

PRAYING WITH JESUS FOR

# 21<sup>st</sup> century Good Samaritans

*"Go and do the same" Luke 10:36-37*



**“Which of these . . . do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?” “The one who showed mercy toward him.” And Jesus said, ‘Go and do the same’” (Luke 10:36–37).**

## I. Introduction

Concluding His parable of *The Good Samaritan* with the words, “Go and do the same,” Christ shares an important vision for His followers. He desires to send forth into the world multitudes of good Samaritans as a testimony of His love. Christ’s vision is not limited to church professionals or the ordained. It is a general one, touching every follower. His desire is to prepare His church for effective, caring ministry in the lives of the vulnerable and those “different” than us that we encounter along the road of life. His heart of compassion and grace is to be extended through you and me to the unborn, elderly, and those of every age. He longs to share His unconditional love to those “like” us and those “unlike” us ethnically, socially, economically, and any other ways. We live as 21st century good Samaritans when we see the pain of others, allow ourselves to be moved with compassion, and then “cross the road” of indifference, inconvenience, and feelings of inadequacy to care for those in need.

## II. Caring for Those in Need and Pain, Isolated and Alone

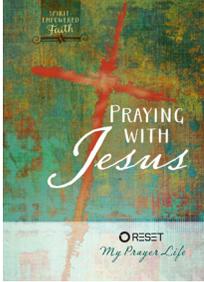
*Jesus replied and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead (Luke 10:30).*

Consider the one beaten, robbed, and abandoned to die beside the road. He was alone, hurting, scared, and losing hope. But a person doesn’t have to be physically assaulted to experience pain and aloneness. People all around us face the physical, emotional, and relational pain that day-to-day life brings. And often they face their struggles alone, just as this one in our text.

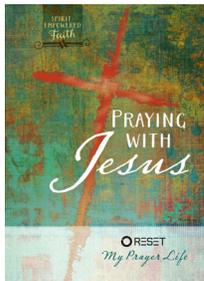
Colossians 3:16 Moment:

**“Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you . . .” (Col. 3:16).**

**Pastor/Teacher:** Pause to share vulnerably about a recent time when the Lord moved you beyond your comfort zone with compassion toward someone in need.



Jedd Medefind's article entitled "Becoming Home," provides an added resource for *Life is Priceless Sunday*. (click here)



Harry Jackson's article entitled "Seven Bridges of Reconciliation," provides an added resource for Martin Luther King Day. (click here)



**P-3** Discerning the relational needs of others with a heart to give of His love

### *Some struggle silently in their pain and aloneness. For example:*

- A compliant child learns all the lessons, keeps all the rules, and engages in all the "right" activities, but he is never challenged to consider "who am I?"
- A teen lies awake at night wishing he or she could make mom and dad love one another.
- A single adult with no real life outside work and church contemplates, "Is this all there is?"
- Husband and wife sit silently together through meals, TV programs, and evenings out, wondering where the love went.
- A widowed adult listens to every sound outside her door, hoping it is someone coming to see her, but fearing it maybe someone coming to harm her.
- The immigrant or refugee, feels anxious over their futures, vulnerable and isolated.
- An unmarried teen, fearful and fighting shame, struggles with the decision to terminate the life of her unborn "gift from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3).

### *Others who struggle in their aloneness do not do so unnoticed:*

- Andy, a violent and abusive husband and father, seethes inside with the secret of his own childhood sexual abuse—a secret shame he has carried alone for decades.
- Ten-year-old Nathan, who is constantly disciplined for grade-school pranks, comments to the school counselor, "At least I get to spend time with the principal after school. I know she likes me."
- A workaholic father, who feels inadequate coming home to a wife needing a best friend and children who need a daddy, admits to himself in panic, "I really don't know what a husband or a father does."
- A single parent, who feels overwhelmed by responsibilities, demands, and bills, struggles frantically against exhaustion and depression, fearful that her children will "miss out" if she doesn't give them everything.
- A minority college student senses the coldness of some fellow students and outright abusive taunting from others.

People like this, and multitudes like them, are all around us. They need our attention and care at the point of their need.

### *Experience Scripture: An Experience with God's Word*

*"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Romans 15:7).*

Consider some of the following hindrances to showing compassionate care and acceptance to others. Which of these might be true at times for you?

Colossians 3:16 Moment:

“Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you . . .” (Col. 3:16).

**Pastor/Teacher:** Share one of your own *hindrances* to compassionately take initiative to offer care. (Review the list to the right)

*I sometimes struggle with . . .*

- being so busy with my agenda that I fail to notice people’s needs.
- feeling inadequate over how to help.
- thinking so much about people’s spiritual needs that I overlook their relational or physical needs.
- not being able to see beyond a person’s sin or the ways in which they are different from me. I am, therefore, not always sensitive to their need for acceptance.
- being judgmental, critical, or condemning.

After you have identified your areas of hindrance, pray privately or with one or two others.

Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to help you embody the instruction of Romans 15:7. Pray that God would make the wonder of Christ’s acceptance real in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to demonstrate that caring acceptance to others in order to bring praise to God.

*(For example: I might sometimes struggle to accept others because I cannot see beyond a person’s sin or the ways in which they are different from me. I regret this struggle because I can see now that even as I have prayed for several family members to come to Christ, my own lack of acceptance may have kept them from hearing God’s truth.)*

*(For example: I might sometimes struggle to accept others because I am so busy with my agenda that I fail to notice people’s needs. I regret this struggle because I can see now that there have been several people at my office who have needed my acceptance. I wonder if they might have avoided several mistakes and come to a personal relationship with Christ if they had received more of Christ’s acceptance through me.)*

Share your responses with your partner or small group. As you share, give accepting responses to one another. Such responses might sound like, “I can understand how hard that is for you, or I am saddened to hear of your regret”.

As you share, keep in mind the promise of Romans 15:7: As we accept one another, thus expressing our gratitude for Christ’s acceptance of us, praise is brought to God!

### III. Stop—Look—Listen

*But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion... (Luke 10:33).*

Critical to the ministry, a good Samaritan is prayerfully asking for the Lord’s discernment and guidance. We must be convinced that the compassionate care of Christ in us is often more valuable than any advice you may give. Your eagerness to share words of advice or counsel will often hurry you past the pain and needs of others.

Following the example of Jesus, we must respond with care to the person in pain before dealing with any wrong and sinful behaviors and attitudes

that may be at the root of his or her situation. Recall His acceptance of Zacchaeus before he changes (Luke 19:1–10) and His support of the woman caught in adultery before He exhorts her in right living (John 8:3–11).

You and I must see people as God sees them—persons in need of His saving and freeing grace to be sure, but also persons who are in pain, needy, and often alone, needing a grace-filled relationship with God and possibly you!

How can we live and love as good Samaritans? The old adage “stop, look, and listen” gives us insight into becoming a loving neighbor to those around us.

**STOP to notice people.** Even when surrounded by His disciples and a crowd, Christ noticed when someone nearby was in dire need. “Who touched me?” He said (see Mark 5:30). The people around you, even those nearest to you, may be in need of relational first aid. Be aware that:

- They are people you know or think you know such as family members, friends, and co-workers.
- They are people you encounter in the daily traffic pattern of your life, including neighbors, store clerks, bank tellers, telephone salespersons, etc.
- God may also bring to you “divine appointments”—unplanned encounters that are opportunities for ministry.
- Everyone you encounter is created in God’s image and worthy of your loving care, even though they—like each of us—have been marred by sin (see Genesis 9:6, James 3:9).

**LOOK for the pain of aloneness.** Christ asked the man at the pool of Bethsaida, “Do you wish to get well?” (John 5:6). Make it your daily practice to be keenly alert to the pain and struggle of people you encounter. You will find prime candidates for your ministry as a good Samaritan to people who are:

#### *Pain-filled . . .*

- Suffering from obvious trauma, tragedy, violence, sin, compromise of principles, etc.
- Experiencing a time of rejection, loss, discouragement.
- Experiencing a time of rejoicing and celebration, but they are rejoicing alone.

#### *Pre-occupied . . .*

- Immersed in endless activity and busyness, trying to ignore their feelings.
- Clearly avoiding their most important relationships—those with God, family, God’s people, etc.

#### *Prodigals . . .*

- Escaping into substitutes such as drugs, alcohol, food, television, pornography, the Internet, work, etc.
- Making self-focused decisions based on the lusts of the eyes, lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life.
- Compromising ethics, morality, values, and principles, and selfless living.

**LISTEN** for others' pain. Christ was a master at drawing out the pain of people in need of grace and love. After discerning the Samaritan woman's need, He said, "Go, call your husband" (John 4:16), opening the door for her to share her pain. Listen for pain in what people say—and sometimes don't say. You may hear the pain in . . .

- Obvious cries for help like, "I just can't take it anymore."
- Guarded words and phrases that hide the pain.
- Words of frustration like, "How can I go on?"
- Concerns over adequacy like, "I just can't do this!"
- Endless words that reveal little of the person's heart concerns.
- Outbursts of anger, expressing pain from the past—bitter, critical, cynical, or jealous words.
- Signs of fear, anxiety over anticipated pain, behavior that is controlling, avoiding, or rejecting.

As you stop, look, and listen for the pain of aloneness in the people around you, you place yourself in position to be a 21st century good Samaritan.

#### IV. Becoming a Good Samaritan

*On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' (Luke 10:35).*

Caring relationships are God's strategy for 21st century good Samaritans. The biblical word for care often means to take thought of others, leaving where we are to go and be present with them. It is most clearly portrayed in Christ leaving heaven to be born into our world, becoming Emmanuel, "God with us." This same simplicity is seen in the Samaritan, who took thought of the unfortunate traveler and crossed the road to be with him.

Share these reflections with one or two others around you. Celebrate together, and then pray for your sensitivity and initiative to share this same type of care toward others.

#### **Engage Fellowship:**

*Hebrews 10:24 "And let us consider how we may encourage one another toward love and good deeds."*

[Pastor or leader asks this question of the congregation:]

- Who has the Lord involved in your life to help you better know His love?
- How did this person love you the way Christ loves you? Reflect specifically on how they demonstrated or communicated Jesus' love. It may have been their prayers, their acceptance in spite of your failures, or their encouragement and support.

After you reflect on who it was and how God loved you through them, we're going to rejoice together as we share these memories with one



**M-8** Attentive listening to others' story, vulnerably sharing of our story and a sensitive witness of Jesus' story as life's ultimate hope; developing your story of prodigal, pre-occupied, and pain-filled living; listening for other's story and sharing Jesus' story

another. Hebrews 10:24–25 speaks of “encouraging one another” as we assemble together. Today’s experience will allow us to not only rejoice in how we’ve been loved, but also encourage us in how we can be an expression of His love to others.

Consider the contrast in the priest and Levite in Christ’s parable. We don’t know everything about their responses. They may each have offered a sincere prayer for the traveler as they passed by on the other side. But, as important as prayer is to caring ministry, the traveler was still alone in very significant ways.

Many scholars consider the mountainous route from Jericho to Jerusalem that Christ mentions in the parable a parallel to the path pictured in Psalm 23:4 about which we read, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me.” This winding valley road was apparently the scene of frequent robberies and assaults. Imagine the priest and Levite quoting Psalm 23:4 as they passed by. “Don’t worry, poor fellow,” they may have called out from a distance, “The Lord is with you.” Yes, the Lord was, no doubt, with the traveler in his pain. But might the Lord have desired to lead the priest and Levite to be with him also?

As we become 21st century good Samaritans, who care instead of persons who pass by, we extend the life and love of Jesus. Below are three specific ways to further your engagement as a good Samaritan.

Truly know people. In order to truly know someone, you must focus undivided attention on his or her concerns and needs. As Good Samaritans, we should:

- Leave our “side of the road” with its priorities and preoccupations to become attentive students of other persons and their needs.
- Notice the surroundings and situations of others, their relationships and needs...with particular attention to their isolation and aloneness.
- Make caring inquiry when appropriate into their hopes and dreams, their disappointments and fears.
- Offer the gift of our presence, expecting that they will see Christ in us (see Colossians 1:27).

Initiate caring involvement. Be among the first to extend loving support to the hurting person according to the need of the moment, drawing upon what you have come to know about him or her. As good Samaritans, we should:

- Offer thoughtful words and, at times, appropriate touch.
- Visit, call, or send notes just to say, “I am thinking about you.”
- Reassure the person’s hopes and dreams by communicating, “I’m looking forward to rejoicing with you as God blesses your future.”
- Commit to travel through the disappointments and fears with the person, communicating, “I’m committed to go through this with you.”
- Help lift the burden of the situation and struggle with practical help, thus fulfilling the law of Christ—the law of love (see Galatians 6:2, 3).

Vulnerably share as a fellow traveler. Communicate that you also, at times, have been stranded by the road, needing help. As good Samaritans, we should:

- Guard against “caregiver pride” by acknowledging to others, “I have, at times, needed God’s help and love given through others, and I still do!”
- Share our motive for crossing the road to help this person: “I’m so grateful to the Lord for how I was supported and loved in my pain, and I’m looking for occasions to pass on to others the blessing of care I have received.”
- Be careful not to draw the attention away from the hurting person’s pain and struggle. A caregiver is insensitive when he or she listens to vulnerable sharing only to say something like, “Believe me, I know what you’re going through. I remember when . . .” or “You think that’s bad. Let me tell you about . . .”
- Guard against any temptation to receive caring ministry from those we are here to serve. We all need relationships through which we are being blessed and cared for, but the hurting person we are caring for at the moment should not be giving to our needs.

## V. Re-Experiencing the Wonder of His Care

*Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?” And he said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do the same” (Luke 10:36–37).*

What is it that empowered the Samaritan to cross the road and minister sacrificial care to the hurting traveler? We are not told directly, but Christ’s words in Matthew 10:8 provide insight as He said, “Freely you received, freely give.” As we observe the Samaritan’s “freely giving” of his compassion and care, we are left to wonder about his “freely receiving.” When and where had he been touched by Great Commandment care? How and through whom did he receive it? Had he in times past been the recipient of Christ’s healing touch, His gracious acceptance at a point of failure, or possibly His support during a time of struggle? We are not told. But this one thing seems important: the Samaritan has not gotten over the wonder of being cared for himself.

Herein lies the power for caring involvement: Never get over the wonder of His abundant care for you! Paul exhorts us in 2 Corinthians 6:1 not to receive the gifts of God in vain. Had the priest and Levite taken the Master’s care for granted? Tragically, it seems so.

This wonder at God’s loving care could be called the secret of the good Samaritan’s power. Good Samaritan care is experienced first in our love relationship with Him then in the wonder of such loving care as we freely share it with those around us. Indeed, Christ is the supreme example of someone who cares for us. Consider that:

- He truly knew us—everything about us (see Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 6:32).
- He initiated caring involvement, leaving heaven to cross, not a road, but the barrier of humanity, becoming a servant, humbled on our behalf unto death (see Philippians 2:3–8).
- He allowed us to know Him. He became flesh and dwelt among us (see John 1:14), leaving for us His Holy Spirit as Revealer and Comforter (see John 16:13; 14:26), and even now still interceding for us (see Hebrews 4:14,15; Romans 8:33, 34).

As good Samaritan caregivers, we express His care to the lonely around us, the hurting we encounter on life's journey. The power and prompting for such care comes from the wonder that we are cared for. In fact, consider the wonder of Christ's words: "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?'" For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matthew 6:31, 32). We are to stand still, trusting that if our Father knows of our need, His provision is assured.

Consider the irony of such counsel. You are to stand still and refrain from pursuing even the good things you need. Imagine yourself standing still, having real needs, but trusting God instead of anxiously chasing after them. You happen to look over your shoulder and notice something following you in the distance. Closer and closer it comes. Soon you recognize it as God's provision coming behind you just as scripture promises.



**W-1** Frequently being led by the Spirit into deeper love for the One who wrote the Word.

### *Encounter Jesus*

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" (Psalm 23:6). The goodness of God's provision has been pursuing you! Had you been chasing all over trying to meet your own needs, you may have missed what God had provided for you. God's counsel to stand still from anxious pursuing is so that His goodness and mercy can overtake you!

Reflect on the similar promise of Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" Imagine Christ's embracing you in outstretched arms, bringing to you the abundance of His provision.

Consider the wonder of it, and don't receive it in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1). Return often to the wonder of this scene—being overtaken by Jesus and the goodness of His care! Pause to celebrate with a grateful heart!