

## STREET LIGHTS: LETTING CHRIST SHINE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

### "LIGHTING MY NEIGHBORHOOD THROUGH LOVE"

#### **This Week's Core Competency**

**Love** - I unconditionally and sacrificially love and forgive others. 1 John 4:10-12 *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. 12No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

God loves me, but he's not in love with me. There's a difference. But unfortunately, our culture has so romanticized and sexualized the idea of "love" that the word "love" can't shake its erotic nuances no matter what the context. Put differently, the meaning of "love" has been reduced so by its culturally dominant connotations that it's hard to even talk about God's love without communicating nuances that don't biblically belong. And the same goes for talking about love for others. Scripture says "love your neighbor," but nowadays, thanks to pop culture, that can either sound immoral or downright creepy.

We've got to snatch the meaning of love out of the hands of our "Desperate Housewives" culture and put it back in the hands of 1 Corinthians 13. What is love? "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always

hopeful, and endures through every circumstance" (NLT). Love is about these things.

#### **A Difficult Situation**

I'm not sure being a neighbor to my neighbor is really possible. You see we have a history; there's bad blood between us, so to speak. We live in a cul-de-sac at the end of a short street so parking space in front of our house is limited. We also have a teenage son and teenage daughter who often have their friends over—a lot of friends. We've told them when they do to tell their friends to park down the street rather than in front of the house because the congestion bothers Bill next door, but sometimes they forget. All the cars, all the kids, and all the noise when they all leave annoy him.

A few months ago Greg and Nancy had their friends over and their mom and I went out. When we got home Bill was standing outside ready to give us an ear full. He was livid. He couldn't get his car out of the driveway and had to go next door to find somebody to move the blue Neon out of the way. If that weren't enough, when everyone left, someone pulled into his driveway to turn around and left tire tracks in his lawn. He told me he had put up with the congestion and the noise long enough and the next time Greg and Nancy had that many friends over he was going to call the cops. The conversation went downhill from there and we haven't talked since.

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## step 1

## LOOK CLOSELY – observe what you are reading.

### Luke 10:25-37

25On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

26"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

27He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

28"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

29But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and

went away, leaving him half dead. 31A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. 35The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

36"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

37The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

### • Read the parable and note:

- \* What occurs in direct discourse, i.e., who says what to whom?
- \* Who are the main characters?
- \* Who gets the most space?
- \* How does Jesus conclude his telling of the parable?

### • Before you decide what it means, look closely at what it says.

- \* Bracket the expert's purpose in v. 25.
- \* Highlight what the expert said in one color.
- \* Highlight what Jesus said in another color.
- \* Draw a line from the word "live" in verse 28 to the words "eternal life" in verse 25.
- \* Circle the word "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 29.
- \* Bracket the expert's purpose in v. 29.
- \* Circle the word "so" indicating *result* in v. 29.
- \* Underline the important words "in reply" in v. 30.
- \* Box the characters in the parable.
- \* Circle the word indicating *contrast* in v. 33.
- \* Number the things the Samaritan did for the wounded man.
- \* Highlight what Jesus asked the expert in v. 36.
- \* Highlight what the expert answered in v. 37.
- \* Underline Jesus command in v. 37.

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## step **2** **THINK CAREFULLY** – interpret what you have read.

### • Recognizing the message of the passage

Jews in the first-century believed that they should love their neighbors as themselves just as the LORD commanded in Leviticus 19:18. Through Moses he told the entire assembly of Israel, "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD." And they generally agreed that "neighbor" meant "fellow-countryman" but excluded foreigners. Full proselytes were also considered neighbors, but there were some exceptions. The Pharisees tended to exclude those who were not Pharisees. Another group, the Essenes, taught their members to hate outsiders whom they called "sons of darkness." One rabbinical saying ruled that heretics, informers, and renegades "should be pushed (into the ditch) and not pulled out" (Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 203). The popular view of the LORD's command might be paraphrased, "You shall love your fellow-countryman; but you need not love your enemy" (cf. Mt 5:43). No wonder Jesus caused a stir when he said, "But I tell you: Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (v. 44).

In the third century A.D. a terrible plague struck the city of Alexandria in Egypt claiming many lives. The pagans interpreted the event as the gods' punishment and refused to help the sick since they must have deserved their calamity. Alexandrian Christians responded differently. Out of love for God and their neighbors, they nursed the weak and buried the dead-often contracting fatal illnesses themselves. These brave souls won the nickname *paraboloni*, which means "one who takes a risk." They followed the example of the Good Samaritan.

You know the story. Three men came across a man in desperate need, but only one-and the least expected one at that-did anything to help. We aren't told why the priest and the Levite passed by on the other side, and we probably shouldn't speculate as to why they did, but we can't help it. Maybe the priest feared that contact with a man near death might leave him ceremonially unclean, and the ritual cleansing was costly and time consuming. Maybe the Levite wanted to avoid the complications that involvement with a person in need inevitably brings. One pastor brings this point home when he writes, "Involvement with 'problem people' often entangles us in embarrassing, difficult, and even dangerous situations. We may not feel good about choosing the other side of the road, but we feel a lot safer. Besides, others are better qualified. 'I'm a priest, not a paramedic.'" He goes on to candidly describe how we all too often feel. "People in need are problems, interruptions, nuisances. They intrude awkwardly on my privacy. They deflect me from my duty. They distract me from my responsibility. They keep me from my pleasures. I agree that they need help, and I hope that someone does help. But not me, not now, not here. I have a different agenda." (Gary Inrig, *The Parables*, 37).

The Good Samaritan stands in stark relief to the priest and the Levite. When he encounters the battered victim, he doesn't toss the man money, canned goods, used clothing, or religious tracts. Instead, he gets up close and personal. He dirties his hands tending to the man's wounds. He gives sacrificially of his time and money. "Go and do likewise," Jesus said (Lk 10:37). But doing likewise doesn't mean we have to wait until we run across a battered victim of violence who's a total stranger to love our neighbor. Love begins by showing an interest in others, caring enough to get to know them, and being kind to them. And while the command isn't limited to literal neighbors, it doesn't exclude them either.

### *The Message of this Passage*

*Get to know your neighbors so you can be there for them when they need you even if at first it takes you both out of your comfort zones.*

### • Digging deeper into its meaning

v. 25 *on one occasion* Luke did not specify exactly when this lawyer questioned Jesus.

v. 25 *expert in the law* Lit., "lawyer." Experts in the law are also mentioned by Luke in 10:25; 11:45, 46, 52 and 14:3. The same are also called "teachers of the law" (11:53), and "scribes."

- v. 25 **test** Not necessarily to trap Jesus or to trip him up but simply to see whether he would answer correctly. The lawyer had prepared an answer to his question before he asked it (cf. v. 27).
- v. 25 **what must I do** In other words, "What must I do to receive eternal life in the kingdom of God?" (Lk 18:18, 24; cf. Mt 5:48). Put differently still, "What must I do to share in the resurrection of the righteous," or "When future blessing comes, how can I know that I will receive it?"
- v. 27 **Love your God** . . . The lawyer based his answer on Dt 6:5 and Lev 19:18. In essence he said one must be righteous to inherit eternal life in the kingdom, and one must love God with all his soul, strength, and mind and love his neighbor as himself to be righteous. Jesus agreed and answered, "Do this and you will live."
- v. 29 **neighbor** "For most Jews a neighbor was another Jew, not a Samaritan or a Gentile. [See Ac 10:28; cf. 11:3.] The Pharisees (John 7:49) and the Essenes did not even include all Jews. The Essenes taught that one was to love all the children of light who are part of the community but to hate the children of darkness who stand outside the community" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 316).
- v. 29 **justify** In an effort to justify himself, the lawyer asked another question. He was looking for an exclusive definition of neighbor rather than an inclusive one so he could claim that he had obeyed the command. Jesus didn't give him what he was looking for.
- v. 30 **a man was going** Jesus story lacks the power today it had then, for we lack the cultural assumptions that made it such a shocking story. The expectations in the account are that the priest and Levite are the good guys, who could be expected to help the wounded traveler, but a Samaritan as a half-breed and renegade would be the last person from whom one could expect compassion" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 300).
- v. 30 **Jericho** The road from Jerusalem to Jericho descends approximately 3300 feet over a distance of about 17 miles. It was a dangerous road to travel because it ran through desert and rocky country well suited to give cover to robbers. Because many priests and Levites lived in Jericho, they had to make the dangerous round trip to Jerusalem regularly.
- v. 31 **priest** A descendant of Aaron who offered sacrifices and presided over temple worship. One might have expected a devout priest to aid a man in need—presumably another Jew. Maybe he was worried that he would be defiled by contact with a man near death.
- v. 31 **passed by** A striking way of describing the priest's unwillingness to love his neighbor as himself.
- v. 32 **Levite** A descendant of Levi who assisted the priests in their various temple duties. One might have expected him to help; the possibility of defilement was less acute for a Levite than for a priest.
- v. 35 **two silver coins** If room and board at the inn cost one twelfth of a denarius, his payment in advance was sufficient for several days. The words "when I return" mean "on my return journey."
- v. 37 **the one** The lawyer could not bring himself to answer, "the Samaritan." Instead he referred to the "hated outsider" in a roundabout way. "The idea of a good Samaritan was an oxymoron to a Jew" (Bock, 300).

• **Answering Interpretive Questions**

1. What do you infer about the setting of the expert's question from verse 25?

2. Jesus answered the man's question with a question. Put what Jesus asked him in your own words.
  
3. The expert responded with a twofold answer to the question. Sum up the first part of his answer.
  
4. Explain the comparison "love your neighbor *as yourself*" in verse 27.
  
5. Jesus said, "Do this and you will live." Good news or bad news?
  
6. Explain the relationship of the question the expert asked to his desire to justify himself.
  
7. Contrast the reactions of the priest and Levite to the wounded man with the reaction and action of the Samaritan.
  
8. Explain how the parable relates to the expert's question.
  
9. **Discussion:** Should we "go and do likewise" to inherit eternal life? Explain.

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## step **3** **RESPOND WISELY** – apply what you have read.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Family Activity** (for those who have a family living at home)

Jesus stated that we are to "love our neighbors as ourselves" and used the Good Samaritan story to tell us that our neighbor is anyone who is in need of our help. As a family think of some people that you might know "first in your neighborhood" then "in your world" that have less than you do. Think of ways that you might help them.

Examples:

A widow on your street is on a fixed income. Take her a meal or mow her lawn.

A beggar is standing on the corner. Give him a gift card to a nearby restaurant.

- **Home Group Discussion** (for those involved in the deeper connections of a home group)

Talk about your neighbors—who they are, how well you know them, things you've done together, etc. Then discuss ways to get better acquainted with your neighbors. Discuss what stands in the way of becoming better acquainted and what to do about it. Then try out one of your suggestions.

- **iconnect+ Focus** (for those involved in our youth iconnect+ Ministry)

Have you ever been in a situation when you saw something that needed to be done or someone that needed help? Sometimes we see a need, but don't feel like we are the ones to help. Maybe there is someone who could do a better job, someone who is more qualified, someone who already "has it all together." In Jesus' day, that "someone" would have been a priest or a levite, but it was the Samaritan, the average man, the enemy who stepped in and helped. Ghandi said "Be the change you wish to see in the world." If we always leave it for someone else, do you think real change will ever happen?

- **Community intentionality** (for those with a desire to reach out in their community)

Do kids from the neighborhood play with your children at your house? Do you see these kids more often than you do their parents? Introduce yourself to their parents this week, if you haven't already, and when you do, why not invite them over for coffee or dessert?

### **"Lighting My Neighborhood Through Love"**

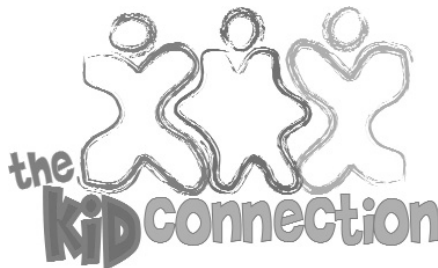
(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

# step 4 Connect the **FAMILY**.

## Experience it!

Experience scripture through the activity-based learning exercise. Dinner is a perfect time to engage the family.

Ask the family to name several neighbors. Ask, "How did you decide who were your neighbors?" Read Luke 10:25-37. Jesus did not define neighbors as people who lived close. He said real neighbors are those people who show love to others. Would the people living around us call us neighbors if Jesus' definition was used?



## Pray it!

Pray God's will for your child by praying scriptures. Insert your child's name in the blanks as you pray.

Father, help \_\_\_\_\_ to understand there is no greater love than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.  
John 15:13 (NLT)

## Post it!

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the memory verse throughout the house. Lead your children to interact with them as they memorize.

**Love** – Giving away lots of love and forgiveness even when others don't deserve it

**Memory Verse**– "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."  
Mt 5:16

## Discuss it!

Discover biblical truth by discussing the scripture. Reflective questions are great with older kids.

What are the two most important commandments?

Why was the Samaritan characterized as a neighbor?

Why did Jesus want the man to understand who his neighbor was?

How would you define "neighbor?"

## Live it!

Live out the Core Competency and build deeper relationships by doing this activity.

Write the name of three neighbors on the top of piece of paper. Have the kids draw a picture of the Good Samaritan on the bottom of the page. Ask God to give the family the opportunity over the next few weeks to be a real life example of God's love. Put the paper on the refrigerator as a reminder.



## Challenge

*Kids preschool through sixth grade receive Kid Pix Tokens for each discipleship activity completed.*

Family completes **Experience It** \_\_\_\_\_ Child memorizes kid-friendly **Core Competency** \_\_\_\_\_

Family participates in **Live It** \_\_\_\_\_ Child memorizes **Memory Verse** \_\_\_\_\_

**Kids can earn extra tokens on Sunday morning by:**

Bringing a friend to **The Kid Connection** \_\_\_\_\_ Completing **KIDZ Bulletin** \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

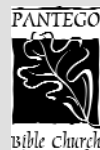
### **Hope** Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).