



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Luke 10:25-37, 1 John 3:17, Matthew 5:16, John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:16-17

REFLECTION AND STUDY

DAY 1

On Sunday we read the story of the Good Samaritan and the dangerous road to Jericho. **Read Luke 10:25-37.** Some who read this parable are tempted to jump to conclusions about the people involved, but that was not the point of Jesus' story. In fact, the purpose of the parable was to show the one who asked the question that he knew the answer he asked all along. How quick we are to judge others to take the focus off of ourselves! Opportunities for judging others are readily available and pronouncing judgement seems human nature, but by judging others we pay an enormous price. Judging others robs us of hope, questions God's authority, pollutes our hearts, makes us vulnerable to hatred, and actually places us in opposition to God. Remember that as Christians, with all our imperfections and failures, God chose to see us as holy and blameless. We are to love, comfort and forgive and encourage.

- Do you remember a time in your life when you were unfairly criticized or judged?
- Is there anyone in your life that you need to ask for forgiveness for unfair judgement?

Thank God for being your only judge. Thank Him for loving you unconditionally and forgiving you for your sins. Thank Him for His unending grace and love.

DAY 2

All of us, at one time or another, have been in need of someone else's help. Perhaps we were too proud to ask for it, but we knew we needed help. And when someone did come and help, we were grateful. Christ says we are to treat others the way we want to be treated. When dealing with people, we need to stop and think how we would want to be treated, then treat them that way. What should motivate us to be a good neighbor? **Read 1 John 3:17.** A person must have compassion if he or she wants to be able to genuinely help others. Human beings have a natural compassion, but too often we learn to shut our eyes and hearts to the needs around us. Regardless of our status in life, we are to look out for the needs of others.

- When was the last time you truly needed help? Reflect on that. Who was there for you? Were you humble enough to ask for help? Did you receive the help you needed?

Ask God to give you His love and the deeper compassion that comes through His Holy Spirit. Pray for those in need around you. Ask God to give you guidance on how you can help.

DAY 3

The priest in the parable of the Good Samaritan made no effort to cross the road. It appears he may have put his position at the Temple before the man lying the street. Does "going to church" ever get in the way of your relationship with God? Some people become so over committed at church that they deny their families, their neighbors and their communities. How can we as Christian be of service to others if we stay within our own church walls or if we are too afraid to get our hands dirty? **Read Matthew 5:16.**

- Have you ever been faced with a situation where someone needed your help but you didn't help them because of a church commitment?

Pray and ask God to make sure you are taking opportunities to love your neighbors. Let your light shine.

DAY 4

The lawyer knew the answer to the question before he ever asked. Pastor Bob talked about how sometimes we can continue to ask questions because it delays actions. We can also continue to question others' behaviors and argue to minute details. That was a problem with the Pharisees of Jesus' day. They loved to debate instead of act. The Church is still full of modern day Pharisees. These are the people who make it their obsession to point out others' faults so that they don't have to deal their own. They boast in their knowledge and look down on others who they perceive to not know as much as them. They may know much, but they forget Jesus' commandment. **Read John 13:34-35.**

- Do you know any modern day Pharisees?
- How can we study God's word and avoid becoming a modern day Pharisee?

Thank God for His Word. Pray that you can shift your focus off of the sins and shortcomings others and truly practice loving the people God has surrounded you with as your neighbors.

DAY 5

When we demonstrate Christian love, it distinguishes believers from the rest of the world. There are no boundaries to loving our neighbors. From the very beginning, God's plan was to develop a people that reflected His character. And what is His character? Love. **Read 1 John 4:16-17.** Believers are God's advertisement to a watching society as to how individuals could best live in that society. In fact, Christian love will always be the best advertisement that the church has. That kind of love makes a difference. Christ has no hands, but our hands; no feet, but our feet. We are His ambassadors, representing Him to the world. And when we love as He as loved us, it will make the difference. People will notice. Christian love is indispensable. In the end, the goal of the Christian life is love. The measure of our maturity is our love for God and our love for others.

- How do your actions towards your neighbors currently reflect Christ's love?
- What kind of advertisement of the church are you? Who are you advertising to?

Thank God for loving you. Pray that you would be able to love others free from stereotypes and limits. Pray that God would break down your biases and give you fresh eyes to see people as He sees them.

DAY 6

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.