

## LIFE MINUS LOVE EQUALS ZERO

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, June 18, 2006



Love  
your neighbor  
as yourself.

*Leviticus 19:18*

**Luke 10: 25-37**

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "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." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. 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; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "**Go and do likewise.**"

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We still have Good Samaritans in our time! Recently a very dear little old lady saw a man lying face down on a busy street. Traffic is backed up for blocks. A little old lady rushes up and begins giving him artificial respiration. He swivels his head and says: "What are you doing? **I am trying to fix this cable beneath the street.**"

In a PEANUTS cartoon Lucy saw Snoopy shivering out in a snow storm beside an empty food dish. He was looking longingly, expectantly, toward the house. Lucy came out and said, "**Go in peace, be warmed and filled!**" Then she turned and went back into the house and slammed the door. In the last frame you see a confused Snoopy looking toward the house, shivering and hungry and utterly baffled.

If ever there was a story in the Bible that needs little explanation – then it is this one! We have all heard it several times -- **I have never heard of anyone disagreeing with the conclusion.** We are good Christian people and our hearts are open for those in need! **Not so?** When the Tsunami strikes, when natural disasters occur, when war and famine devastates the lives of many, we are at our most efficient. Our hearts open wide, our pocketbooks as wide as we can afford and we refuse to take a back seat to anyone.

But, we cannot use the story of the Good Samaritan as an illustration of how righteous and kind and generous we are. This is a different story. **This story really deals with a lawyer who wanted to test Jesus.** And this was not just any old lawyer – this one really knew and understood the law. **He wanted to lure Jesus into a minefield of a discussion to see if he could get Jesus to say something that would break the strict laws that governed the lives of**

the faithful Jewish believers of that time. Who is my neighbor? That was the key question!

Jesus responded with a story that would not only adhere to the laws of his time, but would go far deeper than the law and set new standards for behavior. The lawyer had to understand that there was only one way to overcome the danger of loving only ourselves. George MacDonald who lived 150 years ago spoke of the "dungeon of self" into which most people get trapped. He wrote: The love of our neighbor is the only door out of the dungeon of self. He said: The only time to look down on your neighbor is when you are bending over to help. He concluded: We are not the better for our Christianity if our neighbor is the worse for it.

There were really three philosophies of life at play in Jesus' story:

1. The robber's philosophy was "What you have is mine, and I will take it."
2. The priest & Levite had the philosophy that "What is mine is mine, I will keep it."
3. The Samaritan's philosophy was "What is mine is yours, and I will share it."

Jesus approved the Samaritan's philosophy! "Go, and do thou likewise." (Luke 10:37)

"I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to my fellow creatures, let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

In a Garfield cartoon, Garfield, seated in a comfortable chair, sees his friend Odie at the window, peering in eagerly. Garfield says to himself, "Poor Odie! He is locked outside in the cold. I just can't bear to see him like this. I got to do something." At this point Garfield gets up from his chair and closes the curtains!

Many people are afraid of dogs. It is a common fear. The famous scientist Louis Pasteur was far more frightened of dogs than most people. Even a distant bark would terrify him. In his mind he remembered a mad wolf, which raged, through his boyhood village bringing agony and death to many of his neighbors. "I have always been haunted by the cries of those victims," he said time and again. Yet in 1882, past the age of 60, Pasteur gave up all his other studies in an intense search for a cure for rabies. For three long years, in spite of his deep-seated fears, he risked his life working with mad dogs. At last he came through with a vaccine to cure the victims of rabies. On a July night in 1886 he tried the first injection on a little boy whose life seemed doomed. The boy lived. The remembered agony of his neighbors spurred Louis Pasteur to find a cure for this dread disease.

Two responses to folks in need! Louis Pasteur sought a cure. Garfield closed his curtains. There it is! The simplest formula for the good life ever given came from the lips of Jesus himself. **LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL ELSE AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOUR SELF!**

Each of us at some time or another has identified with the priest or the Levite who passed by on the other side or perhaps in our better moments with the Samaritan himself who ministered to the man who had been beaten and robbed. But we will never have the power to be the loving man or woman God means for us to be until we identify with the man who is lying bruised and beaten beside the road and have discovered that it is Christ himself who has been the Samaritan binding up our broken hearts and lives.

Why have Christians been historically so charitable, so caring? It is because once we were lying beside the road broken and bleeding. Nail-scarred hands reached down to us and ministered to us in our need. Now we seek to do the same for others. Besides, we have found that such a concern for others is the source of unlimited joy.

"If you were busy being kind,  
Before you knew it, you would find  
You'd soon forget **to think 'twas true**

That someone was unkind to you.  
If you were busy being glad,  
And cheering people who are sad,  
Although your heart **might ache a bit**,  
You'd soon forget to notice it.  
If you were busy being good,  
And doing just the **best you could**,  
You'd not have time to blame some man  
Who's doing just **the best he can**.  
If you were busy being right,  
You'd find yourself **too busy quite**  
To criticize your neighbor long  
**Because he's busy doing wrong."**

Your neighbor is the man who needs you.

The Apostle Paul says, "If I do not have love, I gain nothing. Let faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Jesus put it like this: "Do this and live!"

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**PRAYER:** Thank you Lord, for our experiences of your love. How many times have you been the Samaritan binding up our broken hearts and lives? Give us the vision and the willingness to be your Ambassadors in this world and to do unto others as you have done unto us. Be with us now as we go back into the world –with your words ringing in our ears:

**"DO THIS AND LIVE"**  
**Amen**