



Who Is My Neighbor And What Does This Mean?

BY ALICE SCHUMAN

Opening Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, show us who our neighbors are. Help us to be sensitive to their needs. Empower us to do all we can to reach out to those in distress. This we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The tenth chapter of Luke relates the occasion when Jesus was having a conversation with one of the many legal eagles who had been trying to discredit Him. The inquisitor wanted to know what Jesus believed must be done to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked the man what he thought. The lawyer quoted two passages from Scripture that command believers to love God completely and love their neighbors as themselves (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18). Jesus confirmed that this was indeed correct, if the lawyer would be able to keep the commands.

Read **Luke 10:25-37**. To whom do we compare to in this parable? _____

To whom does Jesus compare to in this parable? _____

What was our condition before we were saved? Read **Romans 5:6-10**. _____

Does a friend need to be “open” to the Gospel before you can talk to her about Jesus? _____

How was the lawyer hoping “to justify” himself?

God’s command for us to deal with others is not based on what others do for us or who others are to us but based on what the Triune God has done for us.

Luke 6:36: Be merciful, even as ... _____

Matthew 10:8 (use the NIV translation): Freely you have received ... _____

Colossians 3:13 (use the NIV translation): Forgive as ... _____

Jesus defined the good neighbor as anyone who has mercy on another, even as God has had mercy on us. He taught that when others need help, whether emotional, physical, or financial, it is our privilege to show the love God has had for us by addressing the needs of our neighbors.

How would you define “neighbor”? _____

Is your definition as broad and all-embracing as the one Jesus was teaching in the parable? _____

Meeting Our Neighbor's Emotional Needs

What emotional needs did the wounded man experience? _____

How did the Samaritan meet those needs? _____

As Paul says, *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep* (Romans 12:15).

In the Book of Ruth we read about Naomi's neighbors sharing her great joy at the birth of Obed, the child of her daughter-in-law Ruth and Ruth's husband Boaz. Naomi was a woman who had suffered many losses (her homeland, her husband, her two sons, and her other daughter in-law), but whose life had now come to a turning point toward better times. Her neighbors celebrated with her.

What are some ways we can increase the joy of our neighbors when good things happen to them?

How can we show that we share their joy? _____

Lazarus was a good friend of Jesus, as were his sisters, Martha and Mary. As Mary was mourning the death of her brother, Jesus came face to face with her. Read **John 11:33–35**. Jesus is our example of mourning with those who mourn. Women and men of our time have to deal with many difficult losses.

What are some of the losses our neighbors encounter? _____

How can we show our concern for our neighbors who are experiencing losses in their lives? _____

What are some practical ways your local group can address such needs? _____

Meeting Our Neighbor's Physical Needs

What do the following passages have to say about how God is at work in us?

2 Corinthians 9:8 _____

Ephesians 3:20 _____

Philippians 1:6 _____

Philippians 2:13 _____

Colossians 1:9–10 _____

1 Thessalonians 1:3 _____

Hebrews 13:20–21 _____

Keep this in mind when we consider the result of our good deeds for our neighbors, which Jesus describes in **Matthew 25:35–40**.

What are the implications for our rich society in a world of neighbors who are near starvation?

What can Lutheran Women in Mission do to carry out a compassionate ministry to the suffering in our own communities, our country, and our world? _____

What are some of the things you have done in tragic emergencies like wildfires, hurricanes, and other natural disasters? _____

Meeting Our Neighbor's Financial Needs

When the Samaritan left the injured man with the innkeeper, he made a down payment on the cost of his care and a commitment to take care of any other charges on his return. He did not hesitate to dig into his pocket. The early church figured out a way to take care of the financial needs of its members. Read **Acts 2:44–45**.

There are situations today when the church opens its purse to pay for the special needs of its members. We have often found ways other than a direct subsidy to provide community support for those in financial need.

What responsibility do we have to support agencies or programs that assist the poor? _____

What commitment to feeding the hungry or clothing the naked are we making? _____

Closing Prayer: O Lord, bring to our remembrance Your gracious generosity to us. You gave Your precious life for us while we were undeserving sinners. We pray that You would make us generous also. Encourage us to find time in our busy schedules to spend with those who need company and consolation. Help us to find ways to meet the physical and financial needs of the poor. Enable us to find coins to fill our Mite Boxes to support ministries that reach out to spread Your Gospel in the world around us. Lead us and help us to follow where You lead. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Great Giver. Amen.

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