

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

LUKE 10:25-11:54

Have you heard about the man who needed legal help? He phoned a lawyer and asked him, *"How much would you charge to answer three simple questions?"*

The lawyer replied, "A thousand dollars."

The man answered, *"A thousand dollars! That's very expensive, isn't it?"* "It certainly is," said the lawyer, *"Now what's your third question?"* Ah, lawyer jokes...

Question: What's the difference between a lawyer and a herd of buffalo? *Answer: A lawyer charges more.*

Well, in verse 25 we read, *"And behold, a certain lawyer..."* Accept this lawyer wasn't a legal attorney, but an expert in Jewish law. He was a theologian. *And he came asking the ultimate question of Jesus.*

He *"stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* A question every thinking person has asked at some point in their life.

(And Jesus) *said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"* So he answered and said, *"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and 'your neighbor as yourself.'* And He said to him, *"You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."* Jesus commends this man's summation of the Jewish Law. The whole Law can be boiled down into two principles: *love God with all you've got and love your neighbor.* The Law put love on display.

Thus, Jesus concluded, *“Do this and you will live.”* And the man would have if love was in his heart.

The problem though is that love doesn't come naturally for any of us. Sin and selfishness lurk in the human heart. True love for God and neighbor comes **supernaturally** only when we've been born of God.

And this lawyer knew his shortcomings. He was well aware of the reality of his sin and the selfishness in his heart. That's why he was looking for a loophole.

He tries to soften the law's demand to get his heart off the hook. We're told in verse 29, *“But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”* Loving others becomes easier when **you define** who is and isn't your neighbor. Some folks are easy to love, but don't ask me to love the unlovable.

Jesus tells a story that defines *who is my neighbor*.

“Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.” Until the 90s the road from Jericho to Jerusalem was an uphill, windy, dirt path that snaked its way above the Kelt Gorge.

On my first trip to Israel, we traveled this mountain road in a tour bus. And there were places where the tires rolled to within inches of a ledge that dropped off into a steep ravine. *I'll never forget that bus ride!*

Today a modern highway has replaced the ancient path, but the original road was dangerous. It was a haven for road

pirates. Ambushes were common. What we call “carjackings” are nothing new.. One happened to “*a certain man*” on the road to Jericho. Bandits robbed him and beat him to within an inch of his life...

“Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.”

The theologian who asked the question prompting the story may’ve been *a priest and Levite*. Rather than let him off the hook, Jesus makes this very personal.

Priest and Levite were the two orders of Jewish clergy who supposedly knew God. But here in this story, their hearts lack love for God or compassion for their fellow man. They probably were on their way to serve God, and love would’ve inconvenienced them.

In his commentary on this passage, J Vernon McGee scenically suggests, “The reason the priest and the Levite passed by on the other side was that they saw that the man had already been robbed!” His wallet was gone. They were as many thieves as the robbers.

I’ll never forget years and years ago now, my mom had asked me to teach her Sunday School class one Sunday. The topic was this story, *The Good Samaritan*.

I was driving to mom’s church when I passed by a little, old lady all dressed up. It was obvious where she was going. She was walking to the church. And I had driven right past her.

That's when the Lord reminded me, "*Sandy, what are you teaching on this morning?*"

I went back and gave the lady a ride to church. But at times we get so busy *serving God*, we miss the point of *serving Him*. Our hearts can become callous.

Verse 33, "**But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.**" Remember, Jews hated the Samaritans.

The term, "**Good Samaritan**" was an oxymoron to a Jew. Like "*30 minute lunch hour*," or "*fresh prune*," or "*Georgia Tech Football*" - it was a contradiction.

And here, Jesus attacks Jewish pride and prejudice by making the hero of this story the man Jews hated most. Jesus is always against any form of racism.

He values **benevolence** over **birthright** - and **heart** over **heritage**. Here this despised Samaritan has more of God's love in his heart than the Jewish holy men.

"So (this Samaritan) went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' This story teaches many lessons, but one truth stands out... **You can't love your brother, and obey God, without being willing to sacrifice some convenience, and time, and image, and money. Love rolls up its sleeves. Love takes risks.**

It doesn't just turn up its nose and stroll past obvious needs. It's willing and ready to get involved. *You* can't pick someone up without *you* getting down and dirty.

Jesus is defining who is our neighbor, so He asks the question in verse 36, "So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"

And (the lawyer) said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Wow! This lawyer had wanted off the hook, but Jesus hooked him. His story exposed his lack of love...

The lawyer's next question should've been, "*How do I love?*" Jesus would've answered, "Follow Me." For only Jesus can give us a love for God and neighbor.

This man had originally asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" But he wasn't ready for the answer. Jesus first had to create in him an awareness of his loveless heart, and thus his need to follow the Savior.

Verse 38 "Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house." This village was Bethany - on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives - east of Jerusalem - just off the Jericho Road.

This means the story of the Good Samaritan was even more dramatic since it was told on-location.

"And (Martha) had a sister called Mary..." She also had a brother named Lazarus. And Mary was the lady "who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word."

It's not every night you have the Creator of the Universe to your house for dinner. That's why Martha wanted every detail of the evening to be just right, especially her meal. Martha probably had a reputation to uphold. But when she needed a little help from her sidekick, *sister Mary was nowhere to be found*. She had been drawn into the other room to be with Jesus.

That's what we're told in verse 40 "But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."

Apparently, Martha was confident that Jesus would set her lazy sister straight. But instead, Jesus sets Martha straight. "(He) answered... "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." And like Martha, we too can get distracted "*with much serving.*"

Realize, the primary reason Jesus saved you is not for you to serve Him. He has angels who can do that, and the angels do a far better job serving than we do.

Fellowship is the reason Jesus died for us. Our Savior wants a love relationship with us. Even our service is just a way for us to spend time with Jesus.

Mary understood this, **do you?** Where are you most often found - in the kitchen of service, or at Jesus' feet?

Chapter 11 begins, "Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His

disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." It amazes me that the disciples never asked Jesus, "*Lord, teach us to heal the sick... or cast out demons... or walk on water... or turn water into wine... or open the eyes of the blind...*"

Not once did they request a course in miracles. Yet they came and asked Jesus, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*"

I think the disciples deeply sensed that prayer was the key to Jesus' miraculous life. If they knew how to pray they too could tap into God's incredible power.

"So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name." The **first** component to prayer is **adoration**. We need to "*hallow*" or *make holy* His name. To hallow God is to observe His uniqueness and supremacy. Prayer expresses *human need*, but it should begin *exalting God's glory*.

Prayer should always start with praise.

The second component of prayer is **submission**.

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The ultimate goal in prayer is not to get my will done in heaven, but God's will done on earth.

Before I *submit my request* I first need to *submit my will*. God doesn't exist for my pleasure, I exist for His.

Once I submit to what's best for God's kingdom, rather than my own; then He can trust my requests.

This brings us to prayer's third component: **supplication**. "*Give us day by day our daily bread.*"

And notice, our asking should be done daily. Every morning God sent wonder bread, or heavenly manna to the Hebrews in the desert. But they could only gather that day's portion. If they hoarded the bread, it spoiled. God wanted them going to Him *"day by day."*

And the same is true for us. The Lord rarely gives me more than I need, lest I forget Him. Rather He gives me each day's portion, so I'll keep coming back.

"And (we're also to pray for our spiritual needs, namely) forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us." As God grants us His forgiveness, it encourages us to forgive those who sin against us. **Prayer and repentance** go hand in hand.

Of course, verse 4 brings up an interesting question.

When I come to Jesus doesn't He forgive me of all my sin - past, present, and future? *If so, why do I need to continually ask for forgiveness?* And the answer is in the old adage, **"Confession is good for the soul."**

I ask to be forgiven not because I lack forgiveness, but confession helps me maintain a right attitude. It keeps me honest, humble, and repentant. Confession, *i.e. seeking God's forgiveness*, is the antidote for pride.

And this model prayer continues, *"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

And here are two more spiritual needs: **direction** and **protection**. *Lead us not into temptation* that's **direction**. *And deliver us from the evil one* that's **protection**.

Ask God to keep you from falling - to steer you from temptation and catch you when you stumble. **And** ask Him to deliver you from the devil and his evil schemes.

Whenever I walk through our neighborhood I carry a can of canine repellent - just in case a dog attacks me.

And prayer is demon repellent. For like a rabid dog, Satan is on the prowl. And prayer is a squirt of *mace* in his face. He forces him to back down. As we're told in James 4:7, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

"And (then still on the subject of prayer, Jesus) said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him..."

In oriental culture, it was a heavy humiliation for a guest to visit, and you have nothing to serve him.

Here, a family with a late night guest and an empty pantry runs to a neighbor and wakes him from sleep. They upset their neighbor to save face with a guest.

But his neighbor "will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'?" Evenings in Israel get chilly and in the absence of central heat, families would pile in bed together. Their collective body heat kept each other warm.

This neighbor had already gotten comfortable. He didn't want to get out of bed and meander through a cold house to

fetch a loaf of bread. The toasty neighbor tells his friend the bread can wait until the morning.

But that's not the end of the story. Jesus continues, "I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs." Apparently, the guy doesn't take "no" for an answer. He keeps banging on the door until his reluctant neighbor ends up fetching him some bread.

And Jesus is teaching us that God also responds to our **persistence**. Sometimes prayer is like banging on the door. God waits until we're desperate. Evidently, our desperation for God's intervention is a good thing.

There is power in persistent prayer! (WITH AUDIO)

I hate to admit it, but as a parent there were times when I *caved* into my children's persistence. It's poor parenting, but on occasion I allowed my kids to pester me into action. "O *daddy please, please daddy, pretty please, daddy...*" And if you give in once, expect them to try it again and again. Kids are good at pestering.

But here, **Jesus teaches us pestering prayer.**

Keep banging on God's door - keep banging - when you think it's time to stop, keep banging. For multiple reasons, God responds to His children's persistence.

Verse 9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." The original reads,

"Everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and to him who keeps on knocking it will be opened."

When my kids did make an off-the-cuff request and never followed up, I assumed it wasn't a big deal. It was just a whim that was best ignored. Perhaps God assumes the same when we ask once and stop. It's when we're persistent that He takes us more seriously.

If you've been praying... keep banging...(AUDIO only)

Jesus continues, "If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Here, Jesus makes clear that just because God responds to our persistent prayers doesn't mean He's a lazy neighbor who has to be badgered into kindness, or a reluctant parent who has to be pestered by his kids to provide. *No! God wants to meet our needs!*

I love Isaiah 65:24, there the Lord says, "It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear." God is a father who loves and relishes giving good gifts to his children.

The persistence God desires doesn't overcome any reluctance on *God's part*. Rather it produces a right attitude in us. The fuller rendering of the Greek word in verse 8 is "a shameless persistence." It's a *desperation* that exceeds *our sophistication*. I'm no longer embarrassed by my need. When

God waits to answer, He's allowing my need to muffle and smother my pride.

The guy who kept knocking on his neighbor's door was past the point of worrying about his image. His pride had been overwhelmed by his need. At times God waits for this to happen in us - *then He answers!*

Verse 14 tells us, "And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute." Most of the time demons create sharp tongues, and bitter words, and hateful speech.

But this demon had pushed the mute button.

Jesus though chose to *cast out* this demon. "So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." Understand "*Beelzebub*" was a name the Jews used for Satan. It means "the lord of the flies."

Those who opposed Jesus couldn't deny the validity of His miracles, so they questioned their source. They accused Him of casting out demons by Satan's power, rather than God's authority. Their *logic was ludicrous*.

"Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls.

If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub." Sadly, Satan is too successful to be divided. He gets too much done to be fighting against himself. There's no way

Jesus was in league with Satan. Jesus' miracles were an assault on the enemy.

He says in verse 19 "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges." There were also Jewish exorcists who cast out demons. And they were considered God's agents. If the Jews applied this logic to themselves, they were then working with Stan.

"But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you." Here's the more obvious explanation of what was happening. Jesus' power over demons, disease, even death was proof that God had come. *God's kingdom had come!*

I love what Jesus says, "*If I cast out demons with the finger of God...*" Jesus handles the devil with His pinky.

Don't **you** underestimate the devil? For you and I, the devil can be a handful, but for Jesus He's nothing.

Jesus doesn't even have to ball up a fist. He can drive out the devil and his demons with his little finger.

In verse 21 Jesus gives the *logical explanation* for His command over demons. "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace.

But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoils." Satan is the "*strong man*," but Jesus is the "*stronger than he!*"

1John 4:4 says the same, "He (the Jesus) who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." As strong as Satan is,

Jesus is stronger. He's overcome him, defeated his devices, and taken back what he's stolen.

Jesus adds in verse 23, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters." Remember in Luke 9 Jesus said, "he who is not against us is on our side." Two chapters later He says the opposite, "he who is not with me is against me." *What gives?* This brings up a vital rule in Bible interpretation. *To understand a text, seek its context.*

It reminds me of the sign we use to have hanging in the Calvary Chapel nursery. It quoted 1 Corinthians 15, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

Taken literally the verse was appropriate for the nursery, but it was definitely taken out of context!

In Luke 9 Jesus was forbidding sectarian division **within** His Kingdom. Just because you're not part of our particular group, doesn't mean you're not serving God. The Church is always bigger than any one group.

Yet Luke 11 deals with folks **outside** God's Kingdom. The cause of Christ is bigger than any one group, yet make sure every group is part of the big group that embraces Jesus as Christ and submits to Him as Lord.

"*He who is not with me is against me...*" You've got to be part of the big group. But "*He who is not against us is for us.*" His group is bigger than any one group.

The key to understanding the text is context!

Verse 24, "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." This explains the impotence of religion. **Reformation without regeneration is worthless.**

Realize, If every human stopped sinning tomorrow it wouldn't add a single person to the rolls in heaven.

Human beings don't just need to stop sinning. We need to address the reason we sin in the first place. If we don't get at the root of our sin, we'll return to our sinning with a vengeance. Thus we need a new birth.

Here Jesus mentions a man who just gets a face-lift. He cleans up his act. He reforms his wicked ways. He culls out the sin in his life and drives away his demons.

But there's a difference between *turning over a new leaf* and *becoming a new person*. Because this man didn't fill the void the evil spirit had occupied with the Holy Spirit - because he did nothing to assure a changed nature - the demon returned and brought his buddies with him. His latter end was worse than at first.

There's a saying in Alcoholics Anonymous. **"AA won't send you to heaven and it won't keep you out of hell. It just helps you stay sober long enough for you to decide which way you want to go."** That's true. There's merit in getting and staying sober and cleaning up your life, but it's not the end-all. Only

Jesus transforms a life. He alone can instill joy and peace and victory over sin.

Reformation is man's work. It's external, cosmetic.

Regeneration is God's work. It's internal. It reaches to my core. Christianity is more than turning over a new leaf, it's surrendering ownership of my life to God.

True Christian transformation involves more than *removing sin*, but *receiving Christ*. It's not just *improving my life*, or even *living for God*. It's swapping my life for His life. It's letting Jesus live His life in me!

Verse 27, "And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!"

But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" To Jesus, *family affiliation* was secondary to *spiritual determination*.

The voice in the crowd praised his mother. And yes, Mary was blessed. But Jesus insists, "More blessed - more merry than Mary - is the person who becomes a womb for God's word and gives birth to obedience."

You don't please God by worshipping Mary, but by obeying Jesus. God puts a premium on obedience.

"And while the crowds were thickly gathered together (a mob had formed), He began to say, "This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a

sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation.” Remember, Jonah spent three days and nights in the belly of a fish before he was expelled, while Jesus will spend three days and nights in the belly of the earth before He’s resurrected.

From here on - until His ascension to heaven - *the resurrection* was the only sign Jesus would give them.

By this point, Jesus was done with signs. The crowd had proved to be nothing but spiritual ambulance chasers. They sought *thrills* not *truth*. More evidence was not what they needed. They needed to repent.

In verse 31 Jesus says, “The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.” The Queen of Sheba famously visited Solomon to marvel at his greatness.

Yet the Jews witnessed the miracles of Jesus - *a man, a king* - greater than Solomon - and rather than marvel, they only hardened their hearts in unbelief.

Jesus leaves the mob with an ominous warning. “The men of Nineveh (as well as the Queen of the South) will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.”

Nineveh of old, as well as the Queen, trusted in a lessor witness than was given to the Jews. In the judgment they’ll condemn Israel for their lack of faith.

"No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light." And Jesus was this light. His teachings and miracles were public record. Jesus' ministry had been out in the open for everyone to see. No one in Israel lacked evidence of His claims.

"The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness." Israel's problem wasn't insufficient light, *but a bad eye*. You can have the brightest light, but weak eyes don't allow you to see. This was the problem with the Jews. Jesus was a bright light, but the people's own pride and prejudice obscured their own vision.

"Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light."

Here's the lesson, to see clearly make sure your outlook is unbiased - *that there's no darkness in your perspective to obscure your objectivity*. For if you succumb to self-deception you'll never see the truth.

I'll never forget the Adams' family gathering when my dad mentioned to his brother that he'd grown some hot peppers in his garden. My uncle bragged, "*There's no such thing as a pepper too hot for my taste buds.*"

I'll never forget him biting into that pepper, tears streaming down his cheeks, and yet that man never admitted it was hot -

never. Blinding Pride kept him from conceding the obvious and embracing the truth.

This was the Jewish problem. They were blinded by pride, and the chief perpetrators were a sect of legalists known as Pharisees. In Jesus' day, they were a prominent part of the religious landscape in Israel.

And we'll talk more about them next week...

But this morning, *what have we learned?*...

We've learned our neighbor is anybody we meet who has a need... Even if a few moments earlier we might have thought of them as a stranger, or a foreigner, or a victim, or even an enemy. They're still my neighbor.

We've learned that love reaches across racial barriers, and rolls up its shirtsleeves, and takes risks...

We've learned that God desires our fellowship, even more than service. Jesus wants us to sit at His feet.

We've learned the importance of prayer, and persistent prayer. God answers desperate prayers. If you have a need only God can meet, **keep banging...(AUDIO only)**

We've also learned that Jesus can handle the devil with His little finger. There's power even in His pinky.

We've learned that Christianity is more than turning over a new leaf - it's more than religion - it's a new and transformed life - that's received by God's Holy Spirit.

We've learned God puts a premium on obedience.

We've learned that God requires more of the people who've been given the greater opportunities.

And we've learned, the light that shines, no matter how bright, can be obscured by the prejudiced eye that takes that light in. Beware of pride and self-deception.

Wow, we've learned a lot today. May God give us the grace and wisdom to take to heart all we've learned.