

## The God Life Part 5: "Love Is More Than A Feeling" 05.06.12

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:7 / Luke 10:25-37 MSG

**Intro:** Today I want to talk to you about love. Not the kind of mushy, feeling romantic kind of love. I want to talk about the "love in action" kind of love. The kind of love that Peter talks about at the end of his life.

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith ... mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love." 2 Peter 1:5a;7b NIV

Isn't it interesting that Peter includes both "mutual affection" and "love" together... as if they are two differing things. Mutual affection is the love we have for those who are like us, for those who share our values. In the world of Christ-followers - Peter's world of 2,000 years ago - mutual affection would refer to those who share our faith: affection we have for those who worship with us, who are in our church.

But then there is "love," a whole another thing beyond "mutual affection." Love - in the Christian sense - would be more than a feeling. More than a mushy, romantic attraction to someone else. There certainly is - and should be - a love between those in our family, our spouses and our children. Jesus, OTOH, talked about love in action for "neighbors," who he defined for us in his story of the Good Samaritan. **Tonight I'd like to consider six lessons we learn from Luke 10:25-37.**

### Six Lessons from The Good Samaritan

**1st Lesson: The gold standard of Christianity is LOVING GOD and LOVING PEOPLE.**

This is the mission of Church Requel, that we ARE a community loving God and loving people. This was not our own bright idea! It comes from the Old Testament. **The religion scholar recites it to Jesus.**

"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." Luke 10:27 MSG

These two objects of our love - God and other people - go hand in hand. One leads us to the other. Whenever you love someone, you want to please them. You try to identify with them. **ILL. I love Mary Kay. For that reason I love the things and the people she loves. Mary Kay has a passion for families who have someone with a mental illness. Because she loves them, I love them. That's why I'm running in the NAMI 5k this next weekend. It's based more on her compassion than on my own.** Loving other people - especially the hard-to-love kind of people is the same thing for those who claim to love Christ. We love them because He loves them. We act on that love because we realize we are the hands and feet of Jesus in a broken world. Other people see the love of Christ because they see our love for Christ and for them.

**2nd Lesson: Loving People is required for LIVING THE GOOD LIFE.**

Loving God and loving other people is more than just a good option for us. It's the key to the good life, in fact to eternal life! **Jesus tells us why:**

"Good answer!" said Jesus. "Do it and you'll live." Luke 10:28 MSG

Remember that Jesus is answering the question: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus told us that he didn’t come to abolish the OT teachings. He came to fulfill them. Loving God and loving people was the foundation of the entire OT law. We should not look at this in a legalistic way - as in if you don’t do this you won’t go to Heaven. As we’ll see at the conclusion to this “God Life” series, our ticket to Heaven is based entirely on the “work” that Christ has already done for us.

However, this new life we experience should also show itself in the way we live. In our motivations. In what we *want* to do. In how we feel toward others. We can’t experience the powerful and loving Holy Spirit of Christ living inside us and *at the same time* not have a desire to demonstrate real love to difficult-to-love people. The two go together. If we really are Heaven-bound Christ-followers, we will want to love other people. Let me put it this way. We don’t love difficult-to-love people **so we can go to Heaven...** we love difficult-to-love people **because we are on our way to Heaven!**

**3rd Lesson: There are no LOOPHOLES when it comes to loving other people.**

The religious lawyer does the same thing we do when we come up against difficult-to-love people. **He looks for a loophole.**

Looking for a loophole, he asked, “And just how would you define ‘neighbor?’” Luke 10:29 MSG

This is the “cake and eat it too” syndrome. We want to be a Christ-follower. We just don’t want to love the messy kind of people that He loves. We want to love the kind of people that we love. So we look for loopholes.

It’s sad to say, but this is especially true in our American society today. We even choose the kind of church we attend often because of the other kind of people who attend it. We actively look for people who are like us. We ask ourselves, ‘Are these the kind of people I want to hang out with?’

That’s why this lesson on “Who is My Neighbor?” is still so important today. The people we love are not defined by the neighborhood we live in. They are not defined by our social class, our economic status, our political viewpoint, and especially not by our race or nationality.

**4th Lesson: Loving people God’s way doesn’t come from OBLIGATION but from COMPASSION.**

We often say that our Christian faith is not a religion, but is a relationship. No where is this more apparent than in this lesson about demonstrating love to those who are difficult-to-love. Verse 33 shows us the “how” of our love. Notice that it doesn’t come from “have-to-do-it.”

**“A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him.” Luke 10:33 MSG**

This is the natural compassion felt by anyone in love with Christ. His Spirit changes our natural compassion to His compassion. This is why, I believe, Jesus described the first 2 travelers in religious terms - the priest and the Levite. We will never really LOVE other people because we have to. We can be involved in giving projects. We can do all kinds of things because of religion. But we will only really love our neighbors out of compassion. Because of relationship, not religion.

### **5th Lesson: Compassion trumps our SCHEDULE AND PLANS.**

Our own busyness is the biggest barrier we face when it comes to showing Christ's love to others. **Jesus details the love shown:**

"He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable." Luke 10:34 MSG

The Samaritan even checks back and leaves money to care for the injured traveler. This means leaving room in our lives to help other people. Keeping margins in our life that make it possible to stop our schedule and plans and to change priorities on a dime. **ILL. - (Holding up a sheet of notebook paper with writing on it.)** When we write on a sheet of paper, we don't write on it from edge to edge. We include margins... white space that borders and frames our writing. The same thing should be true of our lives. We should leave room in our lives for the unplanned compassion that could frame and border our lives. Far too often we don't help because we just don't have room in our lives. We think we are being efficient and effective, but we are not living in that interruptible space of ministry that Jesus so beautifully demonstrated in his physical life on Earth. Keeping the margins of your life free for unplanned compassion requires discipline and purpose. This is where a daily quiet time can be so important. If, in the morning - during your quiet time - you ask God to show you how you might be a Good Samaritan to others - you'll be amazed at all the opportunities you have throughout your day!

### **6th Lesson: Our KINDNESS TO OTHERS is God's plan to confront evil in our world.**

One of the biggest challenges we face is the question of evil in our world. Why are things so bad? Where is God when people are hungry or hurting or needing help? God works through you and me. **Jesus:**

"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." Luke 10:36-37MSG

**Conclusion:** These are the same words that Jesus says to you and me. "Go and do the same." There is nothing that says "Christian" more than this story of the Good Samaritan. There is nothing that speaks more loudly about your own Christianity than your own acts of love and kindness, especially when they are unplanned in the margins of your daily life.

It's easy to become overwhelmed about all the problems and evil and wrongness of our world. It's God's job to solve the "whole thing," not your job. What is your responsibility? To do what you can do. To remain close to Christ. To keep the margins of your life open. To look for ways that you can be Christ to someone today. If each one of us did this on a daily basis - if we lived the life of the Good Samaritan - loving others by showing kindness in those unplanned margins of our lives - the world would be a much less evil place. People would know that God is still alive and well because you and I "go and do likewise."

**Let's pray.**