

QUESTIONS CHRISTIANS ASK
IS MY NEIGHBOR REALLY LOST?
LUKE 10:25–37



The Heart of the Matter

Isn't it amazing? We get so busy with our Christian activities, traveling to and from church, engaged in things that will ultimately gain eternal rewards, that we walk by, drive by, live beside, and if we're honest, virtually ignore those around us. It's hypocritical for Christians to say that we want to reach the world for Christ if we won't even walk across the street and befriend our neighbors. If we say we want the lost in the remotest parts of the world to know Jesus, but we don't share His story with those around us, we lie.

Let's all begin playing our part by finding out what our neighbors need and meeting those needs—especially their need for Christ. Let's start living as good neighbors to the people God has placed in our paths. To help us begin doing that, let's eavesdrop on a conversation held in the street back in the first century between a lawyer and the Lord.



Discovering the Way

1. Who Is My Neighbor?

We can spend long hours, valuable energy, and millions of dollars working out strategies, initiating crusades, establishing medical clinics, building translation stations, and praying that governments will open up their countries to the gospel. As wonderful as these efforts are, haven't we missed a basic ingredient? Outreach begins not overseas but close to where we live—across the street, in our offices, at the gym, and in the shops we frequent. Let's learn from Jesus, not only the identities of our neighbors but how to *be* a good neighbor.



Tools for Digging Deeper



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Christians Ask**
by Charles R. Swindoll
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by Charles R. Swindoll
booklet



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2. The Real Question: Am I a Merciful Neighbor?

In this parable, Jesus confronted the lawyer's prejudice and complacency—and perhaps our own as well. Jesus answered the lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" from an unexpected angle. Jesus turned the question around and asked, "Are you a good neighbor?" Let's take Jesus's concluding question to heart and prepare to make our own personal response.



DOORWAY TO HISTORY
Who Were the Samaritans?

When Jesus told a story and cast a Samaritan as the protagonist, His audience cringed. But why did the Jews hate the Samaritans so much?

Second Kings 17:24–28 records how King Sargon of Assyria repopulated the area of Samaria in Israel after he carried away the captured Israelites. Sargon sent pagan people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sephar-vaim to settle in Samaria. Samaritans, then, were likely the mixed-race people who came from intermarriages between these pagan groups and the few Israelites who remained in Samaria after the exile.

The Samaritans were also a syncretistic people who mixed the worship of Yahweh with the worship of false gods. So, the Lord sent lions to kill some of them. In order to try to appease the Lord, they asked the king of Assyria to send one of Israel's priests to teach them the customs of God. One of the exiled priests returned to Samaria and probably took a copy of the Torah with him. But this priest most likely taught the inhabitants the idolatry of Jeroboam (2 Kings 17:27–31).

Continued on next page

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Continued from previous page

The Jews despised the Samaritans for changing a few key facts in the Torah. They replaced Mount Ebal with Mount Gerizim as the mountain where Moses commanded the Israelites to place the stone tablets upon which were written the words of the Law (Deuteronomy 27:1–4). And as time passed, the Samaritans began to worship at a sanctuary on Mount Gerizim, which they claimed that Joshua built.¹

But Jesus's parable illustrated His love for all people regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds. And Jesus asks us to join Him as His redeeming work continues to break down barriers and prejudices today.



Starting Your Journey

Reaching the world for Christ doesn't begin in some foreign land but within our own hearts. Those of us who have received Christ's compassion must consider whether we're willing to act on Christ's command to extend compassion. If we are willing, we will start seeing everyone as our neighbor.

Our closeness with Jesus Christ often indicates the degree of compassion we have for others. As we encounter others on the road of life, are we like the Pharisee, who ignored the pain of an untouchable? Or do our actions resemble the Samaritan, who put the needs of a dying man above his own?

ENDNOTE

1. Adapted from Insight for Living, "Second Kings," in *Insight's Handbook of Old Testament Backgrounds: Key Customs from Each Book, Genesis–Esther* (Plano, Tex.: IFL Publishing House, 2013), 113.