



Session 11
Spring 2016
Middler

The good Samaritan

LUKE 10:25-37

prepare

PRAYER

God of compassion, you care for each person, especially those who are hurting. Empower me to do the same. Amen.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

To show care to strangers in need

STORY SUMMARY

A lawyer asked Jesus how to receive life with God. Jesus asked what the law said. The lawyer said to love God and neighbor, and then asked, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus told a story about a robbed, wounded traveler. A priest and a Levite passed by without helping. But a Samaritan stopped, taking the man to an inn to recover, and paying his bill. Jesus told his listeners to go and do the same.



teaching tips for middler

This story will be familiar to many middlers. Challenge the children to listen for something new God might be saying to them through it today. How does it fit with the "Road to Peace" theme you have been following? Most children will readily identify with the "hero" of the story, the good Samaritan. Make sure to explain how the Samaritan would have been viewed by Jesus' listeners (see Share the story). Expand children's points of connection in the story by asking when they have felt like looking the other way or have been too busy to be kind. Personal examples from your own life can be a helpful model.

For Spiritual practice, you will need bubbles, preferably one container for each child. Decide which Explore activities you will do, and check Supplies and To do throughout the session to see what needs to be prepared.

Who is my neighbor?

The story of the good Samaritan is probably the best-known parable in the Bible; however, it is rarely read in context. Just prior to this passage, a Samaritan village rejects Jesus and his messengers as they begin their journey to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the hero of this parable turns out to be a Samaritan who is also on a journey. As is often the case in Jesus' teaching in Luke, it is outsiders who model authentic discipleship.

The episode begins with an exchange between Jesus and a teacher of the law. The discussion has two main parts: a question concerning the requirements for eternal life and a question concerning who is one's neighbor. This kind of public conversation was not uncommon in Jewish culture. However, the lawyer's questions are likely a means of testing Jesus' credentials and outwitting him publicly to gain honor in the eyes of the crowd. Jesus' wisdom and mastery of the situation is evident as he shifts the focus of conversation from the lawyer's narrow self-interest to unbounded and enduring truth.

The lawyer's initial answer is not unique in Jewish thought, as evidenced in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Loving one's neighbor as the fulfillment of the entire law is expressed in other Jewish writing as well. Though the Hebrew Scriptures referenced here typically use the term *neighbor* to refer to fellow Israelites, other passages also apply it to non-Israelites who live in Israel.

A dangerous journey

The 3,000 ft / 900 m descent on the deserted stretch of road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a fitting locale for this mugging. This journey was dangerous for lone travelers because of robbers who took advantage of the rocks and caves that lined the road. The victim is the only person in the parable without any identifying attributes. His lack of clothing removes all religious or national identification and reduces his plight to that of common human need.

Some have argued that the actions of the priest and the Levite, while not commendable, might not be



unreasonable. Because of their temple duties, both priests and Levites were to avoid the impurity of touching a corpse. However, since they were traveling away from the temple, such concerns would not be paramount.

There has been a great deal of speculation about their motivations, but, in truth, we are not told why the priest and Levite failed to take action. What we do know is that the Samaritan took action because he was moved with *compassion*, a virtue that Luke uses to characterize Jesus in 7:13 and the father of the prodigal son in 15:20. Indeed, the Samaritan pauses on his own journey, risks his own safety, tends to the injured man, and

leaves enough money to provide care for several weeks, with an open commitment for more.

Who acts like a neighbor?

It was not uncommon to illustrate a point by having an ordinary Jewish person surpass the priesthood by acting in exemplary fashion. Jesus, however, uses the example of a despised Samaritan as the one who embodies compassion. Samaritans were descendants of the mixed population that remained in northern Israel after the invasion by Assyria in 722 BCE. They opposed the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple and built their own temple. Jesus' audience would have thought of the Samaritan as the opposite of the priest or the Levite because of his racial impurity and religious unorthodoxy.

The real crux of the episode emerges when the lawyer attempts to justify himself. After quoting two of Scripture's most expansive love commands, the lawyer introduces a calculating question intending to establish limitations on love. But Jesus responds by proposing a different question. Instead of asking who *is* my neighbor—based upon race, religion, or nationality—he asks which one *acts* like a neighbor. The lawyer may not be able to bring himself to speak of the hero's race in his answer, and so he responds universally: "The one who showed mercy." This may have been Jesus' intention all along. To this Jesus responds, "Go and do likewise."

gather

supplies

- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- *Year Two Songbooks* (optional)
- CD player
- Jar of small objects
- Bubbles
- Whiteboard
- Markers and eraser

to do

- Collect a jar of small objects, such as marbles or buttons (enough for several per child).
- Gather or buy bubbles (preferably one container per child).
- Write the Bible memory verse on a whiteboard.

media connections

- "The parable of the good Samaritan" animated video on Max7 website
- Good Samaritan artwork by Vincent Van Gogh and James Tissot
- *The Cat in the Rhinestone Suit* by John Carter Cash (retelling of today's story with animals)
- Hymns about caring for others, such as "Will You Let Me Be Your Servant?"

BUILD COMMUNITY

Welcome children warmly by name. Pass around a jar of objects, such as marbles or buttons. Tell children to take as many as they want. After everyone has taken some, have each child name people they consider "neighbors," naming as many people as objects they have taken. Encourage children to think more broadly than simply people who live near them.

WORSHIP TOGETHER

Sing "The Jesus Way," track 11 on the Shine CD and page 18 in the *Year Two Songbook*. Lyrics are also at the back of *Glow*.

Pray, thanking God for the group and inviting God to teach you something new today about Jesus' way.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Take the group outside if possible. Pass out containers of bubbles. Tell children they can use blowing bubbles as a way to pray for others. Have children blow a bubble and think about a friend. They should pray for that person as long as the bubble lasts (and can blow another bubble if desired). After the bubbles have burst, tell the group to blow another bubble and pray for a "neighbor." Finally, they can blow a bubble and pray for a "stranger"—a person or group of people who they do not know well but who might need God's help.

Bible memory

Cover the Bible memory poster and write the verse on a whiteboard. Invite a child to erase a few key words; then say the verse together. Have someone else erase a few more words and say the verse again. Keep going until all the words are erased.

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

—Isaiah 65:25

experience

SHARE THE STORY

Have everyone look at the timeline on pages 22–23 of *Glow*. Say that today's story comes from the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament, many, many years after the Old Testament peacemaking stories from previous sessions. Have someone open a Bible to Luke 10. Say:

Samaritans lived in the northern part of Israel. When the people were captured by the Assyrians, the Samaritans mixed with the Assyrian people. They married each other and developed different ways and places to worship God. Priests, Levites, and experts in the law lived in the southern part of Israel (also called Judah). They looked down on Samaritans because they thought they were not "pure" Israelites.

Invite children to join you in making sound effects during the story. Whenever you say *lawyer*, put your finger beside your face and say "hmm." For *priest*, snap your fingers to represent the priest's footsteps. For *Levite*, tap your chest for his footsteps. For *Samaritan*, slap your thighs. Tell children to start and stop doing the sounds when you do. Read the story from page 222 of *Shine On*, pausing as needed for the sound effects.

WONDER AND REFLECT

First invite any thoughts or questions from children. Then offer these questions if they have not been spoken already. (You may also want to share the questions in *Shine On*.)

- I wonder if the priest and Levite thought about the injured man later.
- I wonder who you would be in this story.
- I wonder why Jesus made the Samaritan the hero in his story.
- I wonder if Jesus' story surprised the lawyer. I wonder if the lawyer's conversation with Jesus changed him.

PEACE NOTES

Have children choose the sign on the "Road to peace" poster that fits with today's story. ("I can care for someone in need.") Talk about the needs that people face in your community. Read together "Trevor's campaign for the homeless" on page 33 of *Glow*. Talk about the potential risks and benefits/blessings of helping people in need. Share examples from your life of when you have and have not given help to a stranger.

teaching tip

If you are marking a timeline in your meeting space, make nametags for Jesus and the good Samaritan to post on the final wall.



The good Samaritan

Luke 10:25–37

supplies

- Bible
- *Shine On: A Story Bible*
- *Glow* magazines

poster pack

- "Road to peace" poster

to do

- Practice reading or telling the story while creating sound effects.
- Think of examples of times you have and have not helped others to share during Peace notes.

explore

CREATE

Children can make a 3-D “helping hand” using the instructions on page 36 of *Glow*. Use the prompts in *Glow* to talk about people who use their hands to care for others. How can children use their hands to show care? Play “Life Together,” track 12 on the Shine CD, while children work or reflect.

supplies

- *Glow* magazines
- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- CD player
- Blank paper
- Rulers/straightedges
- Pencils, markers

MOVE

Play the Peacemaker game. Add all the Bible trivia cards from page 93 of this guide. Children should act out the situations on the Dove cards and follow instructions on the Question cards. For the Bible trivia cards, have them choose other players to help them pose in a scene that shows a part of that story as well as answer the question.

supplies

- Peacemaker game and cards (from poster pack)
- Bible trivia cards (from Additional resources)
- Pawns

RETELL

Provide copies of the Good Samaritan finger puppets from page 94 of this guide to each child or small group. Children can color and cut out the puppets (help them with cutting the finger holes) and add yarn for hair and fabric for clothes if desired. Children could also design their own puppets for Jesus and the lawyer. Turn a table on its side for a puppet stage and have children use their puppets to retell the story.

supplies

- Good Samaritan finger puppets (from Additional resources)
- Scissors
- Colored pencils/markers
- Yarn, fabric, glue (optional)
- Table

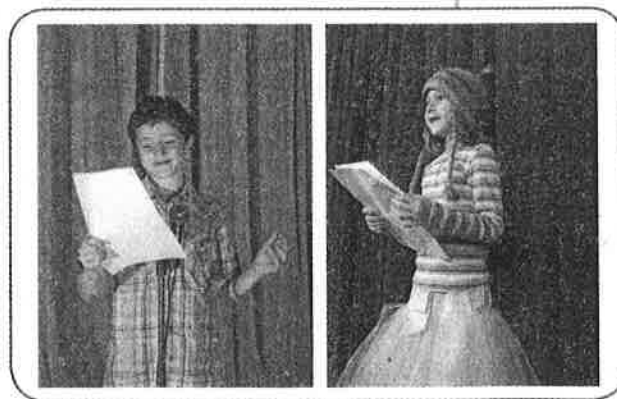
GLOW

Assign parts for the readers theater on pages 34–35 of *Glow*. Encourage children to look over their parts and then read it quickly and rhythmically, like a spoken word performance. Switch parts and do the reading again. Or, help children create a modern-day version of Jesus’ story using a setting and characters that relate to your community.

For smaller groups: The lawyer can double as another character, the injured man can be omitted, and everyone can read the chorus part.

supplies

- *Glow* magazines



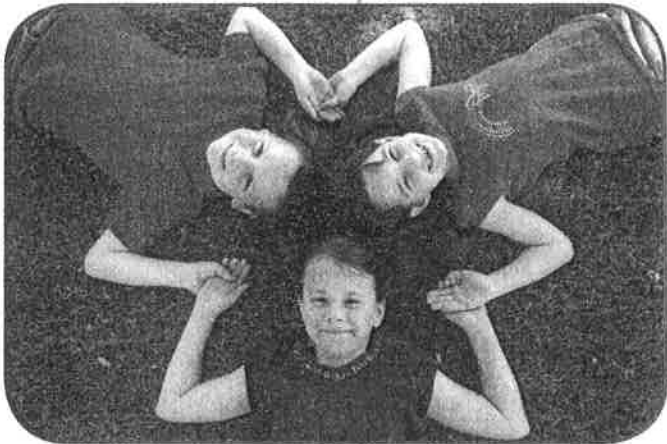
other ideas

- Make rolled bandages out of sheets to donate (see Global Health Ministries website) or collect supplies for hygiene kits (see Mennonite Central Committee website).
- Visit a nursing home and ask to see residents who normally do not have visitors.
- Have a relay race where teams wrap different body parts of one of their players in cloth bandages.

bless

PRAY

Play "Óyenos, mi Dios," track 15 on the Shine CD. Stand in a circle and invite volunteers to name prayer requests. In between each request, sing a line or two of the song. Close by asking God to help you all watch for opportunities to be good Samaritans this week.



SEND

Place a hand on the children's heads or backs as they are comfortable, and send them with this blessing:

The Samaritan was a good neighbor. Jesus says to you, _____ (name): Go and do the same.

supplies

- Shine Songbook and CD
- Year Two Songbooks (optional)
- CD player

Don't beat yourself up if it feels like one class here or there "failed." Sometimes children go silent when they are deeply touched or when they are seriously pondering new ideas.

—Jill Emmelhainz
Grove City, Ohio

leader's closing prayer

What prevents you from taking time to help others? Busyness? Fear? Self-focus? What opens you to the needs of others?

God, help me notice people around me who may need my help, and fill me with the motivation to act on what I notice. May the way that I live and worship bring me closer to others and closer to you. Amen.

looking ahead

For next week's Retell, you will need dress-up clothes for "rich" and "poor" people. Bring jewelry, hats, gloves, or boas, and T-shirts with holes in them or other worn clothing.