

Who is Your Neighbor?

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MAIN VERSES

[1 Samuel 23](#) • [Leviticus 21](#) • [Luke 10:25-37](#) • [Matthew 9:10-13](#) • [Hosea 6:6](#) • [Matthew 25:31-46](#)

So we're going to start by just reading. Go. There it goes. Yes, that is a lot. There's actually more than just that, so bear with me because we are going to read real quick. [1 Samuel 23](#)—if you would like to follow along, we're not going to read the whole chapter, but we are going to read a chunk of it. Just so you are aware, I am reading from the Holman translation because it's my favorite.

It was reported to David, look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and raiding the threshing floors. So David inquired of the Lord, should I launch an attack against these Philistines? The Lord answered David, launch an attack against the Philistines and rescue Keilah. But David's men said to him, look, here we are afraid in Judah. How much more if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces? Once again, David inquired of the Lord and the Lord answered him, go at once to Keilah for I will hand the Philistines over to you. Then David and his men went to Keilah, fought against the Philistines, drove their livestock away, and inflicted heavy losses on them. So David rescued the inhabitants of Keilah. Abiathar son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, and he brought an ephod with him. When it was reported to Saul that David had gone to Keilah, he said, "God has handed him over to me, for he has trapped himself by entering a town with barred gates." Then Saul summoned all the troops to go to war at Keilah and besieged David and his men. When David learned that Saul was plotting evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod." Then David said, "Lord God of Israel, your servant has heard that Saul intends to come to Keilah and destroy the town because of me. Will the citizens of Keilah hand him over to me? Will Saul come down as your servant has heard?" "Lord God of Israel, please tell your servant." The Lord answered, "He will come down." Then David asked, "Will the citizens of Keilah hand me over?" Hand me and my men over to Saul. They will, the Lord responded. So David and his men, numbering about 600, left Keilah at once and moved from place to place. When it was reported to Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he called off the expedition. David then stayed in the wilderness strongholds in the hill

country of the wilderness of Ziph. Saul searched for him every day, but God did not hand David over to him.

Two Important Questions

So I want to start by asking two questions. The first of these questions is, what does God think is the most important thing in the world? If someone was to ask you, whether you were at work or at wherever, it doesn't matter, and somebody asked you, what is the most important thing to God? How would you answer that question? I'm letting you think about it for a minute. Life, it's a good answer. Love, all good answers.

How do we find out what is most important to us? That's the second question. How do I know what is actually important to me? So not what I think is the most important thing to me, but what is actually the most important thing to me. So when we say a question like, how do I know what is most important to God? Or how do I know what's most important to me? I can answer all kinds of things, but how do I know what the actual truth is?

Measuring What Matters

The easiest way to find out what's most important to me, what's most important to a congregation, what's most important to a business, what's most important to a government, is to give it a small test. And the first thing is, how do we spend our money? The other two are up there, but we'll get to that in a minute.

So for instance, in the next couple of months, if you were to look at my bank account, you would see that painting the inside of my house is what's most important to me and my wife, because it is really important to my wife, so I'm going to paint the house. You'll see that I'll have a number of hundreds of dollars tied up in paint. You'll see that I have a number of dollars tied up in supplies to put that paint on the walls of the house. So, easy thing, how do I spend my money?

Secondly, it's similar—how do I spend my time? Same thing with the paint. I'm going to be spending time painting the house because a number of hundreds of dollars is not enough to pay somebody else to do it. So I'm going to do it. And how do I expend my energy? Money, time, and energy are the easiest way.

So another example, does everybody get the newsletter or at least see it on Facebook? The Fit newsletter? That's an easy way how you can see what's important to us as a fellowship. What

we're going to be spending time doing throughout the week. What we're going to put our energy into. Shavuot that's coming up, the family night in the park. These are things that are important to us as a fellowship.

So when I say what is the most important thing to us and how do we know, we can answer a number of different ways, but I'm not saying what do we think is the most important thing. I'm asking what is the actual most important thing? And that is the way that you find out what is the actual most important thing to you. How do I spend my time? How do I spend my money? How do I expend my energy? There's a lot of work that goes into doing these things every week. So obviously teaching for me with the teens or teaching for Matt up here is an easy measure of how what's important to us, what we put into it.

So think about applying this test to everything we look at today or anything else you're doing, whatever it is. Apply this test—the litmus test of money, time and energy—how we spend money, how we spend time and how we expend energy.

The Good Samaritan

All right, now we're going to jump ahead. Turn with me, if you will, to Luke chapter 10, verse 25. I know I've got you going all over the place. I'm certain that everybody knows this story, but we're going to read it again anyway so that we can set the stage.

Just then, an expert in the law stood up to test him, him being Yeshua, Jesus, saying, Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Let's remember that line right there. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the law?" he asked him. "How do you read it?" The man answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all of your mind, with all of your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." "You have answered correctly," Yeshua told him. "Do this and you will live." But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" And Jesus took up the question and said, He went over to him, he bandaged his wounds, pouring on olive oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper and said, take care of him. When I come back, I'll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend. Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?

So before we unpack this, we're going to look at the players in this story real fast. The priest, the Levite, the Samaritan. We'll look at the priest and the Levite. Obviously, as the story is being

told, there is one person who comes out looking good and a couple of people who come out looking not so good.

There's been about a billion different commentaries done on this section of Scripture and about a billion different interpretations of what it means. I found some really interesting ones when I was looking at it actually. There was somebody who had used this piece of Scripture to argue for universal health care. That one was fantastic. That was a good one. But a number of other things. But we're not going to look at any of those. We're going to look at what the text actually says.

The Status Structure of Jesus' Day

So first of all, there was a status structure that existed in the day of Yeshua that we need to understand as we look at this. So if you think of it like a circle, I should have drawn this out, but I didn't. And you have one in the middle and then there are different layers that get bigger and bigger and bigger, kind of like a target. And right in the middle, you would have the priest. And then right next to that, close to it, but not quite, you would have the Levite. And then right next to that one, you would have the common Jew. Outside of that, you would have slaves and foreigners, things like that. Outside of that, you would have Samaritans and Gentiles. Some would consider them the same thing in the day. So we have our social structure set.

The first thing we need to look at, and it worked out that the Torah portion was what it was, because we do need to understand if there was a lawful reason for why the Levite and the priest stayed away from the man when they found him on the road. And the only scripture that I could find that really had anything to do with it, and Matt and I discussed it this week, was [Leviticus 21](#). [Leviticus 21](#), 1 through 4, where it said, Matt, you went over it this morning, do not defile your priests, do not defile yourselves, for anyone, even in your own family, by being around dead bodies.

That was the only thing I could find. Obviously, that can't be right, because Yeshua has an issue with what they did here, so it can't be that. So we can throw that out for now. But it is possible, and in my opinion even likely, that the Levite and the priest saw that as a moral absolute. That when they came upon the man, he wasn't dead, is what the story says, but they weren't sure that he was dead. They didn't know. And if he was dead, you can't go up to him. We can't do anything about that because we could be defiled. There are a few things in the text that tell me that's not the case. But we can't minimize how important that would have been to the Levite and the priest. Whether it was right or wrong, it was still important. These two are responsible

for the spiritual health of the nation, for its spiritual leadership, the way that they saw it. And even though Yeshua disagrees with them over and over and over and over, it doesn't change how they saw themselves. And to them, that was very important.

So if they're at the top of the social ladder, the Samaritan is all the way at the other end. Now if you're like me, you grew up in Sunday school classes hearing this story. And it was a lovely story. It's a story about how we're supposed to treat people and what we're supposed to do and whether people like us or don't and how we're supposed to love anyone anyway. A number of different things, but we completely miss the gravity of this story when it's reduced to just a Sunday school story. And if you don't understand the Samaritan, that's what we're going to do.

The Depth of Samaritan and Jewish Enmity

The Jews hated the Samaritans in a way unlike how they hated anybody else, to be honest. They hated them so much they wouldn't even walk through their country. If they needed to get from Galilee to Judah or vice versa, they would go around, which turned out to be roughly an 80-mile trip out of their way. I won't drive 80 miles out of my way to get somewhere, let alone walk, but this is what they did. We need to understand where the Samaritans came from, and I'll explain this very, very fast because I don't have a slide for it. When the northern kingdom was taken into captivity into Assyria, the Assyrian king replaced the inhabitants of the northern kingdom with their own, and they brought with them their own customs, their own gods, their own way of worshiping. But they lived amongst the people who were still there and worshiped differently, so they asked the Assyrian king to give them a priest so they could learn to worship the way the inhabitants of the land did, which he did. They mingled with the people, they mixed, and this is where the Samaritans came from. So they were generally considered half-breeds. It was just not a fun relationship. They and the Jews had hostility ever since the Jews returned to Judah.

There are a number of reasons, but one thing that helps explain this is found in Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews 1829-30, about the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Now this happened roughly between 6 BCE and 9 BCE, somewhere in there. So 20 to 22 years before the story that Jesus is telling right here. "When the festival of Unleavened Bread, which we call Passover, was going on, the priests were accustomed to throw the gates of the temple open after midnight. This time, when the gates were first opened, some Samaritans, who had secretly entered Jerusalem, began to scatter human bones in the porticos and throughout the temple. As a result, the priests, although they had previously observed no such custom, excluded anyone from the temple in addition to taking other measures for greater protection against the temple."

One small example of why you can see they didn't like each other. A reason for traveling around their country wasn't just because they hated them. It was because there had been—there is evidence of—Jews being attacked when they went through Samaria. So it wasn't just that we don't like them, we're not going to step foot on the ground type of thing. They were enemies. And they were constantly kind of at war with each other.

Defining Neighbor

So, now that we've covered all that, let's return to the text. First things first. Based on this text, being that the story is told in response to the question, who is my neighbor? How do we define the question, who is my neighbor? So if I was to say, based on what we just read, who is my neighbor? How would you answer that question? We're getting there. That was a great answer. Obviously, I've had way more time to think about it, so it's going to sound better when I say it, right? Based on this text, the way that I believe that we should define neighbor is anyone on the planet in need, of whose need I become aware.

So, walking down the road, you see somebody beaten and left on the road. Is that my neighbor? You bet it is. You're watching TV and you see some foreign land that is devastated by whatever—earthquake, flood, natural disaster, war. It's going on all over the place. Are they my neighbor? You bet they are. We measure these things by our use of time, by our use of energy, and by our use of money. And if we're going to apply that to what happened here, the Samaritan, his schedule changed. His bank account was affected. His energy was used up doing something that he hadn't planned on doing that day. Because as he was doing life, he came across somebody in need and he acted.

The Power of Compassion in Action

Now this word, when it says in the scripture—I didn't write this down either, but it's fun to talk about—the Samaritan on his journey came upon him. When he saw the man, he had compassion. The Greek word for that word compassion, I have no idea if I'm saying this right because I don't know Greek. But the way it looks when it's written out is *spladnigzomai*. It's a unique word. It's not used very many places at all. And it specifically means to have compassion on someone. But the connotation is that it causes you to act on that compassion. So it isn't just compassion. Compassion's easy. I can have compassion on anybody. Oh man, that's a bummer. Glad I'm not you. Oh man, I understand how compassion with action is what *spladnigzomai* means. And I don't think it's used very many other places in scripture at all. But it's a very interesting word.

But he comes upon the man. It affects his use of time. It affects his use of money. It affects his use of energy. He stops what he's doing to practically love somebody he doesn't know. In this case, somebody who would be considered an enemy. Have you ever known anybody close to you who's been in the hospital? Your schedule changes. Your priorities change. Something happens to somebody who lives near you. All of this is out the window. But what Yeshua is saying is, this is how I expect you to treat everyone, regardless. Regardless of who they are, regardless of where they come from, regardless of what they've done or haven't done, regardless of the people group.

The Cost of Practical Love

A few years back my grandfather died from Alzheimer's. And for the five years before that, that was my father's life. My grandparents didn't live that close to my parents. They lived about an hour away, a little over an hour away. And a number of times throughout the week, he had both planned times and then times where he just needed to go. My dad was there doing things for his father and his mother. He would handle their taxes, manage their accounts, take my grandma grocery shopping, do whatever needed to be done. After he passed away, all that changed. I remember my dad telling me that it wasn't so much a sadness that he felt, but a peace that his father didn't have to suffer anymore. His time, energy, and money were invested for years to practically love his father. But that was his father. And this text is talking about anyone who is in need.

A Willingness to Love Beyond Convenience

So Yeshua says, my neighbor is anyone on the planet in need of whose need I become aware. So I have a question before we move on. Does that really mean anyone? Now, yes, it does. It means anyone. But my view of this—and I've spent a lot of time looking into this—is a little different. It does mean anyone, but a big component of this is going to be access. The Samaritan's doing life. The priest and the Levite are doing life. They're going somewhere. They've got to get somewhere. There's obviously some sort of business that's going on. They're not sitting around waiting for a natural disaster. They're doing life. So it doesn't mean that people across the world aren't your neighbors. What I'm saying is, practically speaking, it's about a daily attitude. Because we get busy. I get busy. Am I prepared to love my neighbor as I'm living my life?

Another thing I've thought a lot about. I told the kids a story when I was doing this with them, and I'm often telling them stories related to myself because there's so many of them. But it ironically happened the same week I was putting this lesson together for the teens. I was going

somewhere—I had to go to Dollar General, I'm not even sure why I needed to be there, it was probably to get diapers or something—and I was in a hurry. So of course I'm standing in line behind an elderly woman who wants to write a check. She didn't have the checkbook out; she waited until everything's through. Then she gets the checkbook out. Then she asks who she's writing the check to. She takes forever to write the thing, she tears it off. Anybody who works retail like I do knows that if you're using a check in the year 2000—at this time it was 2015—there's about 9 million things you have to write on the check just so you can take the stupid thing. Oh my goodness, I gotta be somewhere. Hurry it up, get out of the way.

She finally moves—she was buying transmission fluid by the way. She finally moves, she gets out of the way, I get what I came for, I go to get in my car. Her car is right next to my car. She is struggling to get the hood open, presumably to put the transmission fluid in the car. She's messing with the thing and she can't get it. As I said, she was an elderly woman. She wasn't moving very fast. She's doing her thing. So I shut my car door and left because I was in a hurry. I hadn't gotten two miles down the road before I felt it. Life gets in the way.

Missing the Moment

And if my attitude is more of what's important to me and not what's important to my father, I'm going to miss the opportunity to love the people that he has put in front of me. I'm going to miss the opportunity to show a non-believing world what a believer looks like. I'm going to miss the opportunity to practically bring help to somebody. And I don't know what that help is. It might just be putting transmission fluid in the car, but it might be helping a nightmare. I don't know. We don't know what anybody is going through. We don't know what anybody is doing. It's a little weird to walk up to people you don't know and start doing things for them. But I'm willing to bet the elderly lady who wanted to put the transmission fluid in her car probably would have been okay with it. But I was in a hurry.

Regardless of whether it's a little weird though, their response to my love does not dictate my love. I had a Bible teacher years ago in the Christian world and he used to say something that I loved. So bear with me on this. He used to say, the kind of love that loves only on the assurance that they will come to Jesus is not Jesus' kind of love. So for those of us who don't understand the connotation, obviously we're talking about praying a prayer and coming to Jesus and living eternally. We might not all understand that terminology, but the idea is there. We don't love based on a decision that they're going to make. I don't love somebody based on a decision that they're going to see my love, turn their life around, come and join me at fellowship. They're

going to start giving money. They're going to start bringing food for their own egg more than they need for just themselves so everybody can eat. No, that's not the way it works.

Loving Without Conditions

Sometimes it might work that way, but that's certainly not the way it works in the text. Has anybody ever spent time with any group of people that needed it—like homeless shelters? Loving needy people is not easy. Loving someone just out of prison is not easy. Loving a fall-down alcoholic is not easy. They smell bad. They forget what they just told you. They'll take your stuff. They'll show up and get all the freebies. They'll show up and get all the kindness. They'll show up and get all the love, and at the end of the day they're gonna turn around and leave, or they're gonna turn around and not do anything with it. So what, says my Messiah.

A lifetime ago—well, we'll get to that in a minute. Do you think that Yeshua only helped people who gave up everything to follow him? The way that John says it in his gospel is that there were so many things that Yeshua did as far as miracles are concerned, that volumes and volumes and volumes of books couldn't contain them. So we know what we're talking about. But the way that he makes it sound, it's like he's just walking around like it's nothing. You're walking, you're seeing, you can float, you can do anything—it's just whatever. You can move things with your mind.

How many of them were standing around when he was crucified? How many of them ran away when he was getting ready to get crucified? I'm not unique in my inability to love my neighbor. I'm not unique. It's been happening for a long time, but that's not his kind of love. So why are we looking at this? We're looking at this because this is central to the heart of God. The answer—what must I do to inherit eternal life? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.

David and Keilah

Now that we've covered that, that's great. But what on earth does that have to do with David? If you remember a while ago, we read some scripture about David. So now we're going to jump back. I don't remember what the next slide is. Yeah, okay, we'll get to that one in a minute, so we can leave that up there. Actually, we'll just get to it now. Back to [1 Samuel 22](#), 23. It was reported to David, look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and raiding the threshing floor. So David inquired of the Lord, should I launch an attack against the Philistines? The Lord

answered David, yes. But David's men said to him, look, here we are afraid in Judah. How much more so if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces?

So David goes back to the Lord and he said, did you really mean that? "We should go do that?" And he said, "I already told you, go do it." So they went. What is the first thing that happens? What is the first consequence of David loving his neighbor? First thing that happens, majority disagreement. There are somewhere between four and 600 men with David right now. They are running from Saul. Saul is trying to kill him. Saul will kill him if he finds him. He's got all these men that have surrounded him. Those who are in distress, those who are in debt, those who are running from something, they all go to David. He becomes their leader. They become what eventually turns into one of the finest fighting forces any time period has ever seen. But right now they're running. They're still a fine fighting force, but they're running.

So David goes to him and says, hey, we're going to town. The Philistines are trying to kill everybody. Let's go. And they went, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. We're safe here. Saul doesn't know where we are. The Philistines don't know where we are. We are military experts. We cannot get into a town that is surrounded by gates and stay in there. That's a horrible idea. Do you know what you're talking about? Saul will come down in the middle of the night. He will surround it. We'll be stuck. The Philistines are out there. There's only 400 of us. Have you lost your mind?

Leadership in Action

So David went back to the Lord. Did you really mean that? Yes, I did. And then the next piece of information as they go—which I love, that we'll get to that in a minute—remember, it is so easy to get caught up in life and forget the opportunities that are put in front of us. Here was a city in Judah full of his own people that were suffering. David had the ability to affect it, and he chose to affect it. David is a leader. So we have majority disagreement. But then the next sentence, they're all going. You know what David didn't do? He certainly didn't take a vote. He didn't stop and go, "Alright, whoever wants to go to Keilah, raise your hand." He didn't ask who didn't want to go. No, he said, "We're going," because that's what leaders do.

How do you know what a leader is? It's another great question. What is the definition of leader? Someone who has followers. It's a very simple concept. I can put whatever name tag I want on myself. It doesn't make me that. A leader is someone who has followers. David was a leader. He went to his men and he said, I'm going to love my neighbor and you're coming with me. Let's go. And they went. So they go down, they route the Philistines, they get into the city. Lo and

behold, the men were right the whole time. They are now going to be stuck. Saul does know where they are. He's going to come down. So he goes to God and he says, hey, is Saul coming down? God said, yep, sure is. David said, hmm.

So if he does come down, let's talk about this for a minute. These people that I just saved from an invading horde, they're going to stab me in the back. They're going to give me to Saul. And God said, yep, they sure are. So he leaves. Second consequence of loving his neighbor. Massive disruption. Now he's in a town. He has to leave that town. He no longer can stay there. So David and his men numbering about 600. Now we don't know if he picked up some more in Keilah. That's my view. Or if he picked them up somewhere else. But he had 400 a chapter ago.

Now he has 600. So it's feasible to think that not everybody in Keilah thought it was okay to give him up, but whatever. It was reported to him that Saul was going to show up. So they leave and start moving from place to place. Saul searched for him day and night, but God did not hand him over to him.

Now it says in here, David stayed in the wilderness strongholds in the hill country of the wilderness of Zith. That doesn't mean anything to me because I've never been over there. But talking about massive disruption, I have a friend who was in the military for a number of years. He spent a couple of years in Iraq and even more years in Afghanistan. He spent some time in Egypt, which is why I wanted to talk to him about this.

When he was in Egypt, he took a camel ride with some Bedouins up through the desert toward Israel. So I asked him about this, and he said this is some of the worst terrain on earth. He'd been to a lot of places in the world, Afghanistan being one of the worst, but this area that David was driven to after he had to leave Keilah — the wilderness of Zith — is an area in southern Judah that kind of separates Egypt and Judah, kind of over toward the coast, not cutting down toward the Philistines. Trained soldiers die in terrain like this.

600 Men and Their Families

Sometimes the consequences of us loving our neighbor might make us think twice about loving them. But that's not the only thing I want to talk about with massive disruption. It says 600 men, it says David. At this point, David's married. Now we know later on that he has children that are born in Hebron. It's not clear whether he has children already, but it is completely feasible to think that it isn't just David and his 600 men running around the hill country of Zith. There's 600 men with him, and many of them have wives and children.

David's entire family came to him at one point, and David had the ability to leave them with the king of Moab. Otherwise, he'd be dragging his elderly father and mother around with all of his brothers. Because you can't just leave your wife behind if you're on the run from a king. You can't just leave your kids behind. What's going to happen when there's a psycho chasing you around? So it's easy to think that we've got 600 soldiers and David running around in this hostile wilderness. But the truth is, if you pay attention to the text, it's more likely that you've got 600 soldiers and then about a thousand women and kids running around as well.

I didn't think about that one when I was reading the story. I've never done that before. How is this going to affect my children? Now it's possible that the men fled and left the women and kids in the cave. I can accept that. But again, I think it's unlikely. There isn't social aid. They can't just stay in Keilah. Who's going to take care of the kids? I'm sure some women can hunt, but we're not going to get into that. I think it would be highly unlikely that he would leave them there.

The Resources David Had

Anyway, now that we're done with that section, let's look at what we said about loving our neighbor. Yes, everyone is my neighbor. But one of the things I'd like to add to loving my neighbor is access. While I'm doing life, the Father puts things in front of me that I can either affect or not affect. So what are some of the resources that David has?

First, he has access. The cave of Adullam, where he's hiding, is three miles north of Keilah, a border town right next to the Philistines. If you're looking at a map to the left of Jerusalem, it had been disputed before — the town had gone back and forth between Philistine control and Israelite control. It actually belonged to Israel, but it was constantly being attacked. That's why they had walls around the city. He was there. He had access. Did I put that up there? Oh man, I got to get used to this thing.

It's likely that David and his men had dealings with the people of Keilah. I've never lived in a cave personally, but I'm assuming there isn't a lot of flour in a cave or water. Maybe there is, I don't know. There aren't any supplies to speak of. So it's likely they even knew the citizens of Keilah. Because it was the closest town, it's likely they would have gone there to trade or to get things. We don't know for sure — a little conjecture on my part, but it's fun.

So he had access. What else did he already have? He has the congregation. Lo and behold, the Philistines are attacking Keilah and David happens to have four to six hundred of the best trained greatest warriors on earth. And here he comes to save Keilah. I told you earlier they

would become one of the most formidable fighting forces not only of that day, but of any day, according to many historians.

If you learn about David and his mighty men, they are warriors. David was a warrior. He was a fantastic soldier. If you go back in the story, you'll see just how good he was at such a young age. The types of things he did didn't happen. Many of his mighty men that you read about at the very end of 2 Samuel — has anybody ever read the end of Samuel? David's mighty men get just a little blurb in there. This guy who was one of David's best friends killed 700 people at one time with a spear. What? Was it 800? 1200? Who knows? That's like one of those times where you get to that number and just quit counting. I'm not even sure how they know. This guy was as mighty as the three. He killed an entire universe of aliens. I mean, the things that they do later on, it's ridiculous. These are the men that are with David in the cave. They stay with him forever. This is where it comes from. Joab, his commander, comes from this group. Joab's brother, his second command, comes from this group. Incredible fighting force.

He had the congregation. And thirdly, he had the information. He didn't need a report to be done first. He didn't need to form a committee anywhere to decide if the people of Keilah actually wanted to be freed or if they preferred life under Philistine rule. He didn't stop to make sure how this was going to affect everybody else around him. He didn't do an environmental report. He had the information. He had the congregation. He had the access. He had the resources he needed to provide exactly the kind of practical help that they needed. And David became an awesome neighbor.

What Does This Practically Mean?

So what does this all mean? Did I get to that part? Oh yeah, okay. Every week with the teens, when we get down to the end of that part where we've just gone over Scripture and their eyes have been glazing over for the last 20 minutes, they generally aren't answering questions. Every week we stop and we say, what does this practically mean to you and me?

[Matthew 9](#), 10 through 13. We're going back. 10 through 18. While he — that being Jesus — was reclining at the table in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came. You remember our hierarchy of people? We have priests, we have Levites, we have common Jew, and then tax collectors and sinners. The social structure was an important thing back then, and you just didn't do that. But when he heard this, he said — I love the way that the Holman puts that, I think the NIV puts it the same way, but I can't remember — Go and learn what this means. A little reference to [Hosea 6.6](#). Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice.

That says a lot about the way that our Messiah speaks, not only to the people of the day, but to us. Maybe it's not so simple to look at the law and just see the law. Go and learn what this means. What was it Jonathan said last week? I loved it. When Jonathan was doing the Torah portion, he said the light isn't part of the darkness, but it has to go into the darkness to make it light. We are in the world, not of the world. I love that. It's a perfect description of what loving your neighbor and loving God with everything you've got means.

If you're like me, this can feel pretty suffocating. It's easy to remember when you were the guy at Dollar General not putting transmission fluid in somebody's car. It's very easy to remember that. It's easy to look around and say, "It's going to take a lot of time. That's going to affect not just me, but it's also going to affect my wife. I have five, soon to be six, children. If I go and do this thing that I really feel is a good thing — that is potentially loving my neighbor — that means my wife has to be willing to stop and do what she needs to do to take care of the kids because I'm not going to be there."

It's easy to start going down that road. It's easy to start saying, "This can't be done because it just isn't practical for me." It's not what our King is asking of us.

A lifetime ago, I worked with gangs. At a certain point, it didn't become practical anymore, so I didn't do it anymore. But a lifetime ago, I worked with gangs. And as anyone who has spent time with criminals — and I've spent a lot of time with criminals in my life — they're a unique bunch.

Understanding Others' World

But when you get involved with people like that, you realize that if they're going to steal from me, if they're going to take things, if they're going to get things—we look at all the things they're going to do and we forget the things that we are doing. And because they're doing those things because that's their world, they're doing those things because that's how they live, they're doing those things because that's what they understand—and because I don't understand that, sometimes it keeps me and maybe us from getting involved with people. But when we were working with gangs, it wasn't just me; it was a group of people. We had a really, really hard time getting into this community.

It was basically like a weekly Bible school—vacation Bible school, like one of those—except we did it every week. And so we'd get kids from the neighborhood who'd show up, play some games, and do this and that. And it was just a pain. It was hard. And we didn't understand it, because vacation Bible school, when you live on the other side of town in the middle of the

summer, that's the greatest thing you've ever done. You show up, and you play games for a week, and then you have snacks.

Meeting Basic Needs

Most of them hadn't eaten that day. A lot of them couldn't brush their teeth because they didn't have a toothbrush. Some of them would show up without shoes. So somebody had the idea that we should feed them first and then maybe they would be better behaved. It was amazing. So we started feeding them first. Then we got toothbrushes. We got clothing. We got involved with other groups that would give things that would—and that Bible club exploded. And it didn't just include the kids, it included the parents, it included—

We did a barbecue one time after we had spent six or eight months feeding people, giving out clothes, walking the community, and meeting people. And 700 people showed up. I was really proud to be able to man this giant barbecue. And here comes this big black dude and he's like, "Nope." And he starts grilling meat and throwing things around. It was amazing. Never seen the guy in my life. Cooked up 100 pounds of meat like I'd never seen it done before.

When Love Shows

This isn't just a story to tell. When you really start practically loving people, it shows. Our lives are busy and this stuff is suffocating. But we need to remember that loving our neighbor is part of loving God. With all of my heart, with all of my soul, with all of my strength—with everything I've got. You can't separate the two commandments that are in completely different places in the Old Testament—they are so closely connected that you can't separate them.

Remember, he's an expert in the law. "How do I inherit eternal life?" was the original question. Love him with everything I've got, and love my neighbor as myself—what does that mean? He just got the whole question answered, all of it. It will affect my use of money. It will affect my use of time. And it will affect my use of how I expend energy.

What Really Defines Us

We're going to close with one more scripture. As I said, the expert in law asked how to essentially earn eternal life. I remember that one. We wanted to put that one up there, didn't we? Okay, we're going to stop before we get to the scripture. Back to what we were talking about before.

We spend a lot of time in congregations like this talking about a lot of things. We spend a lot of time talking about the law. We spend a lot of time talking about politics. We spend a lot of time talking about what's going on in this city council's chambers, what's going on in this state—who goes here, who goes where? These are all good discussions, but good discussions don't define us. If we're arguing about politics or the calendar or whether or not you spent money on the Sabbath, it doesn't matter what it is. If we're arguing about that with a fellow believer, we are wasting our time. Good discussions do not define us. We are defined by our love. All these other things are just distractions. So do we want to be known for how we love, or do we want to be known for what we don't like or how we disagree?

Matthew 25: The King's Judgment

Then scripture. Oh man, I'll just read it. I knew I was giving you these really long things. [Matthew 25](#). We're going to start in 31 and just move on through the end of the chapter. How do I inherit eternal life was the question that the expert in the law asked.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his throne of glory. All the nations will be gathered before him. He will separate them one from another just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. All the nations will be in front of our King, which includes us. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you?" Remember our social structure. Then he will say to those on the left, "I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you didn't take me in. I was naked and you didn't clothe me. Sick and in prison and you didn't take care of me."

As I was reading this week, I was tempted to add here, but we don't add to it. But I was tempted to add, "I was a Dollar General and I needed transmission fluid put in my car, and you didn't do it."

Then they too will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or stranger without clothes or sick or in prison and not help you?" And he will answer them, "I assure you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me either." And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

This Is What God Cares About

This isn't a joke. This is so important to the heart of our God. It is so closely connected to anything that we could ever hope to do with our own salvation. This is what he cares about. My relationship with him hinges on my relationship to my treatment of others.

So if it's all just me and Jesus and we're going along and everything's fine and I'm praying that a miracle is going to come, I'm praying that people will be reached, I'm praying that it isn't going to bypass me. This stuff is not going to jump me over. We are not going to ever do anything to further his kingdom if we don't get up and start looking outside of ourselves. The miracle will not jump me over.

I guarantee you, even in our tiny little group of people here, I guarantee you that we could spend the next 30 years being a neighbor to somebody just from somebody who knows somebody who met somebody here. And that doesn't even begin to affect the rest of the world. If this is stuff that the church would embrace tomorrow, the world would change tomorrow. It's not going to bypass me. And it certainly won't bypass us.

And my King said, "Now go and do the same."

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