

The Good Samaritan Scripture Study



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The Christian church is becoming more ethnically and globally diverse. I attend a fairly diverse church in Seattle and I know that there are others out there. Church leaders *need* to be trained and equipped to effectively meet the needs of their increasingly diverse local communities. I designed the following resource to help guide you to foster reconciliation from a biblical and Christian perspective.

READ: Luke 10:25-37 from the MSG

Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus.

“Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?”

He answered, “What is written in God’s Law? How do you interpret it?”

He said, “That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself.”

“Good answer!” said Jesus. ‘Do it and you will live.’

Looking for a loophole, he asked,

“And just how would you define ‘neighbor?’”

Jesus answered by telling a story.

“There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other

side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man. A Samaritan traveling the road came to him. When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him on to his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the inn-keeper, saying, 'Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I'll pay you on my way back.'

"What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?"

"The one who treated him kindly." The religion scholar responded.
Jesus said, "Go and do the same."

DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS:

The following questions will help you to discuss issues of racial injustice from a biblical perspective and give practical steps to mobilize Christians toward action.

1. How would you usually identify someone as your neighbor?
2. The scripture says that the religious leader was "looking for a loophole" to avoid identifying with people whom he did not naturally consider to be his neighbor. In what ways do we look for loopholes and try to avoid identifying with people unlike us?
3. Jews despised Samaritans and avoided all contact with them. Why? What were some of the reasons for this historical animosity? In what ways do we avoid contact with people who are ethnically and culturally different from us and why? How might this lead us to justify ourselves in avoiding issues of racism?
4. In the story two highly respected religious leaders avoided the injured man—they crossed the street. How do we "cross the street" to avoid having contact with or getting involved with those who have been injured because of racial/ethnic injustice?
5. Under normal circumstances do you think the injured Jewish traveler would have received help from a Samaritan? Why or why not? Explain.
6. The Samaritan feels "compassion" for the injured Jewish traveler. This means that he identified with and felt empathy for the injured man. What would it look like for Christians to identify with and have empathy for people who come from different racial and ethnic backgrounds? How could we demonstrate our concern for the injustice they may face? What would this require?

LEADERS DISCUSSION GUIDE:

This biblical story demonstrates our human tendency to identify with people who are ethnically and culturally like us. For most people it is easier, more comfortable and doesn't require as much work to relate to those who are similar. This can lead to generalizations and stereotypical thinking about people and the difficult situations that they might face. This tendency causes us to intentionally or unintentionally avoid people who are different, which is why we live in segregated communities and participate in segregated activities—including Sunday morning worship services.

APPLICATION POINTS:

1. People are hurt on a regular basis by the effects of racism and injustice—the oppressed as well as the oppressor. It is important that Christians not only acknowledge these effects but get involved in addressing these issues.
2. Jesus challenges us to go beyond who we would normally and naturally identify with as our neighbor. He calls us to identify with people who are ethnically and culturally different from us.
3. According to this biblical story, the first step in reconciliation is to become aware of and acknowledge the pain of our brothers and sisters. The second step is to identify with people who are ethnically and culturally different from us.

This process of identification must include:

- Coming into contact with people who are different from us
- Sharing our stories with them
- Developing mutual empathy and understanding (role taking)
- Linking our individual stories with God's bigger story