

## **Training Session 30 - Becoming: Merciful & Just**

### **Objective**

To equip you to go and do likewise by loving people through acts of mercy and development

### **Key Text**

Luke 10:25-37

### **Bible Study**

We're in a series looking at the type of people we want to become and, more importantly, God wants us to become. Without question, God desires for us to become people who are merciful and just (Micah 6:8). We're going to draw from one of the most famous stories in the Bible (or any form of literature for that matter) called the Parable of the Good Samaritan to flesh out both of these values.

We'll begin by walking through the parable and I'll provide a running commentary. The origin of the parable comes from a man—in modern parlance a lawyer—who lacked love. “On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). As he asks this question about inheriting eternal life, Jesus, as he often does, responds with a question, which should tip you off that this guy is in big trouble. “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered, “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, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” (Luke 10:26-28).

Jesus' answer is short, sweet, and to the point: just do those 2 things and you will live, both now and forever. Easy, right? Wrong! Jesus knows how difficult it is to pull these off. His point is to get the man to think about how inadequately he has carried out these two summary commandments (much less all the other tributaries that flow from these fountainheads) and to throw himself on the mercy God offers through Him.

The lawyer begins to ponder the 2 things that he correctly summarized from the Pentateuch (i.e. the first 5 books of the Bible) and he gets a bit nervous. Disgruntled, the lawyer realizes that Jesus is deposing him and he senses the wet paint in front of him and the corner behind him. In an effort to leap out of the corner, he pulls a maneuver made famous by President Bill Clinton when asked if he had sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky, “Well, it depends on what the meaning of the word, ‘is,’ is.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, our text says, “But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” In a sense, he wants to justify his lack of love for people all around him by defining neighbor so tightly that all those he has failed to love are somehow outside his narrow definition of neighbor.

How does Jesus answer? As is often the case, he says, “Well, let me tell you a story.” “A man (a Jewish man) was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.<sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.<sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. (Luke 10:30-32). Not surprisingly, the professional religious guys blow it. They encounter a Jewish neighbor of theirs with a clear life or death need and they show no love and zero compassion.

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him (Luke 10:33-34). The guy from the wrong side of the tracks (in the lawyer’s mind) took pity, which literally means had compassion on him. His heart went out to him and “He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine” (Luke 10:34). The oil and wine of the Good Samaritan was the equivalent of an expensive, first century first aid kit. Wine was used for antiseptic purposes to cleanse wounds, much like hydrogen peroxide today. The oil, similarly, was most likely an essential oil used for a number of medicinal purposes in the first century. But how would he apply these? Most likely, he is tearing strips off his robe, getting bloody, dabbing them with oil and wine, and cleansing the man’s wounds with his own clothing. Mercy is messy, and so is life if lived in accord with the mess that is mercy.

“Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.” So he stops what he is doing, cancels all his appointments, takes a day of his life to check him into a hotel, stays with him that night, and then pays the bill the next morning. And if that wasn’t enough, he goes so far as to leave his credit card the next morning for any uncovered expenses. “The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’” (Luke. 10:35).

Costly love. In addition to the cost of his time, his clothing, his oil and wine, the text says he paid 2 denarii. How much is that in modern money? We don’t know. Commentators try to do the adjustments for inflation over 2,000 years and it gets a bit challenging, but what we do know, from archaeology, is that the cost of a room was 1/32 of a denarius.<sup>2</sup> Do the math, and you realize that the Good Samaritan paid, up front, for two months of lodging. Even if he put him up at the Motel 6, he laid down a substantial chunk of change. Love does, and love costs!

Now Jesus moves in for the close. “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” (Luke 10:36-37). Notice the racist lawyer being deposed can’t even get the hated word Samaritan (who was racially different from him) out of his mouth. He just says “the one who had mercy on him.” Jesus is exposing so much in the lawyer, but he is also imposing a clear moral arc for any of his followers: love, to Jesus, transcends racial barriers, personified through the heroic Samaritan loving the half-dead Jewish man. And then Jesus sums up the whole story in four pithy, power-packed words: “go and do likewise.” Go and do likewise. This is at the heart of our calling. To go and love and value people by doing likewise. This is our calling. So let’s spend the remainder of our time unpacking these 4 words: go and do likewise.

## **1. What is keeping us from going and doing likewise?**

What is keeping us from going and doing likewise with our neighbors and neighborhoods and cities? The same thing that kept the two religious guys from loving and valuing their brother who was lying half dead in the street: self-absorption. Dr. Martin Luther King helped me realize this in his famous, final sermon delivered in Memphis shortly before his assassination. Dr. King noted that in the days of Jesus, the Jericho Road came to be known “as the ‘Bloody Pass.’ And you know, it's possible that the priest and the Levite looked over that man on the ground and wondered if the robbers were still around. Or it's possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking. And he was acting like he had been robbed and hurt, in order to seize them over there, lure them there for quick and easy seizure. And so the first question that the priest asked -- the first question that the Levite asked was, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But then the Good Samaritan came by. And he reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"<sup>3</sup>

In effect, Dr. King is saying, “The question that keeps the priests and Levites from helping is this, “What will happen to me if I go over there and help? My agenda? My safety? My clothes? My young kids?” The problem is as old as sin itself. The problem is a self that is centered on itself or, as Augustine and later Martin Luther put it, a self that is curved inward on itself.<sup>4</sup> This is the central movement of the spiritual journey. Jesus, in his mercy, straightens out individuals who are gnarled inward and empowers us to love and value people with acts of mercy that are others-focused. The inward curve is melted and molded outward. “Yeah, but I don’t have time. I’m crazy busy right now. My kids are on a nap schedule. I’ve got a really important meeting to get to at work.” All of these reasons sound like excuses the religious guys would have said. Moreover, I find it hard to imagine that the Good Samaritan had it entered on his calendar to help the guy lying half dead in the road when he met him. Mercy isn’t a calendar item; it is a call to love. Mercy asks, “What will happen to this man if I don’t stop?”

## **2. What will it look like if we go and do likewise?**

### **MERCY**

Here is what will happen: friends, colleagues, and family members (i.e. neighbors) will be rescued and renewed, one at a time, and the merciful love of Jesus will start spreading one heart, one person, at a time. Historically, this is exactly how the love of Christ swept through the pagan Roman empire. Rodney Stark, a sociologist, tells the story of how mercy swept through the Roman Empire in the Rise of Christianity. He asked the question, “What about the early church caused it to grow so rapidly? Why did the church go from 11 disciples following Jesus to roughly 34 million people by the year 350 AD?”<sup>5</sup> Percentage wise, this means that Christianity grew from less than one percent of the population to 56% of the population by 350 AD. How? What explains that kind of rapid growth?

Rodney Stark identifies one critical factor when he states that Christians had compassion on people and loved them by showing them mercy, regardless of their religious belief. Roman, Pagan, Christian—it didn’t matter. They opened their homes and they loved their neighbors, sacrificially and indiscriminately.

During a plague in 451 BC, Thucydides observed the following: “Doctors were quite incapable of treating disease. Equally useless were prayers in the temple. The people became afraid to visit

anyone and as a result thousands of people died with no one to look after them. Indeed there were many houses through which all the inhabitants perished through lack of attention..”<sup>6</sup> In 165 AD, a plague struck Rome and killed off one quarter of the people living in cities in the Roman empire. Nearly 100 years later another deadly plague wiped out the urban centers of Rome. Dionysius, an eyewitness to these events, states, “most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ.”

But Dionysius points out that something was different among the Christians. “Most Christians in the plague showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and **thinking only of one another**. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need, and ministering to them in Christ and many departed their life serenely happy for they were infected by their neighbors and they cheerfully accepted their pain. The best of our brothers lost their lives and a number of elders too.”<sup>7</sup>

Think about the transforming power of mercy in motion by placing yourself in the year 165 AD. Picture yourself living in a pagan, Roman household. Your daughter gets sick and your whole family panics. You go to the temple to try to wake up the gods but it does nothing. Your daughter’s sickness gets worse. Boils break out on her body, fever develops, and then a hacking cough. Finally, you realize that you only have one choice: either everyone is going to die with her or you turn her out and she dies.

With tears in your eyes, you tell your daughter she must go and you painfully turn the lock behind her as the door closes. Then she wanders past a pile of bodies that look only slightly worse than her. And she, already half-dead, like a rabid, mangy dog wandering the streets, starts knocking on doors to get help. And she hears the bolts turn and voices scream, “Go away.” And then she knocks on one last door and it opens. Nearing exhaustion, she collapses in the house. Months later, miraculously, she recovers and the first question out of her mouth is. “Why? Why did you let me in when no one else would?”

Person after person gave the same response, “Because Jesus opened His door for me when I was sick. He took me in and touched me and healed me. He became sick and died with the disease I have, called sin. But He conquered death and sickness and He is alive now and His Spirit enabled me to do for you what He did for me. So that is why I opened my door. We knew that there was a great possibility that we would be infected and die, but our King, Jesus, knew with absolutely certainty that He would be infected and die. He overcame death and we knew that His resurrection would be ours if we died.”

Roman after Roman, when they encountered the merciful love of Jesus, said, “Well, I want to know this Jesus too. Please introduce me.” And they met Jesus and He eventually said to them, “Go and do likewise.” Person after person met Jesus; neighbors and neighborhoods came alive, and a negligible percentage of Christians swelled to over 56% of the Roman Empire. The thing that changed the cities of the Roman empire was an army of people committed to this vision of justice and mercy, with hearts curved outward on others, filled with mercy and compassion.

Not only does mercy mend the world we live in, but mercy also molds us into men and women full of meaning and mission. Leo Tolstoy, one of the finest storytellers to grace the planet, captured this well in his novel *Two Old Men*. The story depicts two elderly men who strike out on the pilgrimage of a lifetime (on foot) from Russia to Jerusalem. Along the way, they encounter a village full of sick people who are barely holding on to life. One man sees neighbors hurting and mercifully stops, while the other sees strangers standing in the way of his journey to the “Holy City” and journeys on.

The one who stays behind assures his companion that he will catch up to him, but the needs of the village are far greater and more complex than he imagined and he never makes it to Jerusalem. Mercy is messy and has a way of changing our agenda. His pilgrimage, as it turns out, becomes nursing neighbors back to health and happiness. The other strikes out in more ways than one, missing the opportunity to love and ultimately being uninspired by Jerusalem. As he journeys back to Russia, many moons later, he comes upon a village that feels eerily like a place he has been before. At last, it dawns upon him that this is where he departed from his fellow pilgrim, but things seem so different now. The shadow of death has passed and the village is full of life, with kids playing and crops growing and families thriving. His fellow pilgrim, as it turns out, missed Jerusalem, but found life and gave life. He, on the other hand, found Jerusalem but missed life, leaving uninspired and dissatisfied. Tolstoy concludes, “the best way to keep one’s vows to God and to do His will, is for each man while he lives to show love and do good to others.”<sup>8</sup> In doing so, the world is healed, and so are we!

Let’s use Movement Mortgage as a very imperfect case study in the business world as an illustration of one company seeking to apply the lesson of justice and mercy in the parable of the Good Samaritan. When a teammate (or neighbor) encounters a crisis in life, the point of the Good Samaritan story is to stop, not simply to walk by. The Good Samaritan stopped. He had mercy.

One thing Movement Mortgage did to create a system of mercy is establish a fund called Loveworks. The Loveworks fund enables us to stop and mercifully love those who find themselves in a crisis. In 2017, whether it was sickness, car trouble, or some unforeseen tragedy, praise God that 380 people who found themselves in crisis on the Jericho Road received financial support, receiving \$840,358! It could be that God is calling you to start a similar fund at your office or the application may be very different. Regardless, the point of the Good Samaritan story is that mercy responds to those whom God places in our paths, for love’s sake, wherever life and love lead us.

### **Justice/Development**

Mercy is one thing; justice is another, and we’re called to become both merciful and just. While mercy helps one individual (as the Good Samaritan did), development helps all the individuals who are walking on the Jericho Road because it begins to address the systemic problem consistently re-occurring on the Jericho Road.

In another address on the Good Samaritan, Dr. King said: “On the one hand we are called to play the good Samaritan on life’s roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must

come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”<sup>9</sup>

Dr. King is saying that if people are consistently mugged on the Jericho Road then at some point we've got to fix the road itself. We've got to restructure and repave the entire Jericho Road. To hammer home this point, let me provide an illustration. Imagine that you live by a picturesque river. You and all those living around you depend on the river for water and for fish and swimming and so many different things. So one day you see your neighbor out swimming in the river. When she climbs out of the river, she begins vomiting and is deathly ill. Concerned, you take her inside and begin to care for her.

That evening, four friends come over for dinner and you serve the fish you caught from the river. Shortly after dinner, they contract the same symptoms: vomiting, high fever, and chills. So you begin to care for them as well.

You look at the calendar, with panic, because you realize that you are scheduled to have a school field trip at your house for kids to play in the river. Since it has been planned for months, you don't want to disappoint the kids and you decide to let them come, even though your house looks like a hospital. After the kids swim in the river, predictably, you have 30 sick kids vomiting in your house. You're doing your best to care for them, but now your denarii and oil and wine first aid kit are depleted. Mercy has reached its end. What you're doing in loving people with acts of compassion is right and beautiful and Biblical and bold, but at some point somebody needs to go upstream and begin to address the problem upstream that is polluting the river and making it toxic. Until that problem is solved, you need a Good Samaritan downstream loving people through acts of mercy and you need a Good Samaritan upstream loving people by addressing the systemic issues through development.

Dr. King says, and he is right, that for us to be faithful to this passage we must begin thinking about repaving the Jericho Road itself. Let's again use Movement Mortgage as a case study to learn from on how Movement is seeking to join with others to repave the Jericho Roads in our communities. While the work at Movement Mortgage is flawed and far from perfect, the hope is that this case study will spur on other companies, churches, and individuals to the work of Christian community development. Movement Mortgage created the Movement Foundation to work out this principle of development. The Movement Foundation exists to glorify Christ by bringing love, light, and life through development to communities facing systemic injustice. Here are four examples:

### **1. Movement Schools**

Charlotte is 50<sup>th</sup> out of 50 in upward mobility, which means that if you are born into poverty in Charlotte you are stuck.<sup>10</sup> One reason for this is a lack of access to quality education in certain communities in the city. This is a Jericho Road that needs restructuring and repaving. Charlotte, sadly, is not alone. Students and families in lower socioeconomic communities across the nation lack access to excellent education that will prepare them to thrive in college and in the world. Movement Schools are not the solution by any means, but we do hope that Movement Schools

will be a part of God's solution, as well as faith-based and secular groups loving and serving together to change the narrative. Movement Schools are public charter schools that seek to provide a sustainable model of elite, private-school-like education for free! The Movement Foundation also works to ensure that parents at Movement Schools have access to holistic, faith-based wrap-around services outside of school to love the whole family with the holistic love of Jesus Christ. Our prayer is that God will so build and bless this embryonic model that it will one day not only flourish itself but also catalyze other models of holistic development that help repave the Jericho Roads of education throughout our country. **Love Does: If you want to get involved in loving through the development of quality education at the Movement School or begin something similar, then contact [tim.hurley@movementfoundation.org](mailto:tim.hurley@movementfoundation.org).**

## **2. Movement Center(s)**

In order for systems of injustice to be toppled, then a gathering of different instruments must be joined together in symphony, collaboratively composing a song of redemption. Movement Center(s) seek to provide a space that will allow Christ-centered non-profits to co-locate and synergistically work toward breaking the bonds of oppression that have enslaved generations by collaboratively working to love neighbors and neighborhoods. By offering below market rate rent, the ministries are empowered to do more ministry, and they are connected with the Church (capital C) in the different non-profits in the Movement Center and the church (lowercase C) in Center City Church which worships at the Movement Center. As with the genesis of Movement Schools, our prayer is that God will so build and bless this embryonic model that it will not only flourish itself but also catalyze other models of holistic development that will help repave the Jericho Roads of education throughout our country. **Love Does: If you want to get involved with the Movement Center or begin something similar, then take a step toward going and doing likewise by contacting [garrett.mcneill@movementfoundation.org](mailto:garrett.mcneill@movementfoundation.org)**

## **3. Thrive**

If LoveWorks is the arm of mercy extended to help people up and out when they are in crisis at Movement Mortgage, then Thrive is the hand of development that seeks to prevent people from entering back into crisis on a continual basis. Thrive creates systems of love directed toward the long-term thriving of human beings. So we slap Fitbits on people and get them working out and eating healthy. Then we connect them with financial counselors through Financial Finesse to create a God-glorifying stewardship. We provide mentors to help with relationships and have all sorts of family fun events. Finally, we get people loving and serving in their local communities. The golden thread that connects all four of these quadrants, and that leads to a thriving person, is the love of Jesus Christ, so in all of these areas we seek to point people back to the all-surpassing love of Christ. **Love Does: If your heart goes out to love people at Movement by helping them Thrive, then take a step toward going and doing likewise by contacting [Aimee Dodson \(aimee.dodson@movement.com\)](mailto:aimee.dodson@movement.com)**

## **4. Elhanan (Movement Farm in Africa)**

In 2017, Movement purchased an 1,100 acre farm in Uganda called Elhanan, which in Hebrew means the grace of God. Why? Because our neighbor, according to the parable of the Good Samaritan, is defined broadly, not narrowly. Biblically, Ugandans are our neighbors, and one stretch of Jericho Road that needs repaving in Uganda is unemployment. Unemployment estimates among young people in Uganda have soared as high as 83%.<sup>13</sup> As our company took a

mission trip to Uganda recently, God opened doors for us to come alongside local Ugandans in helping repave and restructure a section of this Jericho Road by helping provide sustainable, living wage jobs for Ugandans on a farm run by Ugandans.

### **5. How do we go and do likewise?**

Here is the key question. How? How do we go and do likewise by loving through acts of mercy and acts of development? Where do we get the Samaritan juice to be a downstream and upstream Samaritan? To be a rescuer and repaver? If you are honest, and you are like me, you're often like the religious guys who walk by on the other side because life is busy. So what changes that?

The change begins to happen when you realize what role you and I really play in this parable. Ultimately, we're not the good Samaritans. We're the Jewish guy lying not just half-dead like the Samaritan, but graveyard dead. We may be physically alive, but we are spiritually dead. Thankfully, Jesus' heart went out to us. To us. He is the real Good Samaritan. He had compassion and took pity, on us. His question wasn't, "What will happen to me if I stop?" He knew the answer to that question. He knew that bandits were waiting and would kill him, but He also knew that if He didn't take on flesh and fight for us then the outcome would be tragic. As a result, He willfully and intentionally walked into a trap so that He could, on the other side of the grave, come to us and bandage up our wounds with the oil of joy and the wine of the Holy Spirit. Like the Good Samaritan who took off strips from his robe to bind up the wounds of his neighbor, Jesus gave strips of His flesh so that we can say, "By His wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

This story won't come alive until the True Good Samaritan, the one from Nazareth, binds up your wounds. And when what He did for you takes over and His Spirit starts to rise up, then all of a sudden a dead person on the road becomes a Samaritan rescuer and repaver. Even better, a dead person on the road becomes vested with the power and authority of Christ to do even greater things (John 14:12) at the office, at home, in neighborhoods, and cities across the globe!

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What most impacted you from the teaching?
2. Read Luke 10: 25-37. What do you think keeps the two "religious" men from stopping to help the man lying half-dead in the street?
3. Discuss how and what keeps you from going and doing likewise?
4. What are the areas of your life where you feel like you are showing mercy and involved with development?
5. Reflect on Martin Luther King's thoughts on the Jericho Road itself. "On the one hand we are called to play the good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not



haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”

6. In v33, it says that the Samaritan “had pity” (or compassion) on the half-dead man. What does it look like for you to have compassion or pity so that you become one who is rescuing half-dead neighbors?
7. Read v37. Jesus summarizes the teaching in 4 words: “Go and do likewise.” How do you get the power to go and do likewise when, if you are honest, you know that you often act more like the religious guys than the Good Samaritan?

## Endnotes

1. <https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/17/politics/tbt-clinton-grand-jury-testimony/index.html>
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5. Stark, Rodney, The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries (New York: Harper One, 1996)
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