

Neighbourly Hearts?

From Luke 10

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

²⁷He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

²⁸"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

³⁰In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶"Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."



This is a very well known “parable” of Jesus. In fact, the expression “Good Samaritan” is commonly used for anyone who does somebody else a good turn. When Jesus told the story, though, Samaritans were out of favour with the Jews. They were distant relatives of the Jews, who had intermarried with the surrounding nations—and were treated with absolute disdain. This is a story that (almost disturbingly) gets everything back to front.

This week’s challenge: Read it. Think about it. Chew on it. And talk about it.

Read it.

1. What is the context in which Jesus tells the story?
2. Who’s the audience?
3. Mark what you think are the key sentences in the passage.
4. Who are main characters?
5. Give some good and valid reasons the priest and Levite might have to pass by. (At least in their own minds!)
6. What’s the difference between them, and the Samaritan? Who would you rather live next door to?
7. What do you think story is—really— all about? Is there more going on here than meets the eye?
8. God has always been interested in a righteousness that starts at the heart. How’s the heart of the expert in the law who has asked Jesus the question?
9. Perhaps the Teacher of the Law—and the Israelites in General—are guilty of ‘minimum compliance thinking.’ Can you think of some examples where you’re guilty of this?
10. What are some of the ways this parable might have “put things back to front” for the law expert?
11. What do you have to change as a result of this passage?