

Parables: Jesus the Storyteller

Lesson 19 - Who's My Neighbor?

Warm up -

1. Have you ever picked up a hitchhiker? Why or why not?
2. You're riding on the city bus when a bag lady gets on and chooses the seat opposite you. She's dressed in rags, and it's all too obvious she hasn't taken a shower for a very long time. All of a sudden, she quits mumbling to herself and starts talking to you. What do you do?
 - stare straight ahead and pretend you don't hear
 - move to another seat
 - invite her to your home for a bath
 - chat with her and get off at the next stop
 - ask her some questions about her life
 - other :
3. What do you think eternal life has to do with being neighborly?

Lesson -

What do I need to do to get eternal life? That's the question a scholar who majored in religious studies asked Jesus one day. Jesus answered his question with another: What does the Bible say? That's easy, replied the scholar (you can bet he knew his Ten Commandments inside and out). Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself. Bingo! said Jesus. There's your answer. Do it and you'll live.

Well then, who is my neighbor? the scholar wanted to know. Then Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan.

The scholarly type was probably hoping for a nice tight definition he could use to plot his way into eternal life. If so, this parable must have blown him away. First, Jesus' story makes it clear that *anyone in need* is our neighbor. Whoa! Think about the number as there are people - at last count, over six billion. Our neighbors include the know-it-all in math class, the popular girl who wears only the hottest stuff, the millionaire whose name graces half the buildings in the town, and the coke addict on the street corner.

Second, it's pretty obvious that there are more needs out there than we could ever hope to meet. It's also obvious that even if we win the Nobel prize for charity, we can never earn our salvation. It's a gift from God, plain and simple. And the best way we can thank God for the gift is to try and live like Christ in this world.

What does that take? It's simple and it's hard. It takes everything we have, every minute of our lives.

Read Luke 10:30-37

1. As you read this, look for things the Samaritan does for the wounded man.
2. The Jews hated Samaritans. Why is this important to the story?
3. With whom in the story would the religious expert have identified? What advice does Jesus have for him?
4. When the Samaritan saw the injured man, his "heart went out to him," and he stopped and took care of him. What keeps us from doing the same thing?
5. How do we sometimes try to justify walking past people in need? Are any of these excuses valid?
6. Think of someone you know who needs your help or your attention or your time or your comfort. What can you do to follow the Samaritan's example? Share your ideas with the group.
7. It's easy to do stuff for people we like. Why does Jesus insist that we help people we have reason to hate?
8. Sometimes thinking about the needs people have can be overwhelming. Poverty, for instance, may seem like too big a problem for you to make any difference. How can this be a copout for doing anything at all? Discuss specific ways you can help address a big problem.