Jesus the Storyteller



DailyLife

Five Oaks Church

July 9 - 13, 2018

*Day 1*

*July 9*

*Pray | Ask God to open your eyes to see those in need around you.*

Truly loving your neighbor is a full-time job, not a one-time event.

This week we’ll be digging into another story from Jesus, the great storyteller. Through the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus reveals in a most powerful way the true meaning and implications of loving our neighbors. The lessons from this story are so powerful, clear and challenging because Jesus “flips the script” on many common assumptions that hold us back from truly loving our neighbors. Jesus tells this story in response to a pair of questions from an expert in the Jewish law. The questions reveal that the expert is looking to zero in on the minimum list of things he needs to do to achieve eternal life. How often do we find ourselves thinking along the same lines? We know we need to work a little neighborly love into our busy schedules, but we don’t quite know how much is enough. Jesus flips the script in this story. The expectation cannot be measured by *when* or *how much*. The expectation is that we’re doing it continuously. God surrounds us with people who need to receive his love through us. Our job is to respond – *every time*.

*Read | Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 22:36-40*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Based on your reading of the story of the Good Samaritan, how do you define “neighbor”? How should that definition change your daily routines and behaviors?

Take a moment to reflect on the major activities of your normal day. Whom (which neighbor) is God calling you to love and serve in each of those activities? Name names, and make a commitment to step up your attention to love and serve those individuals in a greater way today.

How we serve and love our neighbors is a critical aspect of living a life that is different from the world, and through that distinction we can point those around us to Jesus Christ. Take a moment to reflect on how your service to your neighbors differentiates you from the world. What adjustments might you need to make to differentiate yourself?

*Day 2*

*July 10*



*Pray | Praise God for the work he has done in your life – your story.*

Loving and serving your neighbor creates opportunities to tell your story.

In response to the questions from the expert in the law, Jesus could have simply given a definition of the word “neighbor.” Perhaps he could have said, “Your neighbor is anyone you encounter who is in need of help.” Instead, Jesus, the creator of all humans and in whose image we are created, chose to tell a story—because he knows us. Definitions engage the mind, but stories engage our whole being: our hearts, souls and minds. It’s easy for a definition to be forgotten, but a story endures. Beyond the message of the story, Jesus is also instructing us through his methods. As you engage in acts of love and service to your neighbors, opportunities will arise to share the motivations for your actions. You could say, “I do it because God tells me to.” Or you could follow Jesus’ example and tell the story of how the promises and love of Jesus have changed your priorities and behaviors. God created you and planned your story from the beginning. Don’t let fear or pride keep you from sharing your story or underestimate the power of sharing it.

*Read | Luke 10:25-30a; Matthew 13:10-15*

*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

In what areas of your life do you tend to instruct and give definitions? How can you transform those situations by the use of stories? What is the potential upside to using stories in those situations?

Other than Jesus, who is the storyteller who has most impacted your life? Take a few minutes to send them a note of thanks and encouragement; let them know how they’ve impacted your life (maybe tell them a story!).

Take a few minutes to reflect on the situations where the love and promises of Jesus Christ made a difference in your life. If you have a journal or place to write it down, do that as well. Start building your own “Story of God” today, and be ready to share it!

*Day 3*

*July 11*

*Pray | Thank God for loving you enough to send Jesus to save you.*

True compassion for your neighbor flows from Jesus’ compassion for you.

After completing the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus comes back to the expert in the law with a clarifying question to confirm he understood the point of the story. It’s clear to everyone that the Samaritan, the one who showed mercy, demonstrated the behavior of a true neighbor. Jesus closes the exchange with a simple but enormous instruction: “Go and do likewise.” The expert in the law started the conversation hoping to put some boundaries on the expectations to earn eternal life, but Jesus flipped the script on him and on us. In reality, the duty of being a neighbor is boundless. It is something we could never accomplish on our own. Fortunately, we’re not on our own. In the love demonstrated through the life and death of Jesus Christ, we have a model to follow and the inspiration to do so. And through the presence of the Holy Spirit in each of us, we are empowered to succeed. All we need to do is *respond*.

*Read | Luke 10:36-37; 1 John 4:13-19*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

1 John 4:16 and 19 confirms that God is love, that we love because God loved us and that we can know and rely on the love of God. How does the reality of God’s love make its way into your daily life and shape your behaviors?

There are many reasons that we may hold back from being a neighbor to those we encounter. What are some of those reasons for you? 1 John 4:18 touches on one possible reason: fear. Read over that verse again. What does it tell you about the relationship between love and fear?

The transformation that Jesus is suggesting for all of us is the move from being people who perform acts of compassion to being compassionate people. Take a few minutes to reflect on your life. What steps can you take toward being a more compassionate person?

*Day 4*

*July 12*



*Pray | Ask God to help you see every human being as he sees them.*

Let justice, mercy and humility guide each interaction with your neighbors.

Our ultimate purpose for engaging as true neighbors is to reveal the love and hope that comes from knowing Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and to help our neighbors experience that same love and hope personally. It’s important that our behaviors draw them to Jesus and do not push them away. Micah 6:8 reveals three behaviors that God says are good—behaviors that he requires of us, that will distinguish us from the world and that will open the door to a discussion about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (1) *Act justly*: speak and demonstrate concern for the fair treatment of all human beings. (2) *Love mercy*: take and support actions that meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of all human beings. (3) *Walk humbly with your God*: love without judgment and without compromising your loyalty to Jesus Christ and his truths. Through consistent use of these behaviors, Christians and Christ’s church can draw the world to Jesus Christ and make his will supreme in individuals and in our society.

*Read | Micah 6:8*



 *Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

What distinguishes a Christian who is acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly from someone who has not yet made Jesus their Lord and is demonstrating all the same behaviors? As a follower of Jesus Christ, how are you ensuring your behaviors are distinctive?

What does walking humbly with your God look like in your life? Are there people or groups you encounter that you’ve written off as lost? Go to God in prayer, and ask for his wisdom and truth to be revealed in that situation.

Reflect and pray about things you can do to help your church embrace the behaviors of justice, mercy and humility in a greater way. Find a way to get more involved with the entire body of believers.

*Day 5*

*July 13*



*Pray | Ask God to orient your heart to eternal purposes.*

Loving God and your neighbor as your primary objectives orients you to eternal purposes.

As we wrap up this week focusing on the Good Samaritan, it’s good to remember the original question asked by the expert in the law: “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” We love God first and our neighbors as ourselves out of obedience and the desire for eternal glory with our Savior in heaven. Obedience is easier for most of us to embrace, but doing it for the reward of eternal glory is sometimes more difficult. Because of a feeling that we always need to be selfless and give God the glory, we shy away from actively thinking about, and taking motivation from, our own promised reward. Even though his motivations may not have been pure, the expert in the law had it right. We all need to be crystal clear on what we need to do to inherit eternal life. The reality is that this is the one reward God calls us to orient our lives toward, and the story of the Good Samaritan shows us how.

*Read | Luke 10:25-28; Matthew 25:31-40*

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*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

The story of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25 is yet another powerful story from the Storytelling Jesus. It gives a clear image of the eternal importance of showing mercy and serving our neighbors. Take a few minutes to reflect on how the conversation described in Matthew 25 plays out for you. If you’re already a committed follower of Jesus Christ, have you made loving God and your neighbor the top priority in your life? Spend some time in prayer talking this through with God. If you’re not yet a follower of Jesus Christ, it’s important to recognize that just showing acts of mercy to your neighbors is not enough; you need to love God above all first. If God is calling you to make that commitment, go to Him in prayer, and make that commitment today.

The beauty and magnitude of the gift of eternal life can be hard to comprehend and to use as a motivator. How real is this gift to you? Does it motivate your behaviors on a daily basis? Go to God in prayer, and ask Him to make the gift real in a way that will motivate your heart and mind to distinctive acts of obedience and service.

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