Serving Neighbors, Serving God
Luke 10:25-34
SS Lesson for 02/08/2015

Devotional Scripture: James 2:8-20

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reviews how we as Christians should always be Serving Neighbors and Serving God. The study’s aim is to recognize how self-centeredness hurts our ability to help others. The study’s application is to forgo personal conveniences so that we can meet the needs of others. (Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary).

Key Verse: Luke 10:36-37

36 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" 37 And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is perhaps the most well-known Lucan parable. It must be interpreted on two levels. The first level is the plain teaching that a person, like the Samaritan, should help others in need (v. 37). If one has the heart of a neighbor, he will see and help a neighbor. However, in the context of the rejection of Jesus, it should also be noted in this parable that the Jewish religious leaders rejected the man who fell among the robbers. A Samaritan, an outcast, was the only one who helped the man. Jesus was like the Samaritan. He was the outcast One, who was willing to seek and to save people who were perishing. He was directly opposed to the religious establishment. The theme is reminiscent of Jesus’ words to the Pharisees (7:44-50). The theme of Jesus’ going to those who needed Him became more and more evident. An expert in the Law asked Jesus. Teacher... what must I do to inherit eternal life? This question surfaced on several occasions (Matt. 19:16-22; Luke 18:18-23; John 3:1-15). The question in this case was not sincere, as can be seen from two points in the text: (1) The lawyer wanted to test Jesus. (He called Jesus “Teacher,” didaskale, Luke’s equivalent of a Jewish Rabbi.) (2) After Jesus answered the man’s question, Luke recorded that the man wished to justify himself (Luke 10:29). Jesus answered his question with two other questions (v. 26), driving the Law expert back to the Old Testament Law. The expert answered correctly by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. One must love... God and one’s fellowman in order to keep the Law properly. Jesus affirmed that if the man did this, he would live. The man’s response should have been to ask, “How can I do this? I am not able. I need help.” Instead, he tried “to justify himself,” that is, to defend himself against the implications of Jesus’ words. So he tried to move the focus off himself by asking, And who is my neighbor? Jesus answered by telling the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho descends approximately 3,000 feet in about 17 miles. It was a dangerous road to travel for robbers hid along its steep, winding way. A priest, one expected to love others, avoided the wounded man, probably a fellow Jew. Levites were descendants of Levi but not of Aaron, and they assisted the priests (Aaron’s descendants) in the temple. The Samaritans were scorned by the Jews because of their mixed Jewish and Gentile ancestry. It is ironic, then, that a Samaritan helped the half-dead man, dressing his wounds, taking him to an inn, and paying his expenses. By asking Which... was his neighbor? (Luke 10:36) Jesus was teaching that a person should be a neighbor to anyone he meets in need. The ultimate Neighbor was Jesus, whose compassion contrasted with the Jewish religious leaders who had no compassion on those who were perishing. Jesus wrapped up His teaching with the command that His followers were to live like that true neighbor (v. 37).

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Have you ever seen a TV game show on which ordinary people try to match wits with experts? It is a format that has proven popular off and on through the years. The rules are different from show to show, but the idea is for the contestant to prove that the so-called expert is not as knowledgeable as one might expect. Since 1992, Apple Inc. has hosted a Stump the Experts segment, in a game show format, at its annual Worldwide Developers Conference. Of course, game shows often rely on topics that have wide popular appeal but ultimately are of little consequence—things like sports or movies. Or the topic might be certain issues of science or history—the kind of thing a person learns in school but seldom remembers. The important questions of life are not the subject matter of most game shows. The

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Gospels show us that some people in Jesus’ day tried to play stump-the-expert with him. Appearing sincere, they really were attempting to put Jesus to shame by asking questions he could not answer effectively. But Jesus always overcame these challenges. In so doing, he fashioned answers that addressed something of greater significance than what the questioners had asked. Jesus was the master of life’s most significant questions. Today’s text is an example of this, perhaps the most famous of all such examples.

Today’s lesson is best understood by first familiarizing ourselves with the characters that appear in it. The text begins with Jesus being confronted with a question from an expert in the law, or what some translations simply call “a lawyer.” This refers to someone very different from modern lawyers. This first-century Jewish lawyer was not a legal advocate like a lawyer of today, but was an expert in the Law of Moses—someone who taught that law and its application. We might compare this kind of lawyer with a scholar of the Bible today. In responding to this expert’s challenge, Jesus introduced some typical characters in the form of a story. One was a Jewish priest. As descendants of Aaron (Exodus 29:9), priests offered sacrifices in Israel’s temple in Jerusalem. Their duties were sacred to all the Jewish people. Another character in Jesus’ story is a Levite, a member of Israel’s tribe of Levi. Levites assisted the priests in the temple (Numbers 3:5-9). Levites might be masons or carpenters who maintained the temple grounds, musicians accompanying worship, janitors who cleaned up after the crowds, or even animal handlers who managed the livestock that was sacrificed (1 Chronicles 23:27-31). The role of Levites was not as distinct as that of the priests, but was nonetheless sacred to the Jews. In contrast with these two is a Samaritan, who stands at the center of the story. Jews and Samaritans were rivals for the land of Israel and for the claim to be God’s people (Luke 9:51-56; John 4:9, 19-22). Assyria deported many people of the tribes of northern Israel in 722 BC and brought captives from elsewhere into the land of Israel. This resulted in intermarriages between those imported captives and the Israelites who remained, those not taken into exile (2 Kings 17; Ezra 4:2, 10). The descendants of such intermarriages became the Samaritans. The designation Samaria comes from 1 Kings 16:24. The “pure blood” Jews viewed Samaritans with disdain. This resulted in antagonism between Samaritans and the Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile after 539 BC (Ezra 4:1-5; Nehemiah 4:1, 2). Jews were afraid of being corrupted by those who were not pure Israelites, so post-exilic Jews had few dealings with Samaritans (John 4:9). Jesus’ enemies tried to discredit him by labeling him a Samaritan (John 8:48). Thus a Samaritan serves as a perfect foil in Jesus’ story, as we shall see. Today’s text is found in a section of Luke in which Jesus is teaching his followers and responding to his critics while making his way slowly and fatefully toward Jerusalem (see Luke 9:51). Jesus had already warned his disciples that he was to be crucified and rise from the dead, something that they could not grasp (9:21, 22, 44). It has been said that the cross casts a shadow over every episode in this section of Luke’s Gospel.

**Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

**Serving Neighbors by Loving God (Luke 10:25-28)**

25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"
26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"
27 So he answered and said, "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.'"
28 And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

**What is loving God**

*Loving God is fearing, serving and obeying Him (Deut 10:12-13)*

12 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?
Loving God is the first and greatest command (Matt 22:37-40)
37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Loving God is more important than offerings (Mark 12:33)
33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

With all our heart

With sincerity (Commentary from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary)
The "heart," then, must here mean the sincerity of both the thoughts and the feelings; in other words, 'uprightness' or 'true-heartedness,' as opposed to a hypocritical or divided affection.

With the center of the intellect (Personal Commentary)
Heart' as the center of man's intellectual activity. The inner source from which something proceeds”. The heart, not only as the seat of the affections, but is the center of our complex being-physical, moral, spiritual, and intellectual.

We are able to love God because He purposed our hearts to do so (Deut 30:6)
The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

Loving God with our heart is rejoicing in His salvation (Ps 13:5)
5 But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

Loving God with our heart is trusting in God and praising Him for that (Ps 28:7)
7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart exults, And with my song I shall thank Him.

Loving God with our heart is being steadfast in our faith (Ps 57:7)
7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!

With all our soul

Supremely (Commentary from Barnes Notes)
The meaning of this is, thou shalt love him with all thy faculties or powers. Thou shalt love him supremely, more than all other beings and things, and with all the ardor possible. To love him with all the heart is to fix the affections supremely on him, more strongly than on anything else, and to be willing to give up all that we hold dear at his command.

Through emotions (Commentary from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
But next, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" "with thy soul." This is designed to command our emotional nature: ‘Thou shalt put feeling or warmth into thine affection.’

Loving God with our soul is worshipping God in spirit and truth (John 4:24)
24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

We can love God with our soul by blessing His Holy Name (Ps 103:1)
103:1 Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name.
We can love God with our soul because our soul belongs to God (Ezek 18:4)

4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.

With all our strength

Through great effort (Commentary from Barnes' Notes)

With all the faculties of soul and body. To labor and toil for his glory, and to make that the great object of all our efforts.

With energy (Commentary from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

This commands our energies or with the whole energy of our being!

We can love God with our strength because He is our strength (Ps 18:1-3)

I love you, O LORD, my strength. 2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. 3 I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise

We can love God with our strength through endurance and patience (Col 1:10-12)

11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light

With all our mind

Through living like we love God (Commentary from Barnes' Notes)

Or, with all thy "life." This means, to be willing to give up the life to him, and to devote it all to his service; to live to him, and to be willing to die at his command.

Through the intellect, like the heart (Commentary from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary)

This commands our intellectual nature: 'Thou shalt put intelligence into thine affection'-- in opposition to a blind devotion, or mere devoteeism.

We can love God with our mind by praying and singing to God with our mind (1 Cor 14:15)

15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.

We can love God with our mind by setting our mind on what the Holy Spirit desires (Rom 8:5-6)

those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace

We can love God with our mind because God has renewed our mind (Rom 12:2)

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Serving God by Loving Others (Luke 10:29-37)

29 But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"
30 Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.
31 Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

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32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.
33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.
34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.
35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'
36 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"
37 And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Don't ignore others troubles

Instead of ignoring, God wants us to help carry other's burdens (Gal 6:2)
   Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Instead of ignoring, God wants us to help the oppressed and share with the poor (Isa 58:6-7)
6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?  7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Instead of ignoring, God wants us to bear with the failings of the weak (Rom 15:1)
   We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

Instead of ignoring, God wants us to encourage and help those who need it (1Thes 5:14)
   And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

Have compassion for others

God has compassion on us so we can have compassion on others (2 Cor 1:3-4)
3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,  4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

As God's chosen people, we should have compassion (Col 3:12)
   Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

We are commanded to be kind and compassionate (Eph 4:32)
   Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Showing compassion confirms we have wisdom from God (James 3:17)
   But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

As a member of the body of Jesus, we should be sympathetic and compassionate (1 Pet 3:8)
   Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

Compassion is one of the building blocks of maturity in the faith (2 Pet 1:5-8)
   5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;  6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;  7 and to godliness,
brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When to help our neighbor (From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)

“Jesus’ answer involves three things. (1) We must help a man even when he has brought his trouble on himself, as the traveler by his recklessness had done. (2) Any man of any nation who is in need is my neighbor. Our help must be as wide as the love of God. (3) The help must be practical, and must not consist merely of feeling sorry. No doubt the priest and the Levite felt a pang of pity for the wounded man, but they did nothing. Compassion, to be real compassion, must issue in deeds” (Barclay, The Gospel of Luke, Westminster). Most of us do not have difficulty understanding what the Lord requires of us. As persons who have received God’s grace and mercy, we are capable of loving others as ourselves, and we are called on to do so. We do not necessarily need more knowledge of the Scriptures; we need the willingness to daily put into practice those commands of our Lord that we already comprehend. Does prejudice, racism, or hatred keep us from helping people our Lord would help? Remember, we are the hands and feet of Christ on earth (cf. I Cor. 12:13-27). If His work is to be accomplished, it must be done by those who claim to be His people.

Address the physical needs of others

_We are commanded to attend to the physical needs of those who need it (James 2:15-16)_

15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

_We are to provide the physical needs of others (Prov 25:21)_

If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.

_We must love in physical action not just words (I John 3:18)_

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

_Love compels us to do no harm to others (Rom 13:10)_

Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

_Love is meeting the needs of others (Luke 6:35)_

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

_Commentary from the Life Application Notes_

Love means action. One way to put love to work is to take the initiative in meeting specific needs. This is easy to do with people who love us, people whom we trust; but love means doing this even to those who dislike us or plan to hurt us. The money we give others should be considered a gift, not a high-interest loan that will help us more than them. Give as though you are giving to God.

Address the financial needs of others

_Address the financial needs by being generous with our resources (2 Cor 9:11)_

You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

_Address the financial needs by giving versus always desiring to receive (Acts 20:35)_

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’"
Address the financial needs by supplying the needs of others out of our plenty (2 Cor 8:14)

At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality.

Address the financial needs by supporting the needs of others (Phil 4:16)

for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.

Address the spiritual needs of others

Always try to assist in the restoral of others (Gal 6:1)

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

Pray for the spiritual health of others (1 John 5:16)

If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.

Always try to help those who are not sure of their spiritual destination (Jude 1:22-23)

22 Be merciful to those who doubt; 23 snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Assist in the spiritual growth of others (Luke 22:32)

But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

There is a great contrast in our text between the two religious leaders and the Samaritan, but at its very root, there is one thing that especially distinguishes the Samaritan from the Jews—compassion. When the two Jewish religious leaders saw the injured man, they seem to be repulsed, and they do everything they can to ignore and avoid him. The Samaritan, moved with compassion, does everything possible to minister to the needs of the injured victim.

What is Jesus trying to teach this Jewish lawyer here, by telling him this story? Overall, I believe that Jesus is attempting to show this lawyer that the Jewish religious system of that day was completely bankrupt. This lawyer obviously saw himself as the authority, and Jesus as the back woods preacher. The lawyer thought of himself as the accreditation agency, and of Jesus as the novice who was being tested for official approval. The lawyer thought of Judaism as owning the only franchise offering tickets to “kingdom of God,” and anyone who did not obtain their official approval as imposters. Jesus sought to show this self-confident lawyer that by his own definitions, law keeping was not the pathway to eternal life, because no one is able to live up to the demands of the law. In order for one to be saved by law keeping, he must fulfill every requirement of the law all of the time, and with his whole heart, soul, mind and strength. This was impossible, and so this lawyer should realize that the law can only condemn, but it cannot save. This lawyer’s confidence in the law and his ability to keep it was at the heart of his resistance to Jesus Christ. He confronted Jesus because he perceived (correctly) that our Lord posed a threat to Judaism. This lawyer was unwilling to accept faith in the Lord Jesus as the way to eternal life because his whole life was devoted to the preservation and promotion of law keeping. Until this lawyer saw the bankruptcy of his religious system, he could not cast himself on Jesus for salvation by faith.

The story of the Good Samaritan teaches some very important lessons to law keepers, to those who wrongly supposed they can earn eternal life by doing good works. It teaches that those in the highest offices of Judaism are guilty of a lack of compassion, which is at the heart of what the law required:
9 And as Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man, called Matthew, sitting in the tax office; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he rose, and followed Him. 10 And it happened that as He was reclining at the table in the house, behold many tax-gatherers and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax-gatherers and sinners?” 12 But when He heard this, He said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. 13 “But go and learn what this means, ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matthew 9:9-13).

There was a very fundamental difference between our Lord’s way of salvation and that of Judaism. Our Lord’s way was that of grace, through faith in the sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Judaism’s way was the way of law keeping, impossible though it may be. If a man actually supposed that he earned eternal life by his good works—by law keeping—then it is no wonder that he would be proud and self-righteous. Salvation (eternal life) was the result of his working. And so it comes as no surprise to see the priest and the Levite passing by the robbery victim with no compassion at all. They looked at the afflicted as those who suffered due to their own sin (see John 9:1), and they looked upon the affluent as those who had lifted themselves up by their own bootstraps. No wonder they had no compassion on the “sick.” No wonder the prophet Jonah wanted to watch the people of Nineveh be burned to a crisp, even the little children and the animals (see Jonah chapter 4). Self-righteousness is a subsidiary of legalism, and the mortal enemy of compassion and mercy. Grace, on the other hand, is the mother of compassion. The lawyer was partially correct in his assessment of our Lord’s teaching about the way to eternal life. Jesus did teach that eternal life is granted by the doing (so to speak) of one thing—namely, believing in Jesus Christ. If one recognizes that law keeping cannot save, but can only condemn, then eternal life must come another way. And so it does. Those who accept the indictment of their sins by the law can be saved, apart from good works, by trusting in the only One who has ever kept the whole law, the One who died to satisfy the death penalty which the law pronounced upon sinners. Jesus Christ is the only righteous man to have lived on this earth. He alone fulfilled the law perfectly. And yet He took our sins upon Himself, bearing the curse of death which the law pronounced upon us. And by trusting in His death, burial, and resurrection on our behalf, our sins are forgiven and we receive the free gift of eternal life. Since this eternal life is not the result of our good works, but the result of God’s grace manifested in and through Jesus Christ, we have nothing to be proud of, no basis for feeling self-righteous. And because God has been merciful and gracious to us, we can show mercy and compassion toward others. Grace leaves no place for self-righteousness; it is the basis for compassion. That is what Jesus is trying to help this lawyer to understand through the parable of the Good Samaritan. And just as this despised and rejected Samaritan became the “savior” of the robbery victim on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, so the despised and rejected Jesus of Nazareth has become the Savior of all who trust in Him:

3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; he chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him (Isaiah 53:3-6).

Let me say one more thing as I conclude this lesson. This parable (and this sermon) are not intended to demean true biblical scholarship and study. I do believe that this parable was meant to condemn scholasticism, the intellectual and academic study of the Bible that is substituted for faith and obedience. How this lawyer seems to have enjoyed intellectualizing the truth of God’s Word. How hard he tried to keep the discussion scholarly and detached from life. But our Lord would not allow this man to deal with the truth of God’s Word in a test tube. Jesus would not define the term “neighbor” by doing a Hebrew word study. He defined it by telling a story. And Jesus will not allow the lawyer to deliberate and pass judgment as to whether someone else is our neighbor; He challenges us to ask ourselves whether or not we are good neighbors to those in need. That is what the truth of God’s Word is for, it is to be rightly understood and then rightly lived. God does not want us to give Him a textbook definition of loving our neighbor; He wants us to demonstrate love for our neighbor in the real world, by showing compassion to one in need, as did the Good Samaritan. Let us beware of intellectualizing the truth. Let us beware of keeping the Word of God in the classroom. And let us live out the grace of God that we have experienced it, if indeed we have experienced it.

(Adapted from URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/good-samaritan-1025-37)
Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Jesus’ story challenges some ways we commonly think about ourselves, others, and God. He challenges the ways we distance ourselves from people who are not like us. He challenges the ways we try to narrow our obligations. He challenges any thinking that pretends one can be good enough to deserve God’s favor. When we read the story of the good Samaritan, it is proper to think that we must be like the Samaritan. But first we need to think of ourselves as the victim in the story. His helpless, near-death condition is our condition when God finds us. Through the sacrifice of his Son, God in his grace and mercy rescues us from eternal death. We love him in response to his gracious love for us. Loving God compels us to love others in the same way, to reach out graciously and generously to those who have need of salvation just as we did.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. The lawyer was not truly seeking Jesus; he was seeking to trick Jesus (Luke 10:25)
2. The law is summed up as loving God and loving your neighbor (vss. 26-27)
3. If we could obey the law completely, we could live (vs. 28)
4. The lawyer knew he did not love everyone as he should (vs. 29)
5. The loving neighbor in the parable was not someone people expected (vss. 30-33)
6. Showing love to someone results in self-sacrificing actions toward that person (vss. 33-34)
7. Obeying the law means we are being good neighbors