

# Luke 10:36-37

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/luke/luke-10/luke-1036-37/>

*Jesus asks the religious lawyer which of the three travelers was a neighbor to the injured man. The lawyer responds, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus counsels the Lawyer to be like this Samaritan if he wishes to inherit the blessings of eternal life.*

There is no apparent parallel for this encounter in the gospel accounts.

In the previous section, *Jesus* responded to the religious lawyer’s question: “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29) with “The Parable of the Good Samaritan” ([Luke 10:30-35](#)).

The lawyer asked this question to justify himself for not living up to God’s commandment to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18b). *Jesus* had told the lawyer that this commandment was the requirement to inherit eternal life, referring to gaining the greatest fulfillment and experience of life (Luke 10:25-28).

In the parable, a man was attacked, robbed, and left for dead on the side of the road by bandits. A priest came first upon the aftermath, and then a Levite, both religious leaders. Each passed by the bleeding mess on the other side of the road rather than fulfill their religious obligations to render aid to the man. But then a despised Samaritan came, and not only treated the man’s wounds, he also brought him to town on his donkey, rented a room, and took care of him. And then the Samaritan paid the innkeeper money to provide for any future expenses required to help this stranger—and he promised to pay more if needed.

Having finished the parable, *Jesus* then asked the religious lawyer, *Which of these three [the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan] do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?*

By including the phrase—*do you think*—*Jesus* put the question squarely into the court of the lawyer. The Greek word that is translated *do you think* is a form of *Do-ké-O* (G1380). It means “suppose,” “guess,” “speculate,” or “feel.” *Jesus* was asking for the lawyer’s gut reaction. *Jesus* often asked for people’s immediate take on things rather than their polished or premeditated answers (Matthew 17:25; 18:12; 21:28; 22:42).

The answer to *Jesus*’s question was obvious—it was the Samaritan who *proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell*. The religious men may have claimed to love the *man* as their *neighbor* but their inactions *proved* otherwise. Love consists of more than words. It consists of actions. This is consistent with the New Testament’s descriptions of “agape” love. “Agape” love is displayed by choosing to act in ways that seek the best for others (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

The commandment to “Love your *neighbor* as you love yourself” implies self-love as a natural condition for humans. But it adds the requirement of a humble perspective that transcends one’s self.

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

(Philippians 2:3-4)

Biblical “agape” love is a love of setting aside self in order to pursue the best interest of others in a manner you would wish for yourself.

The Samaritan had this perspective and therefore he was able to love a stranger as he loved himself. The priest and the Levite did not have this perspective and they did not love the wounded man—only themselves.

The Samaritan was others-focused.

The priest and Levite were self-absorbed.

The Samaritan saw a man half dead and rearranged his business to save the man.

The priest and Levite saw an inconvenience or hindrance to their agenda and left him to suffer.

The Samaritan risked his own personal safety to try and save him.

The priest and Levite saw a threat to their personal safety.

The Samaritan saw a bleeding man about to die.

The priest and Levite saw a bloody mess that might cause them to become ceremonially unclean, and therefore inconvenience them.

The Samaritan saw a desperate person to serve.

The priest and Levite saw a problem to be avoided.

The Samaritan went to the man and saved him in his moment of distress.

The priest and Levite walked on the other side of the road and left him to die.

The Samaritan met his immediate needs, then took him to town, and sacrificially made provisions for his recovery and comfort.

The priest and Levite were gone and on to the next thing as they tried to put the dying man out their mind.

The religious lawyer correctly answered *Jesus’s* question about which of *the three men proved to be a neighbor*.

*He said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.”* This was the correct answer, for the Samaritan had shown the dying stranger great *mercy*. But it is interesting that the religious lawyer did not say, “the Samaritan,” but rather described what the Samaritan did.

This may be because the lawyer did not wish to speak well of his perceived enemy (the Samaritans). If this was the case, he lacked even the charity to verbally credit a fictitious

Samaritan with good. Moreover, if this was so, then the lawyer was demonstrating his own moral failure at keeping the commandment that was necessary to inherit eternal life.

*Jesus* did not point this out. He did not need to. *Jesus* simply *said* to the religious lawyer, “Go and do the same.”

The point *Jesus* made is that we do not choose which of God’s commandments we will obey and which ones we won’t obey if we are to enter His kingdom and inherit eternal life. To gain the greatest fulfillment of life available to us requires that we set aside convenience in order to pursue serving others.

To learn about the difference between receiving the gift of eternal life vs. inheriting the prize of eternal life please see: [“Eternal Life: Receiving the Gift vs Inheriting the Prize.”](#)

Every person we encounter can be our *neighbor*. We do not decide the standard of when and to what degree we obey God and then receive His blessings. God makes the standard. His standard is to love everyone, including your enemies (Matthew 5:43-45). We are not assigned a job to justify ourselves. Christ is our judge (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 2:5:9-10). We are justified in the sight of God by *Jesus*’s death and resurrection (Romans 3:24).

*Jesus* does not defer to us. We are to follow Him (Luke 9:23-24).

God forgives us from the penalty of sin and saves us from the eternal punishment in the lake of fire on the basis of His grace and mercy through faith in Him (John 3:14-16; Ephesians 2:8-9). This acceptance is unconditional. But our rewards of life depend upon our choices. If we are to inherit the fullest measure of blessings in this life, and experience the totality of life (the reward of eternal life), we must follow God completely—with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, as stated in the greatest commandment (Luke 10:27). And the most tangible way we do this is to obey the second greatest command, and love our neighbor as we love ourself. This divine command is the sum of all others (Galatians 5:14).

May we obey this commandment always. And may our actions consistently seek to sacrificially serve our neighbor with genuine love.

### **Biblical Text**

<sup>36</sup> Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?” <sup>37</sup> And he said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.” Then *Jesus* said to him, “Go and do the same.”