



# Lent

# CONNECTING FAITH AND LIFE

stories where heaven and earth meet

Adult Small Group/Study Guide  
The Good Samaritan | Week of February 21

## **KEY POINT**

God's kingdom appears in acts of mercy and love.

While the story of the Good Samaritan is very well known, the radical message of our neighbor's identity (i.e. everyone), is just as important in our own time where fear of the "other" can be seen everywhere. Also, in a culture where it is important to look busy, Jesus' words to Martha about her sister's choice of the "better part" can teach us to find moments of peaceful communion with Jesus in the midst of our distractions.

## **SCRIPTURE**

Luke 10:25-42  
(Psalm 15)

## **OPENING PRAYER**

Holy God, thank you for gathering us together at this time and in this space. Bless our conversation so that we may have the eyes to see and ears to hear your kingdom at work in our lives. We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **READ**

Luke 10:25-42

## **ABOUT THE STORY**

While Jesus is teaching his disciples, an expert on God's law breaks in and asks Jesus an important question about inheriting eternal life. He is not a follower of Jesus and is probably concerned that Jesus is not in line with the Jewish Scriptures. His question is not meant to gain information, but rather to test Jesus in order to find fault with his teaching. His exchange with Jesus is like a "verbal fencing match" where the lawyer is hoping to score a "hit" on Jesus. The lawyer's central question, "Who is my neighbor?" gets at the heart of the matter. In other words, "Where is the line between those I need to love and those I do not?"

Jesus answers the lawyer's question by telling a parable about an unexpected person offering mercy. A parable is a specific type of story that uses easily-understood examples from daily life in order to make a point. Parables also challenge audiences by offering a twist that takes the examples from daily life and changes them in such a way that gets the audience thinking. For Jesus' audience, a "merciful Samaritan" was an oxymoron, as Jews and Samaritans shared a mutual bitterness toward one another. The original audiences of Jesus' parables probably found these parables challenging and thought-provoking. Jesus' story teaches about God and helps him to win the verbal fencing match with the lawyer.

Jesus also visits the home of Martha, one of his followers. Unlike the lawyer, Martha and her sister Mary are both supporters of Jesus and are extremely positive to his ministry. Like the lawyer, Martha has trouble understanding what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and becomes frustrated by Mary's choice to sit and listen to Jesus. Jesus gently and lovingly corrects her and shows her that discipleship is more than doing many tasks.



These stories tell us a great deal about discipleship and being a part of God's kingdom. Sometimes following Jesus means "doing mercy" and at other times it means "sitting and listening" to what Jesus says. These are both important: Christians are called to never become so busy that they are unable to stop and listen to Jesus, but it is also important that Jesus' followers act on their faith. They are also related: "sitting and listening" to Jesus guides "doing mercy."

## SHARE

- Have you ever been asked a question by a person who was attempting to trap or criticize you? Do you think this was the lawyer's motivation in questioning Jesus?
- The ethnicity and background of the beaten man is never given. Is this significant? Why?
- Who are some of the "outsiders" in your community? How surprising would it be if one of them took on the role of the Samaritan in this story?

## PRAY

Gracious God, we thank you for blessing our time together. May it be a continued blessing to others and us. Thank you for the things we found helpful (pause), the things we found challenging (pause), and where we experienced your grace (pause) Empower us to show mercy and listen to your Son everyday of our lives. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

## BLESS

Mark one another with the sign of the cross on your hand and say, "God bless you as you journey with Jesus. Amen."

## FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION AT HOME:

- Who are the outsiders in your own life? Someone of a different ethnicity, religion or political party? Connect with an outsider with a kind word or act of mercy.
- Find time to "sit at the feet" of Jesus and hear what he has to say to you. Take five minutes to concentrate on a particular image from this week's lesson.
- Using a Bible concordance (word index) or an online search, find all of the uses of the word "mercy" in Scripture. Who shows mercy? To whom is mercy given? What can this tell us about our relationship with God?