

## ***AM I BEING A NEIGHBOR?, LK.10:25-37***

Art of Neighboring #2

◆**Intro:** This is truly a deep story. When you think about it, it's amazing what Jesus packs into it. Did you notice something in Jesus' parable? He never answered the lawyer's question of "Who is my neighbor?", right? He didn't say, "Now friends, the man on the side of the road is your neighbor." Jesus didn't spell it out, "Now listen, people who are worse off than you... or, people who have a need you can meet...these are your neighbors." No, Jesus answered a whole different question, namely, "How do I be a neighbor?" Remember? "Who was a neighbor to this man?" v36

◆**1. God is more concerned with what kind of person I'm being that who I'm being it with.**

◆The lawyer asked Jesus who he HAD to consider a neighbor, because he wasn't interested in being a neighbor. He was interested in getting as much credit as possible with as little effort as possible. What do I HAVE to do. Living with God in your life now, and also after you die is not reached by what you do, but by what kind of heart you have. (What are the two great commands? Love God, Love neighbor.) In Jesus' story we see not who our neighbor is but what being a neighbor is. The Samaritan man didn't seem to care who the needy one on the side of the road was. Jesus never said who he was! We don't really know, do we? He's only called "a man"(v30). He might have been a Jew. He might have been a Samaritan, or maybe an Egyptian for that matter. Maybe he was a criminal himself, or camel salesman. We don't know. It doesn't seem to matter.

## **AM I BEING A NEIGHBOR?, LK.10:25-37**

Art of Neighboring #2

◆ Neighboring doesn't begin with who the neighbor is. Think about this, along with telling us to love our families, and love our spouse, and love our neighbors, God even tells his kids to love their enemies!

◆ *But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. ... (Matthew 5:44,45, NIV).*

◆ *Think of someone you might consider an enemy, maybe just someone that you "fail to appreciate much. Hard news: God wants you to love them. And if I'm not, why not? Is it because the people aren't a good prospect for a business deal? Is it because they don't look a lot like us? Is it because no one knows we're being so nice, the cameras aren't rolling and people won't find out we're really swell folk after all. Is it because we can't see how being a neighbor to this or that guy will get us a good return on our investment!*

◆ Why weren't the religious men (priest and levite) neighbors? Because it wasn't to their advantage. That brings us to...

◆ **2. I am a real neighbor when I am OK with inconvenience, and even suffering.** That is to say, to "love your neighbor" we need to start with being willing to not necessarily get something out of it, to suffer (that's where the word compassion comes from).

◆ **A. The "expert in the law" (v25) was a rule guy, right. In Jewish culture, this was an expert in *religious* law, theology.** He

## ***AM I BEING A NEIGHBOR?, LK.10:25-37***

Art of Neighboring #2

wanted to do enough of the right thing to get credit with God. So he could understand the Priest and the Levite in the parable, who were like him, also religious workers. He knew that the Priest's job was to offer sacrifices for sins. These involved many laws all aimed at teaching people that God was holy. According to OT law, the priest had to be ceremonially "clean" to do his job. He would take a ceremonial *bath* at the temple *before* going into church. He would change from street clothes into temple garb. And if he were to touch a dead body (like this dying man on the side of the road) he might have to wait a whole *week* before going back to work at the temple (according to OT law.). So for him, being a neighbor, or "having mercy" (37) would have been a potentially highly inconvenience! Same kind of thing for the Levite. He probably had a talk to give the youth on helping those who are down and out. Maybe a whole Sunday school class was waiting for him. His life was packed. His weekends were packed. His calendar was packed. His suitcase was packed. A hurt man just wasn't going to fit into his suitcase of activities. Besides, he hadn't gotten to binge on a Netflix series for a while now.

◆And here's another thing: all these men were on the same road from Jerusalem to Jericho. A narrow, twisting, turning rocky path through barren ridges and crevices. **[show pix (these are not the road to Jericho but they look just like it)]** All of them were in the same danger as the injured man. All of them needed caution for their own



## ***AM I BEING A NEIGHBOR?, LK.10:25-37***

Art of Neighboring #2

safety.

◆**B.** On the other hand, we can see the love of the Samaritan because he was interruptible. He was willing to risk. His smart phone might have been going off reminding him of appointments in Jericho. Yet he stops. He gives up his ride (v34), that means he has to walk now! [Are you serious right now?! All the way to Jericho? Inconvenient.] And he slaps on the hotel counter two days wages (at \$10/hr, that'd be \$160 -inconvenient) before he leaves. AND, he's gonna come back later to check! What? He is willing, and prepared to have his time and even his *budget* interrupted.

◆**W**hat we're learning about being a neighbors is that love requires putting out. It means giving away, and doing without. Not only that but it *wants* to! (You want to feed your kids. You want to help your son fix the bathroom sink...) So to learn the art of neighboring we need to build extra space into life both in time and in wealth that we want to give away! How do you build margin? Surplus areas of time, and other things too, like treasure. Margin. Here's an idea: To make other people space, I must slow my own pace!

◆**1)** Let's take, for example, financial margin, the pace of our spending: God's Word consistently tells his people to give away a minimum of 10% of what they make! I know many think there's no way you can afford that, but those of us who practice it will tell you to a person, you can't out-give

## ***AM I BEING A NEIGHBOR?, LK.10:25-37***

Art of Neighboring #2

God. We don't believe it because often we spend everything we make already. We buy our kids all the latest tech. We eat out more than in (the most expensive way to eat). And we might even find ourselves putting off bill payments. But in reality we could pay them if we denied ourselves other brand new things and luxuries. Alas, this is how most of America lives, and if I'm spending everything I make, I'm really not open to being generous, or giving. I haven't prepared to be financially interrupted. I haven't even prepared to be financially solvent! This is why many passionate God-followers chose to live below their means.

◆ When Sandi and I were first married we just made a simple tithe ledger. Whenever we received money, we wrote 10% of it in the ledger. Whenever we gave tithe at church or to some worthy cause, we wrote it off the ledger. Then when someone said "Can you help us lobby Washington for the Right to Life?" We'd just look in the ledger to see if God had money in his account. If he did it was simple. I have no problem giving away someone else's money! It was there to be given away anyway! If we don't spend everything we earn, and don't buy everything we can -we can be ready and able to help someone else.

◆ 2) Lets take as another example, our time margin. one of the biggest **time** swallows in our culture; Screens: that's

## ***AM I BEING A NEIGHBOR?, LK.10:25-37***

Art of Neighboring #2

right. TV screens, iPad screens, smartphone screens, laptop screens, computer screens. Screens. I dare say that many of us would have time to linger outside, walk the neighborhood, to hang around in the grocery aisle, to stop to talk with people, learn their stories -if we managed our screens. (No offense to anyone here but, reading about what you had for lunch on Facebook is a real time-consumer! Just give us the real meat! Ooh, bad analogy) Just not taking so many selfies and posting them might open us up to time for lunch with a real person! What if we didn't watch senseless TV all evening and then fall into bed? What might we do with all that time? We could have the neighbors over for coffee and hear their story just by giving up Castle or NCIS for a night.

◆And can we talk about when we adults were kids, walking to school uphill, both ways, on our hands, in the snow? In those days we climbed trees, and build forts, and got muddy, and played for hours with only sticks and rocks, but we knew our neighbors. If we are not careful, screens can literally steal our relationship time. Social networking apps are no substitute for the real thing. For that reason in our house we don't allow screens at the table! When I spend time alone with God, I avoid screens for my Bible. Too easily distracting. Screens can funnel us into entertainment mode which doesn't create relationship and can easily waste my time.

## ***AM I BEING A NEIGHBOR?, LK.10:25-37***

Art of Neighboring #2

◆ Are you open to the effort of neighboring? It requires self-denial, interruption, inconvenience, giving, time. *So the art of neighboring requires storing those up to be at the ready.*

◆ **3. Conclusion: I am a real neighbor when I prioritize people.** This is pretty clear from the Greatest commandment, isn't it? Love God, love your neighbor -all of God's law is summed up in this!

◆ When Jesus said his followers were to be known for something, it wasn't orthodoxy (though that is important). It wasn't by what they did on the Sabbath, though that will affect the degree to which you meet much of God. It wasn't that they'd be known by their political positions. Jesus didn't say they will know we are Christians by our time spent in church. Or our opinion on baptism, or our view of the End Times. What did he say?...

◆ *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

*John 13:34, 35, NIV.*

◆ Now, how about us? Sometimes we have to say no to good things in order to choose better things. Better things always have to do with loving people. Are we living at a pace that allows us to be available to those around us? Or do we always "have to work"? Or do we always "have a game we have to go to"? How are you doing at prioritizing people in your week. Sometimes the church people act like a for-profit business instead of a not-for-

## ***AM I BEING A NEIGHBOR?, LK.10:25-37***

Art of Neighboring #2

profit ministry. Listen people, we don't serve the world with ulterior purposes. We don't even serve to convert. We serve because we are converted and God is honored by our love for his children. Your neighbors are worth your time and attention because they are image bearers of your God even if they never believe in our Lord! The question behind the question is the point of the parable. Not, "who is my neighbor?" but "am I a neighbor?"