

22 THE WAY OF THE SERVANT

Francis was born in 1181 in Assisi, Italy. He was sure to have all the advantages in life that money could buy because his father was a wealthy cloth merchant. People liked Francis, and watched him follow in his father's footsteps. Francis became a cloth merchant also, and later a soldier. But Francis listened to the teachings of Jesus about the dangers of worldly possessions, and he took these teachings very seriously.

To his father's great disappointment and anger, Francis gave away everything he owned! His father had Francis put in jail to change his mind, but Francis would not! Once, when dealing with his angry father, Francis even took his clothes off and gave them back to his father. He would owe nothing to anyone except the Lord. Francis had actually done what the vast majority of Christians only think about. The year was 1206.

For the rest of his life Francis continued to be as serious about the words of Christ. He spent his time caring for the poor. Francis had a sense of closeness to God and creation.

3 STATEMENTS

- Discipleship is a relationship of love between the believer and the neighbor.
- Discipleship is a relationship of love between the believer and God.
- Discipleship demands attentiveness to the Word of God and compassion for one's neighbor.

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Source

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Two Old Testament passages, "You shall love the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 6:5) and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18) summarize Jesus' words on discipleship. Both are commands centered on love and not on the Law or a set of religious requirements.

In his gospel, Luke placed two stories together to show two dimensions of discipleship. In these stories, Luke asks you to think about life as a believer and what is required of a disciple of Jesus.

The first story, in Luke 10:25-37, is really two stories woven together. The parable of the good Samaritan is like a short story placed between the conversation of Jesus and the lawyer. Jesus used this conversation to challenge our way of thinking about discipleship. Read that story in Luke 10:25-37.

When the lawyer asked Jesus, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responded by asking the lawyer what he thought was the answer. The lawyer said, "You shall 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 your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

Jesus praised the lawyer for his answer, but the lawyer was not satisfied. Seeking to narrow his responsibilities, he asked Jesus, "Who is my

neighbor?" The lawyer really wanted to know the smallest amount he had to do in order to obey the Law.

In response, Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan. At the end of the parable, Jesus asked the lawyer a follow-up question.

But wait! The lawyer's second question and Jesus' question at the end of the parable don't match. Did Luke record something incorrectly? Or did Jesus point the lawyer (and us) in another direction?

Write your responses to the following questions.

1. What was the lawyer's question (verse 29)?

2. What was Jesus' question (verse 36)?

3. What do you think is the difference between these questions?

The lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbor?" But Jesus' answer turned the question around. Jesus asked, "What does it mean to be a neighbor?"

THE PARABLE

Discipleship is a relationship of love between the believer and the neighbor. How we treat others and how we think about those around us are important parts of our walk of faith. The parable of the good Samaritan is one of the parables that illustrates this point.

Answer the following questions.

1. How did each of the travelers treat the man who was beaten and left for dead?

The priest _____

The Levite _____

The Samaritan _____

2. According to Jesus, who was the neighbor? (Check one or more.)

_____ The injured man.

_____ The Samaritan.

_____ The Levite.

_____ The priest.

3. Why did Jesus choose a Samaritan to be the helper?

4. What people today might be considered "victims" like the man who was beaten in the parable? (Choose one.)

_____ People of different ethnic backgrounds.

_____ Students who don't fit in at school.

_____ The poor.

_____ All of the above.

5. What people today might be like the Samaritan? (Choose one.)

_____ Family

_____ Friends

_____ (Other)

_____ All of the above.

Discipleship is a relationship of love between the believer and the neighbor.



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6. What does the parable of the good Samaritan teach about discipleship?

LISTENING TO THE WORD

To follow Jesus' command to reach out in love to our neighbors, we

Discipleship is a relationship of love between the believer and God.



must become like the Samaritan. But discipleship is not simply lived out in love for neighbors. Discipleship begins with God. *Discipleship is a relationship of love between the believer and God.* We can learn God's will by remaining close to the way God speaks to us—through Scripture, worship, prayer, the sacraments, and other Christian people.

Read Luke 10:38-42 to hear what Jesus said about remaining close to God.

In this story, Martha received Jesus into the house and busied herself showing Jesus hospitality. But Mary sat very close to Jesus and listened to what he had to say. Mary's response to Jesus is an important part of discipleship—attentive listening to God's Word, which is love for God.

Respond to the following statements by placing an X along the continuum to indicate your response.

1. Martha was busy around the house. Jesus' response to her was considerate.

Disagree Agree

2. Martha complained to Jesus about doing all the work alone. She should not have complained.

Disagree Agree

3. Jesus told Martha she was worried about many things. Worry gets in the way of discipleship.

Disagree Agree

4. Jesus said that "Mary has chosen the better part." Jesus was praising Mary for listening to God's Word.

Disagree

Agree

5. I am more like a "Mary" than a "Martha."

Disagree

Agree

6. How are the parables of the good Samaritan and the story of Mary and Martha related? What is Luke telling his readers about discipleship? To find the answer, review Luke's recording of the Great Commandment in Luke 10:27-28.

In the stories of the good Samaritan, and Martha and Mary, outsiders were involved. Samaritans were not accepted in Israel and women at that time had no status in society. But Jesus used stories about a Samaritan and a woman to help people see discipleship in a new light.

ME—A DISCIPLE

Discipleship demands attentiveness to the Word of God and compassion for one's neighbor. The stories of the good Samaritan and of Mary and Martha say that one cannot be a disciple without both kinds of discipleship. That is the way of walking with Christ, of being a disciple.

Discuss the following statements and questions.

- Describe a time when you were a good Samaritan for someone.
- Describe a time when someone was a good Samaritan for you.
- Perhaps you feel like Martha, worried and distracted by many things. Jesus tells us that both service and listening to the Word are needed for discipleship. Why is it difficult for you to find time to listen to Jesus? What are some ways you can arrange your schedule to allow some time regularly for reading the Bible and for prayer?

Shaping life

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In the 1970s, a New York woman was stabbed to death while her own neighbors watched and did nothing. Commenting on the episode, a newspaper reporter said, "We ought to tear the parable of the good Samaritan out of our Bibles. No one lives it any longer."

- Do you agree or disagree with the newspaper reporter? Why?

After the New York stabbing, a team of university psychologists performed an experiment. An actor boarded a subway train posing as a person who used a cane to walk. After the train left the station, he fell to the floor. The researchers repeated the experiment 65 times. The reactions of the other passengers were recorded.

Next the actor posed as a drunk, reeking with alcohol. After the train left the station, he fell to the floor. This experiment was repeated 38 times. Reactions of other passengers again were recorded.

- What percentage of the time do you think people helped the man with the cane? The drunk?
- Were your answers different? If so, was the difference a valid answer for helping or not helping?

A WAY TO LISTEN

Sometimes Native American young people go off by themselves into the wilderness on a spiritual journey. The purpose of this journey is to shut out the daily concerns of life and listen closely to the voice of the one they name the Great Spirit.

They might be gone for days or weeks, but when they return they often are changed for life because they have listened to the voice of the Great Spirit.

- What place does prayer, meditation, and reading the Bible have in the life of a disciple of Jesus?

- How are you changed for life by listening closely to the words of Jesus?

Discipleship demands attentiveness to the Word of God and compassion for one's neighbor.



Betty Groskin

FURTHER

opportunities

Mishna minutes

The way of discipleship is the way of the cross. Read Luke 9:23-27 at least once each day for a week. Read it slowly, stopping when a verse or phrase catches your attention. You may wish to read this text with a parent or friend to see what they think about the call to take up one's cross and follow Jesus.

When the text has become "yours," memorize Luke 9:23. Know that Jesus speaks those words to you, too.

Activity 1

"Good Samaritan" laws that protect people who stop to help those in trouble have been passed in many states and provinces. Find out from a lawyer or police officer if there is a

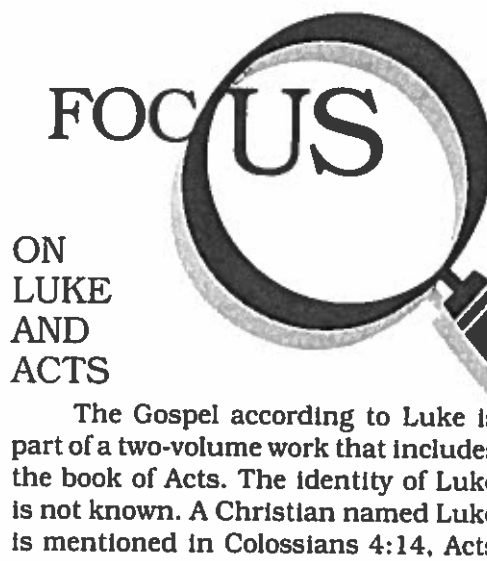
"good Samaritan" law where you live. How does it work? If there is not such a law, was there ever one enacted?

Activity 2

Collect newspaper and magazine articles or pictures that illustrate a "good Samaritan" working to help others. Try to find articles or photographs from around the world as well as from your own community. You may want to make a poster. Share your articles and pictures with your family and classmates.

Activity 3

Interview a relative, friend, or member of your congregation about his or her devotional life. Ask the person if he or she sets aside a certain time each day for prayer and reading the Bible. Has the person ever gone on a spiritual retreat? What does he or she think is the connection between love for neighbors and love for God?



ON LUKE AND ACTS

The Gospel according to Luke is part of a two-volume work that includes the book of Acts. The identity of Luke is not known. A Christian named Luke is mentioned in Colossians 4:14, Acts 13:1, and Romans 16:21. Tradition has said that Luke might have been Paul's companion, the "beloved physician."

What is known is that Luke was not a Jew, but perhaps a convert either before he became a believer in Jesus or after. Luke knew that faith in Jesus as

the Christ and as Lord was the fulfillment of Israel's hopes.

Writing around A.D. 80, Luke was concerned to show the words and works of Jesus as the divine human Savior. Luke showed Jesus' special concern for the poor, women, and orphans—those whom society thought worthless. Luke also saw history come to fulfillment in Jesus and then expand again as the church went forth. The believers were given the Holy Spirit to be "witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The gospel that began in a small town in Israel ended in the Book of Acts with Paul preaching at the center of the world—Rome.