



Date: **July 2025** (or any time during ordinary seasons)

Theme: **Who is my neighbour?**

Bible Readings: **Luke 10:25-37,**
Luke 9:51-56, and Leviticus 19:9-18

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PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

Please read the Bible passages and hymns ahead of the group meeting, and hold group members in prayer before the session. The focus is on the famous **parable of the Good Samaritan**. The other passages provide important background to help us to understand the way in which Jesus' parable would have been heard by the original listeners. Then we put the spotlight on its practical implications for our living *today* as Christian disciples in our world and time.

PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (before the session)

Take time before the session thinking about your neighbours.

You might like to ponder some of these questions: *How long have you known your local neighbours? How well do you know them? Can you think of situations where neighbours have felt too 'distant', or perhaps too 'close'? Have any of your neighbours been a 'God-send'? If you have moved house frequently in your life, how challenging have you found it to establish 'neighbourly' relations?*

Have you experienced situations where there has been tension or conflict between neighbours? Over what kinds of issues? If they have been resolved, what enabled that to happen?

Then read **Luke 10:25-37**, and consider how the parable, and its starting point, sheds light on your own experience of neighbourliness.

STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER

Eternal God, giver of love and peace,
you call your children to live together as one family.
Give us grace to learn your ways
and to do your will,
that we may bring justice and peace to all people,
in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

A collect from *The Methodist Worship Book* (1999, p.550) borrowed from *A New Zealand Prayer Book* (1989)

FINDING OUR ROOTS

Using the individual preparation work, in small groups or pairs, share as you feel comfortable your own experience of neighbourly relationships, their blessings and challenges.

How does the parable of the Good Samaritan help you to relate your faith commitment to the realities of day-to-day living?

Next, read **Luke 9:51-56**.

Are you familiar with this story? What do you think Luke's account of this incident tells us about the attitudes of some Samaritans? And what does the reaction of the disciples James and John tell us about their attitudes towards Samaritans?

READING THE SCRIPTURES - with background information

In the background to Jesus' parable of the 'Good Samaritan' lie two aspects of the life and faith of Jewish and Samaritan people. They both traced their faith back to the Jewish scriptures. The story of the giving of the Law through Moses (e.g. [Leviticus 19:9-18](#)) was foundational for both of these geographically close neighbours. Yet, after the division of the kingdoms of northern Israel and southern Judah, following the end of Solomon's reign, relations gradually became increasingly hostile. In turbulent and dangerous times, Samaria had fallen to the Assyrians in 722 BC, and Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587 BC. The conquerors inflicted mass deportations. When the Jewish exiles returned from Babylon after the decree of Cyrus (538 BC) with a mission to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple, they remembered the record in Deuteronomy where the Lord had insisted that there was to be only one place in the land for his Name to find its dwelling ([Deuteronomy 12:4-7](#)). Yet the Samaritans were to build their own separate temple on Mount Gerizim. By the time of Jesus, that shrine had already been destroyed under the High Priestly leadership of John Hyrcanus in 128 BC, but Samaritans still venerated its site (see [John 4:19-21](#)). Not surprisingly, pilgrims travelling south to the great pilgrim festivals in Jerusalem would generally have avoided going through Samaritan territory. When Jesus and his disciples decided to take that route ([Luke 9:51-56](#)), they faced a hostile reaction.

Now, we turn to the parable itself...

Read together the Bible passage: [Luke 10:25-37](#)

DIGGING DEEPER

Some questions for you to consider in your group:

Try to put yourself in the lawyer's 'shoes'. He would have known his Hebrew Bible 'inside out'. *How do you think he would have understood this command in Leviticus: 'You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.'* (Leviticus 19:18)? *Was it a matter of deciding who counted as a member of 'his people', and who didn't? Are we ever tempted as Christians to make a similar distinction?*

How does Jesus turn that attitude 'on its head'? In [Luke 10:36](#), he puts the spotlight not on the identity of the person in need, but on the duty of the person seeking to live God's way. So, the lawyer is asked to consider the conduct that is required for a member of God's chosen people.

In the parable, which character illustrates the required response? Why might the lawyer have found that shocking?

*When asked to identify the merciful person, what can the lawyer **not** bring himself to say?*

Where do we see similar attitudes in our own society or the wider world?

And where do we find 'Good Samaritans'? Are they always the people we would expect?

At this point it would be good to read the words of two modern hymns: '[When I needed a neighbour](#)' ([Singing the Faith 256](#)), and '[Jesu, Jesu](#)' ([Singing the Faith 249](#)).

In the first hymn, Sydney Carter gives one answer to the question the lawyer posed, before recalling another parable of Jesus (see [Matthew 25:31-46](#)). In the second, Tom Colvin (adapting a song from Northern Ghana) shows us where Christians find their inspiration for neighbourly living.

How can these hymns help us to put our faith into practice day by day?

PRAYING TOGETHER

In a time of prayer and worship together, let Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, inspire us to sing our faith, and to pray for grace to live it. Lift up before God the distressing situations we are aware of in the world and our community, and people in need, calling for a truly neighbourly response.

You might like to sing one of the **hymns** above.

Conclude by saying **The Lord's Prayer** together.