

Opening

Have someone look up and read Matthew 22:37-40

Ask “What does it mean to be a neighbor?”

To be a neighbor goes far beyond just living next door to someone. It means to be helpful, considerate, and kind.

This parable we are going to look at tonight is a great lesson Jesus used to teach us about loving our neighbors. This is a message that can truly transform the world, as well as our homes. Jesus said that one of the most important commandments is “*Love your neighbor as yourself*”. This sounds so easy to do, but we often fail at it. We get distracted, we get busy, and we often don’t pay attention to what others are going through. Sometimes we are going through difficult situations and are too wrapped up in ourselves to notice others are struggling. Sometimes it just makes us really uncomfortable. As we will learn in the parable, the one who is a neighbor, is *the one who shows mercy on others* (even when it’s inconvenient for them).

Consider the Context

- The Samaritans were despised enemies of the Jews.
- The listeners would have expected a Jew to be the hero of Jesus’ story.
- Touching a dirty, sick, and bloody man would be made the Jews “unclean”. They would have to go through a series of ritual washings before they could enter the temple and perform their religious duties. (The Priest and Levite in the story were likely on their way to perform their religious duties).

Learning About Love from the Parable of the Good Samaritan

Jesus shows us how to love our neighbor by telling the story of the Good Samaritan. Have someone read the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Afterwards, ask questions about the verses and have a family discussion.

- Why do you think all of the other people passed the injured man by?
- Do we ever do things like this in our own lives?
- Why do you think the Good Samaritan decided to help him?
- Do you think this is something that he just started doing that day? Or, do you think he tried to help others whenever the opportunity came his way?

Jesus is telling this parable because He wants us to see things from His perspective, not a worldly perspective. Reading the Bible is not just learning about who Jesus is, but learning how to be more like Him. The Parable of the Good Samaritan is a lesson for us on how to be more like Jesus by caring, loving, and having mercy even on our enemies.

When you think about it, this is exactly what Jesus did for us. We were once lost, suffering, and left for dead because of our sin. **Have someone look up and read Ephesians 2:1.** Jesus could have ignored us or turned a blind eye to us, but he didn't. He picked us up, saved us, and made us part of His family forever.

Who is my Neighbor?

The point is that we are called to be neighbors to everyone. This can be at school, at home, at work, at church, or at the store. Think back over the past week. Did you come across any people that you could have been a good neighbor too? How would you have handled the situation differently after reading this lesson from Jesus?

Notice when Jesus asked the expert in the law who was a neighbor in verse 37, he couldn't even bring himself to say the Samaritan (remember, the Jews hated them). All he could reluctantly admit was "the one who showed mercy." But, that's a great description of a good neighbor. *Neighbors have mercy on one another.* The Priest and Levite should have shown mercy on the man, even if it meant it would inconvenience them by becoming unclean.

Finding Ways to Love

As a family, write down ways to show God's love to people they meet, as well as ways that you can show God's love to others as a family. Write these things down but make the list a priority in your home first. Do nice things for your family. Be helpful. Be kind. Put others above yourself. As these things become a priority in your family, watch how they extend outside of your home to your neighbors. Through your family, many neighbors will experience the love of Jesus you share with them.

Remember, the key verse is to *Love your neighbor as yourself.* The main idea is that *Neighbors have mercy on one another--which means everyone!*

A Prayer of Love

Wrap up your Equip time with some family prayer time. Ask your family to pick one family member and one neighbor to pray for and then take turns lifting the individuals up in prayer. Pray for how your family can be impacted by finding ways to love.