

11. The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37



Basic Supplies

CEB Bibles | Sketch & Jot Journals | Submerge magazines | candle and lighter | device for playing music | drama costumes and props | colored pens, pencils, and colored pencils

Additional Supplies

butcher paper | markers | old magazines | scissors | glue sticks | map that includes your location and Jerusalem | sticky notes

Before You Teach

Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan in response to a legal question. That may seem odd, until we remember that a large portion of the Jewish Scriptures were laws. Just as lawyers and judges debate the finer points of the law today, in Jesus' time legal experts debated the finer points of the laws found in Scripture. As is often the case in legal debates, the conversation sometimes became fixated on precise definitions. One word that legal experts debated was *neighbor*.

There were many Jewish laws about how to treat one's neighbor—two of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:16-17), for example. However, the definition of *neighbor* was not entirely clear. In some Scriptures, like the one quoted by the legal expert, the definition seemed to be restricted to fellow Israelites (Leviticus 19:18). In others, the definition seemed to be expanded to include immigrants living in the land (Leviticus 19:33-34). The question was especially complicated when it came to Samaritans. The Samaritans were descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel, just like Jews. Thus, they could be considered neighbors as fellow Israelites. However, Samaritans and Jews had been locked in a bitter rivalry for hundreds of years. Each group felt that it was the guardian of true Israelite religion and tried to discredit the other. Neither group was eager to claim the other as its neighbor.

Jesus, of course, was aware of the complexity of the debate. Perhaps this is why Jesus responded to the legal expert's baiting question with a parable. Jesus' parable did not attempt to determine who was truly Israelite, or who was considered a neighbor under Jewish law. Rather than addressing the question of legal obligation—"Who is my neighbor?" or "Whom am I obligated to love?"—Jesus answered a different question: "How can I be a neighbor to someone?" or "To whom can I show love?" Jesus' story skillfully demonstrated that people's actions, not their religious or ethnic status, determine neighborliness. In particular, the act of drawing near enables people to be moved by compassion. Jesus taught his followers to be compassionate (Luke 6:36) and demonstrated compassion himself (7:13). But, as the parable illustrates, one's capacity for compassion is hindered if one is not willing to draw near. Jesus was not interested in defining and maintaining rigid social boundaries; he was interested in drawing near to those in need. This is a great story to spark a conversation with tweens about the importance of mission and service projects. You also can challenge the students to consider the rigid social boundaries they may experience at school. As peer relationships grow in significance, tweens can become highly invested in the social norms that define what is cool and uncool, okay and not okay. These norms can prevent tweens from being themselves and forming friendships across perceived social boundaries. Following Jesus can empower students to move beyond limiting social norms and develop empathy and compassion.

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GATHER

Greeting

- Welcome students to the space as they arrive. Check in with them about how they're doing.
- Invite the students to silence their electronic devices. Light a candle and invite the students to begin turning their minds and hearts toward God.

Sketch & Jot Journal

- Make colored pens, pencils, and colored pencils available. Invite each student to retrieve their Sketch & Jot Journal (or take a new one and write their name on the back). Encourage the students to respond to the prompt on page 22. You may want to play quiet music during this time.
- After some time, invite your students to share their responses as they are comfortable.

ASK: How do you define the word *neighbor*?

SAY: You might be surprised to learn that this was an important question in Jesus' time. Jewish law said to love your neighbor, but legal experts debated who was included in the word *neighbor*. In today's story, Jesus gives his answer.

Game – Freeze Tag

- Gather your students in a relatively large, open space. Explain the boundaries of the game. Choose one student to be the Freezer. Explain the following rules:
 1. The Freezer chases the remaining players, attempting to tag them. If a player is tagged, he or she must freeze on the spot.
 2. Frozen players must remain frozen until another player frees them by running in a circle around them three times.
 3. If a player is tagged while attempting to free a frozen player, he or she must freeze alongside the frozen player. The pair must remain frozen until a third player frees them by running in a circle around them both three times.
 4. Any player may be tagged while trying to free frozen players. There is no limit to the number of players who may be frozen together.
- Play for a predetermined amount of time, or until every player is frozen, whichever comes first.

TIP: To add variety, you can introduce new ways to free frozen players, such as performing five jumping jacks or the Macarena.

ASK: How did you decide whether or not to help a frozen player? How did it feel if you were tagged while trying to help?

SAY: Helping someone else sometimes means taking a risk. Today's story is a parable Jesus told about a person who took a risk to help a stranger. Let's read the story to find out what happened.

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EXPLORE

Bible Reading

- Invite your students to look up Luke 10:25-37 and to take turns reading.
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Bible Improv

Before class: Photocopy page 66, one for each student.

- Invite the students to choose roles. Have them pick props and/or costumes to use during the skit.
- Option 1: Read through the script as a group. Where indicated, invite the students to say what they think the character(s) would say.
- Option 2: Divide the students into groups. Give each group about 5 minutes to read through the script and to write in lines, where indicated. Invite the students to perform their completed script and to explain why they chose those lines for the character(s).

TIP: *Speaking as a character in the story is a fun, improvisational way to explore the story. Encourage various students to share an answer from the character's perspective. It's okay for students' answers to conflict. Each student will enter the story differently.*

Discussion

- Choose one or both of these topics to discuss with the students. Allow the students' interests and questions to guide you.

ASK: The legal expert asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" This question may seem silly, but it was a common debate in Jesus' time. There were many Jewish laws about how to treat your neighbor. Jewish law sometimes defined *neighbor* as a fellow Israelite. In other cases, the law included members of other people groups. People really wanted to know how to define this word so that they knew who to treat like a neighbor. But Jesus flipped the question. Instead of asking "Who is my neighbor?" he asked "To whom can I be a neighbor?" What is the difference between those two questions? To whom can you be a neighbor? What does it look like to be a good neighbor?

ASK: The Gospels of Matthew and Mark each has a story about the commandment to love God and neighbor. You can check them out in Matthew 22:34-40 and in Mark 12:28-34. In those stories, the two commandments are separated. The command to love God is first, and the command to love your neighbor is second. Why do you think Luke combined these two commandments into one in this story? Do you think loving your neighbor is as important as loving God? Why or why not? Do you think it's possible to love God without loving your neighbor? Why or why not?

TIP: *If you have enough leaders, discuss these questions in small groups.*

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RESPOND

Creative Expression – Love God, Love People Collage

Before class: Gather butcher paper, markers, old magazines, scissors, and glue sticks.

SAY: Jesus' story illustrated how to be a neighbor to someone.

ASK: What did Jesus ask the legal expert after telling his story? (*Which one of these three was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?*) What was the legal expert's response? (*The one who demonstrated mercy toward him.*)

SAY: Jesus told the legal expert to "go and do likewise." That instruction is for us, too.

ASK: What do you think it looks like to be a neighbor to someone today? If Jesus were telling a parable about being a neighbor today, what examples might he use?

SAY: We're going to make a banner to show what it looks like to love God and love our neighbors.

- Roll out a length of butcher paper that is long enough for the students to work on all at once. Have a student who is skilled in bubble letters outline "Love God" and "Love Neighbor" on the banner. Make sure there is enough room inside the letters for students to draw or paste images.
- Invite the students to look through the old magazines for images of people showing love to God. Have them glue the images that illustrate loving God inside the bubble letters of the phrase "Love God." Students also may draw inside the letters ways to love God.
- Have the students repeat the process, this time looking for or drawing images that illustrate showing love to neighbors.
- As the students work, encourage them to talk about the images they find or create. Discuss how those images illustrate love of God and neighbor.
- After the collage is complete, **ASK:** Which of these images could you make happen in your life? How can you show your love for God and neighbor this week?

Mission Activity

Before class: Gather sticky notes, a map that includes your location and Jerusalem, and colored pens.

SAY: This month, we're raising money for the Princess Basma Centre, an organization in Jerusalem that supports children with disabilities. We may not be geographical neighbors, but we can still be a neighbor to the Princess Basma Centre and the children it serves.

- Have the students read the mission article on pages 28-29 of the magazine, if they haven't already done so.

SAY: One way to be a neighbor to people who are far away is to pray for them.

- Invite the students to write or draw on sticky notes prayers for the Princess Basma Centre and the children it serves. Have the children stick their finished prayers on the map, forming a line between your location and Jerusalem.

TIP: Take a photo of the prayer map, if desired. You can include the photo along with the cards of encouragement you'll make next week when you send your donation.

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Magazine Discussion

- Invite each student to retrieve their copy of the Submerge magazine (or take a new one and write their name on the back).
- Invite the students to take turns reading out loud the article on pages 22-23. Invite them to respond to any prompts as a group.

TIP: *After reading the article, you may want to give the students a few minutes to write or draw their responses to any prompts. This will give shy or introverted students time to process their thoughts, making them more likely to share in the group discussion.*

BLESS

Individual Prayer

- Invite your students to get their Sketch & Jot Journals and to gather in your worship space. Make colored pens, pencils, and colored pencils available.
- Encourage the students to complete the prayer activity on page 23. You may want to play quiet music to encourage a reflective atmosphere.
- After some time, invite students who feel comfortable to share their reflections from the prayer activity. Any student may pass.

Group Prayer and Blessing

- Invite the students to share any prayer requests with the group.

TIP: *Students may feel more comfortable sharing prayer requests in the format of “highs and lows.” Invite each student to share the high point and low point of her or his week. Remind the students that we can thank God for the high points and ask God for help with the low points.*

- Invite the students to stand in a circle, join hands, and ready themselves for prayer. Share a brief prayer, then squeeze the hand of the student to your right. Invite each student to offer a prayer, silently or aloud, before squeezing the hand of the next person. Students may pray about concerns just shared or about anything on their hearts.
- When the prayer comes back to you, **SAY:** Amen.
- Invite the students to shake hands with one another, offering the following greeting and response.

STUDENT 1: The peace of Christ be with you.

STUDENT 2: And also with you.

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Bible Improv Script

STORYTELLER: A legal expert stood up to test Jesus.

LEGAL EXPERT: Teacher, what must I do to gain eternal life?

JESUS: What is written in the Law? How do you interpret it?

LEGAL EXPERT: You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.

JESUS: You've got the right answer. Follow it.

STORYTELLER: The legal expert wanted to prove that he was right, so he asked a second question.

LEGAL EXPERT: And who is my neighbor?

JESUS: A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the road, he met thieves, who robbed him, beat him up, and left him near death. Now it just so happened that a priest was also going down the same road. When he saw the injured man, he crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way.

PRIEST: *(Say what you think this character would think or say.)*

INJURED MAN: *(Say what you think this character would think or say.)*

JESUS: Likewise, a Levite came by that spot, saw the injured man, crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way.

LEVITE: *(Say what you think this character would think or say.)*

INJURED MAN: *(Say what you think this character would think or say.)*

JESUS: A Samaritan also was traveling through the area. When he saw the injured man, he was moved with compassion. The Samaritan went to him and bandaged his wounds, tending them with oil and wine. Then he placed the injured man on his own donkey and took him to an inn to recover. He paid the innkeeper for the injured man to stay there as long as he needed.

SAMARITAN: *(Say what you think this character would think or say.)*

INJURED MAN: *(Say what you think this character would think or say.)*

JESUS: What do you think? Which one of these was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?

LEGAL EXPERT: The one who showed him mercy.

JESUS: Go and do likewise.

LEGAL EXPERT: *(Say what you think this character would think or say.)*