

This Week's Theme: The Good Samaritan – What it Takes

This Week's Memory Verse: “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”
Luke 9:36-37

Monday, September 15

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4:17 – 5:21

The Good Samaritan is a great story filled with great characters, but none greater than “the one who had mercy.” If you look at his actions I think you’ll find six character traits that guided those actions: sensitivity, concern, kindness, compassion, love, and grace. This week we will look at each of them individually to see how God’s Word might challenge you

We begin our study with sensitivity. Sensitivity is a word seldom used in Scripture, though it is a concept often displayed. Today’s passage from Ephesians is one place where the word is used, in verse 19. Paul uses it to describe those who had given themselves over to sin: *Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over . . .*

The call of this passage is a call to sensitivity: be sensitive to how you live your life. First, we must realize that if we lack sensitivity to how we live, we are more likely to make the same mistakes Paul addresses in this passage. No matter how long you have been a Christian, no matter how much you go to church, no matter how many Scriptures you have memorized, you must always be sensitive to the fact that sin is enticing and tempting. Like the hymn says, *Prone to wander, Lord I feel it; prone to leave the God I love.* Just as we need to be sensitive to what we shouldn’t do, we need to be just as sensitive to what we should do. First, Paul says we have been taught all the right things because we came to Christ through God’s truth. And we can’t be sensitive to the truth if we don’t know the truth. We will be more sensitive to what God wants and doesn’t want through a better knowledge of God and His Word.

In other words, it’s not just about not doing the wrong thing; it is about building a relationship with God (so we know God and want to please Him) and His Word (so we know what He wants and expects) so we are more likely to do the right thing. That’s when we live with the sensitivity that the children of God’s light are supposed to exhibit. We simply need to follow the next line of that same hymn: *Here’s my heart, Lord, take and seal it; seal it for Thy courts above.* Go and do likewise.

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Tuesday, September 16

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:10-14

A second trait that makes us more likely to be Good Samaritans is concern. Sensitivity led the Samaritan to notice; concern led him to stop and help.

In this brief passage from Philippians, Paul thanks the Philippians for the concern they showed him. While we don't know exactly what they did for him, and the words are few, we can still learn a bit about Christian concern from these verses.

First, we are taught that it is good to receive the concern of others. Paul makes it clear that he didn't need their concern, but he certainly appreciated it. We need to remember this fact when we choose not to share our needs with others, because it is only in sharing those needs will they be able to respond with concern – concern that will touch us deeply. It is also a reminder that we should be diligent in sharing concern with others: if it is so good to receive, then we must be faithful to give it away. We are also taught how we show concern – by sharing in the troubles of others (verse 14). Concern is a shared experience. Concern is an action.

One story coming out of the Iraqi conflict is of a battalion commander who was talking with one of his young soldiers. This young man was about to take night watch for the first time, and the battalion was stationed in a high conflict area. The soldier told his commander he was scared and began to cry. The commander told the young soldier, “I know you are scared. It's OK to be scared. I'm scared, too. And tonight, we'll be scared together.” And he kept watch with the young soldier the whole night.

The battalion commander went beyond sensitivity; he showed his concern by what he did. Go and do likewise.

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Wednesday, September 17

Scripture Reading: Various (see below)

Kindness is the next quality we see from the Good Samaritan. His kindness was shown not just in his stopping to help, but in the fact that bandaged his wounds and poured oil and wine upon them. It is a very tender picture.

Kindness is not so much what you do, but how you do it. In fact, kindness is probably best demonstrated when circumstances aren't good - in disagreements or misunderstandings. Kindness is a behavioral choice you can make at any time.

Kindness is also a fruit of God's Spirit. When you respond in kindness, you are responding the way God would if He were in the same situation. But don't just take my word for it. See what God's Word says:

But let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight. Jeremiah 9:24

I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. Hosea 11:4

Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Romans 11:22

in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:7

If you want to be like God, you have to be kind, in all circumstances. Go and do likewise.

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Thursday, September 18

Scripture Reading: Various (see below)

Yet another quality exhibited by the Good Samaritan is compassion. Yesterday we said kindness was not so much what you did, but how you did it. Compassion is not merely a feeling, but must also have an accompanying action. You might think of it like this: concern is the feeling that becomes compassion when something is done about the concern. For example, I can be concerned about hunger, but I show compassion when I give, when I inform and become an advocate, or when I get food to those who are hungry.

Why do I make this distinction? Because it is the distinction that was made about Jesus. Jesus' compassion always resulted in an action that demonstrated His compassion.

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. Matthew 14:14

Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way. (This led to the feeding of the 4000) Matthew 15:32

Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him. Matthew 20:34

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Mark 1:41

Compassion leads to action – action that can transform lives. Go and do likewise.

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Friday, September 19

Scripture Reading: Various from 1 John (see below)

The love shown in the parable of the Good Samaritan is without question. The Samaritan's continual care for the man demonstrates this was not merely a one time compassionate act. It was truly an expression of love. When we think about love in Scripture, what usually comes to mind is the love chapter: 1 Corinthians 13. But some of the richest passages on love are found in the love book: 1 John. As you read the following passages, think about the love you both give and receive. How does it measure up?

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brother. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth. 1 John 3:16-18

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed His love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 1 John 4:7-12

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1 John 4:16b-21

Go and do likewise.

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Saturday, September 20

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2

*Grace, grace, God's grace; grace that will pardon and cleanse within.
Grace, grace, God's grace; grace that is greater than all our sin.*

Ultimately, the Good Samaritan is a story about grace. We know we are saved by God's grace, we know we live by God's grace, and we know we are to extend God's grace to others. But just what exactly is grace? Quite simply, grace is undeserved merit. Grace means I receive something I haven't earned – like salvation, and new life in Christ, and unconditional love toward others. One of the most beautiful expressions of grace I know of is from Keith Green:

*Lord, the feelings are not the same.
I guess I'm older. I guess I've changed.
And how I wish it had been explained,
That as you grow, you must remember:
That nothing lasts, except the grace of God, by which I stand, in Jesus.
I know that I would surely fall away, except for grace, by which I'm saved.*

*Lord, I remember that special way
I vowed to serve you, when it was brand new.
But like Peter, I can't even watch and pray one hour with you.
And I bet I could deny you, too.
But nothing lasts, except the grace of God, by which I stand, in Jesus.
I'm sure that my whole life would waste away, except for grace, by which I'm
saved.*

I'm sure that I would surely fall away, except for grace, by which I'm saved.

Grace – it really is amazing! Go and do likewise.

Sunday, September 21

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

"At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

"Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

" 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

"But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

"Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!'

"But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Matthew 25:1-13

