

Eternity Daily Bible Study

The Importance Of Love

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Verses: Luke 10:36,37

Topic: Love Is Helpful and Merciful

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Luke 10:36-37 *So which of these three does it seem to you proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the bandits?" (37) And he said, "the one who showed mercy to him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."*

Matthew 9:12-13 *When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are healthy have no need of a physician, but those who are ill. (13) But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

Acts 20:35 *By all things I have shown you, that thus laboring it is necessary to help those being weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "*

True Christianity has always been associated with generosity, helpfulness and mercy. In part because the parable of the Good Samaritan has always been one of the center-pieces of the gospel and has been taught in every church of every denomination that I know of. In fact, for most non-Christians, Christianity almost equals "kindness to others".

Kindness is central. The harshness of the Pharisees contrasts starkly with the mercy of Jesus in all four gospels. The epistles urge us to "bear one another's burdens" and there are numerous positive and uplifting "one another" commands.

However before I talk about being helpful I would like to set some boundaries by discussing those kinds of people that you cannot ever help, and most of the time simply should not help, because they will either refuse, distort or exploit your help:

1. Those who love and practice lies, who dwell in deception and who enjoy falsehood.
2. Those who are wise in their own eyes; there is more hope for a fool than for them!
3. Those whose hearts are full of malice and hatred and who are deeply malevolent.
4. Those who wear masks well, projecting a "persona" that is false and hypocritical.
5. Those who deny their actions and refuse to admit the evil they have committed.
6. Those who frankly admit their actions but who think that they are wise in evil, and who often consider good people to be "just suckers".
7. Those who have reverse morality, calling good "evil" and calling evil "good". (This is the essence of the sin against the Holy Spirit).
8. Those who are totally consumed by greed, covetousness and corruption e.g. Judas
9. The completely lazy "sluggard" who will never act on even the simplest advice.
10. Serial seducers and totally immoral and predatory charmers (who may even try and wreck your marriage, "just for the fun of it", if you counsel them)

Many a pastor has come to grief in trying to help people in any of the above ten categories (which are mainly taken from Proverbs and Ecclesiastes). For instance, you can counsel someone wise in their own eyes until "the cows come home" but they will always find some way of contradicting you or out-smarting you! (I am reminded about Jesus' comment on "throwing pearls before swine!")

Matthew 7:6 *Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.*

Despite these dangers you should help people anyway! We are not let off the hook of helping our neighbor just because a few of them are "bad apples"! Jesus may not have helped King Herod at all, but He did help thousands of other people! Love, mercy, kindness and generosity are still to be our chief characteristics!

Helping others is not an isolated action that is complete in itself. When you help someone they become part of your life story, you become part of their life story and together you become part of that ages long Story of God's Glory! The glory goes to God, and in time, an eternal reward goes to you!

Matthew 10:42 *And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."*

To complicate matters even further there are The Three Big Stories that we as Christians are part of, each of which give meaning and color to our lives, and which we enter into as we love and help others. The Three Big Stories (in brief) are:

1. **The Story of Creation and The Cosmos:** Our part as created beings in matters on Earth and in Heaven, our stewardship of Creation, Our stewardship of our physical created body, its use and abuse, its death and resurrection, its role as a Temple, and its glorification in heaven. Our part in the total spiritual cosmos e.g Job's trials, spiritual warfare, our place in the Grand Design of Providence.
2. **The Story of Love and Redemption:** Our salvation, our testimony, the course of redemption, sanctification, relationships, actions of love, our growth in God, our place in redeeming acts of love and kindness, our role as agents of God's agape love. We need to be part of a "Love Story" revealing God's love to angels and to the world.
3. **The Story of God's Glory:** How we contribute to the story of God's glory through good works, patience, kindness, suffering with endurance, displaying God's perfect works in our character, seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness, possessing Christ in us the hope of glory, doing great things for God (yet only in His power). Our ministry should be part of the story of His glory (not our own)!

When we love and help people we become part of a Divine Drama that runs through the ages and into eternity! Just think of the parents of Samson or Samuel, or of Ruth who helped Naomi and ended up in the line of David and of the Messiah, or of the women who gave to support the ministry of Jesus, or the man that loaned his colt to Him as he entered Jerusalem, or those who Hebrews says have "entertained angels unawares".

When Rahab did the simple act of hiding the Jewish spies in Jericho she became part of a divine drama and ended up in biblical history and an ancestor of Jesus! Many of the biblical heroes did a relatively small thing at an important moment, when courage was required. Quite a few of the great heroic acts of Scripture took only about five minutes!

Simple things, such as hospitality can save lives, change Kingdoms and win battles (Jael and her nail in the book of Judges). Stopping to help someone with a flat tire may get an anointed preacher to a church and see 100 people saved! A gift to a missionary may buy a vital and much needed piece of equipment for the work of the Lord. There is the story of someone who sent a hot-water bottle to a medical missionary in (of all places) the steamy jungles of the Congo, and it arrived on the exact day it was needed to save the life of a premature baby!

Actions of mercy, kindness, and generosity bring us great blessings because they take us into the Three Big Stories of Heaven and Earth. They get us lined up with God's priorities (mercy) and God's blessings and God's approval. This worked even for the Gentile Cornelius and he ended up with an angelic visitation, being visited by the apostle Peter, and his whole household believing and becoming saved:

Acts 10:3-4 *About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming to him and saying to him, "Cornelius!" (4) And looking intently at him and becoming fearful he said, "What is it, lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God....."*

A similar account is how a generous Roman centurion was considered worthy of a healing miracle:

Luke 7:2-5 *And a certain centurion's servant, who was highly valued by him, was sick and about to die. (3) And when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, asking Him that He might come and heal his servant. (4) And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying he was worthy for whom He should grant this, (5) for he loves our nation, and he himself has built us a synagogue."*

Luke spells out how kindness, mercy and helpfulness work for our benefit as well as for the benefit of others and for the glory of God:

Luke 6:36-38 *Therefore be compassionate, just as your Father also is compassionate. (37) "And judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. (38) Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure, pressed down and shaken and running over they shall give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it shall be measured back to you."*

Now lets get back to the verses that started this bible study and the words of Jesus:

- a) "Go and do thou likewise". (Be a Good Samaritan)
- b) "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." (God desires mercy above religious rituals)
- c) "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Generosity brings blessing)

Jesus clearly wants us to be helpful, merciful and very generous. This also ties in with His commandment to "love one another as I have loved you".

He gave us these commandments for our good, and not just because Jesus thought it was "nice" or would make the Earth a better place. Helpfulness, mercy, kindness and generosity are spiritual "triggers" that let loose the blessings of God. Just look for the word "blessed" in each of the following passages and see what it is associated with:

Matthew 5:7 *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

Matthew 25:34-36 *Then the King shall say to those on His right hand, Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (35) For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; (36) I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.*

Luke 11:28 *But He said, No; rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it.*

Luke 14:13-14 *But when you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, (14) and you shall be blessed, for they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.*

2 Corinthians 9:5-7 *Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brothers that they would go forward to you, and make up beforehand your blessing, it having been promised that this would be ready, thus as a matter of blessing, and not as of covetousness. (6) But I say this, He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. (7) Each one, as he purposes in his heart, let him give; not of grief, or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

In each of these cases blessing from God came to those who entered into the adventure of being kind, merciful, generous, thoughtful and so on, out of obedience to the revealed will of God in His commandments.

God's love is merciful, kind, generous, forgiving, reasonable, and practical. God's love is not just a thought or word. God sent His Son, not a Christmas card. God's love actually did good for you, and so you ought to actually do good for others, just as the Good Samaritan did.

When you love one another as God has loved you, in tangible ways, then you enter into a cosmic story and become one with God's actions in the world. This in turn will bring meaning, purpose and joy into your existence. Jesus acted as he did because He knew that was exactly what His Father in Heaven was doing! He was compassionate because God's agenda is compassion!

John 5:19-20 *Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing of Himself but what He sees the Father do. For whatever things He does, these also the Son does likewise. (20) For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all the things that He Himself does. And He will show Him greater works than these, so that you may marvel.*

Blessings,

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