

## The Good Samaritan

This article on Luke 10:25-37 is edited in part from the Nehemiah Project International Ministries

In Jesus' day, Samaritans and Jews did not like each other. Today it would be similar to the way some Christian Americans feel about Muslims or some Democrats feel about Republicans and vice versa. Samaritans were not considered honorable by Jews; therefore, many were probably very surprised that the Messiah chose a Samaritan to demonstrate how we ought to love our neighbors.

In this story a Jewish man, who is astute in the Old Testament law, tests Jesus by asking, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus tells him to refer back to the Old Testament. The man responds, "You shall 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" (Luke 10:27). And Jesus says to him, "You are correct, go and do that." The man then asks a key question, "Who is my neighbor?" The Bible states he asked the question to justify himself. In other words it is obvious who his neighbor is, but he claims to be ignorant of that. The man is looking for a legalistic response, maybe a way out of feeling guilty about his current actions. However, in response to his question, Jesus contrasts a priest and Levite who do not help someone in need, due to their legalism with a Samaritan who demonstrates great honor by risking his life to help someone else.

There are many Christians today, like this man, who do not know who their neighbor is. They participate in all the right activities, say all the right things, and do all the right sacraments but fail to love their neighbors. Loving your neighbors is hard because, like you and me, they are selfish, self-centered and ungrateful. You cannot, however, truly love God if you do not love your neighbor (1 John 4:20-21).

Who then is your neighbor? According to Jesus, he or she is the nearest person to you who needs your help. It could be a friend, family member, coworker, employee, stranger, even an enemy. Good Samaritans are people who are motivated by love for God, and therefore bring aid to others in need. They seek justice in an unjust world. They sacrifice their time and resources to help those in need. They do so because it is the right thing to do and not for recognition or to get something in return. They love all people regardless of their religions, race, or moral standards.

Evaluate yourself. Are you more like the priest and the Levite who worried more about what would happen to themselves, or the Samaritan who focused on the person in need? The Levite and the priest preserved themselves; the Samaritan preserved the other person. In your circle of influence do you focus more on preserving yourself, or do you focus on the people around you and the community you serve?