question gets to the heart of God's law and shows the unbreakable connection between someone's true spiritual identity and how they treat others. The traveler in Jesus's parable was brutally beaten and left to die on the side of the road. His only hope was for someone to find him in time to save his life.

Enter the outwardly "righteous." Both the priest and the Levite were "religious professionals;" priests offered sacrifices in the temple and Levites assisted the priests and had various duties in the temple. But for all both men had in piousness, religious duty, and knowledge of the

law, they utterly lacked in mercy, humanity, and compassion. They were experts in the rituals of God, but they failed to follow His ways.

The religious leaders knew God's law, but they didn't know God. The one who knows God and loves Him also loves his neighbor. And the one who loves his neighbor refuses to ignore that neighbor's needs. The priest and Levite in Jesus's parable remind us that we, too, can become experts in God's Word, teachers of the Scriptures, yet fail to follow His ways. When we do that, we prove we have never known in our hearts the Lord we profess with our mouths (Matt 15:8). Our identity as God's children is demonstrated by our love for others.

### WHAT IS JESUS REVEALING ABOUT THE PEOPLE HE CHOSE TO USE IN THIS PARABLE?

## Make Personal Sacrifices // Luke 10:33-37

Jesus's parable features one of the most unlikely heroes in Jewish culture: "a Samaritan." To understand just how shocking—even offensive—this would have been to His hearers, we must go back several centuries before Jesus's birth.

When the Jewish nation divided, the ten Northern tribes took the name Israel or Samaria (after its capital city). Because of their disobedience, the Jews of Samaria were taken captive by the Assyrian Empire. Other peoples were brought in, and they intermarried with the Jews left in the region. God had forbidden the Jews to intermarry with foreign tribes (Deut. 7:1-4; Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 10:30), so the offspring of the Samaritans were considered half-breeds, not pure Jews.

In every way, Jews believed they were superior to Samaritans. The hatred between Samaritans and Jews was ethnic, religious, and cultural. So, imagine the response of a Jewish religious

## THE POINT: LOVE COMPELS US TO BE THE NEIGHBOR OTHERS NEED.

leader when Jesus used a despised Samaritan as the protagonist and hero of His story.

Was Jesus trying to get under this man's skin? Was He attempting to provoke him? No. Jesus was addressing the man's question: "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). But Jesus turned the question around: "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" The true question is not who is my neighbor but what kind of neighbor am I?

Of course, the true neighbor was the one who had compassion—the one who loved a helpless stranger enough to see his need, not his ethnicity, race, or any other outward trait. The Samaritan's compassion came at his own expense and inconvenience.

Tragically, many church members are pious and well-rehearsed in God's Word, but they do not follow His ways. They value knowledge, but not compassion. They know the right answers to biblical questions, but they have never received the mercy of God. The one who is truly born of God lives in the love of God—and loves others.

## WHAT RISKS DO WE TAKE IN LOVING PEOPLE WHO ARE IN NEED?

### DID YOU KNOW?

The role of the usher board is considered one of importance and honor within African American churches. Their smiling faces and pleasant demeanors set the atmosphere for our worship experience. However, they do more than show us to our seat. They are doorkeepers. The doorkeeper's position is that of a spiritual conduit. The doorkeeper is the first responder to the people's anticipation and expectations. Worshipers who are trying to make their way to be in the presence of God are affected by the first people they see. The kind of hospitality extended in the house of God represents the Spirit of God in the house where each doorkeeper serves. Ushering was even used as a way to train youth to conduct and serve in service. This also would hold them accountable to their actions in their lives outside of church.

## How can we extend this kind of love and service outside the church?

## LIVE IT

### Are you living out the love of Christ? How do we know the difference?

Jesus makes it simple for us in the parable of the Good Samaritan. He demonstrated that it is more important to live out God's Word, instead of condemning people with His Word. We may be able to recite Scriptures, but beyond that we must exemplify God's Word in everyday actions. Here are some ways that we can make sure that we stay in alignment with Christ.

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- **Show love.** It is important that we show Christ's love. It can be as simple as opening the door for others or giving others the chance to express themselves to truly understand their point of view.
- **Give to others.** Oftentimes we miss opportunities to give to others, whether it be giving financially or giving our time. Don't pass up the opportunity to give to someone this week when you see a need.
- **Forgive when offended.** Though it may be difficult, we must walk in forgiveness. Remember Christ died for us. So, why can't we forgive those who transgress against us?

# DAILY READINGS

## 1. NICE OR NAUGHTY // LUKE 10:29-37

What kind of interactions have you had with your neighbors? Answering honestly, I recall both happy and horror stories. For instance, I once asked my Christian neighbor next door to take a cellphone picture of me in my front yard. The response was “don’t bother me because I am busy.” Jesus condemned this type of naughty neighbor behavior in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The religious priest and Levite in the illustration did not represent God’s sacrificial and unconditional love for others. On the other hand, the Good Samaritan represented the nice neighbor who demonstrated God’s love of compassion. Jesus is coming back again so how will you give an account for the deeds you have done in this body: a nice or naughty neighbor?

**Show compassion by seeking to love when it’s not convenient.**

## 2. NEIGHBOR LAW // LUKE 10:27

My mother told me and my siblings, “As long as you live under my roof, you obey my rules.” My mother constantly repeated one rule: “you all better love each other because you are going to need each other.” This house rule originated from the Bible and established boundaries so that our family functioned properly. Similarly, the all-wise God set forth the neighbor law for people everywhere. God purposely gave the neighbor law to dispel a dysfunctional society stating, “love your neighbor as yourself.” While this law sounds straightforward, it can be challenging in life application. We do not always extend the same grace to others that we extend to ourselves. The neighbor law leads to a truth: The way you love others reflects how you love yourself.

**Therefore love yourself well so you can love others well.**

## 3. LIAR, LIAR, PANTS ON FIRE! // 1 JOHN 4:20

Many children have heard the rhyme, “liar, liar, pants on fire!” Growing up in Arkansas, I heard this

phrase when someone was blasted and busted for lying. The apostle John, who wrote to professing Christians boldly proclaimed, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister, whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” The passage is clear and applies to our neighbors if we are going to be known as disciples of Christ by the love that we show others. Otherwise, our lives represent the childhood rhyme, “liar, liar, pants on fire!”

**You cannot say that you love God if you do not love your neighbor.**

## 4. PRESCRIPTION OF LOVE // JOHN 3:16

Medical doctors write prescriptions filled by pharmacists and received by patients for nursing a physical condition. In the same way, God is the ultimate physician who wrote the prescription of love filled by His Son for all people to treat the spiritual condition of a sinful heart. John 3:16 declared, “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” God’s action looks like love because God is love.

**God’s prescription of love is available and filled through His Son, Jesus Christ, and received by placing your faith in Him.**

## 5. COMMANDED TO LOVE // JOHN 15:12

“Jesus loves me this I know, because the Bible tells me so.” These lyrics to a childhood song make me think of God’s great love because He loved us first. God chose to love you and me by demonstrating that love when we were yet in our sins. The Scriptures tell us to love in response to what God has done. What does love look like, when lived out for God and others? Love looks like a life lived in obedience to God’s commands.

**Love is a command not a request given by God.**