

## “Compassion as the Center of Our Calling” // Luke 10:25–37 // *Compassion Weekend 2025*

I want you to open your Bibles to Luke 10 this weekend. We’ve been studying through the book of Exodus, but we’re actually going to pause that for a week because this weekend is COMPASSION weekend—a week we observe every so often here at The Summit Church to highlight a ministry we love working with, called *Compassion International*.

**Compassion** is a ministry that focuses on vulnerable children in some of the poorest communities in the world—we love them because they have a holistic strategy that involves working through local churches in those areas to provide medical, educational, and spiritual development for kids in the area. And if there’s not a local church in the area, they work with national believers and churches like ours to get one planted.

**I’ve been to visit several of their locales around the world**--it’s really amazing. The way we partner with them is simple: Individual members in our church “adopt” a child in need, which means you commit to a small monthly sponsorship of a specific kid, and you send an occasional note of encouragement whenever you want to. I love it. They say every four minutes a Compassion child somewhere gets saved. Today, you can become part of that. It’s one of the greatest ministries on the planet!

Each of my four kids sponsored a child in the Dominican Republic: It was a great way to introduce them to the needs of the world and to personalize it for them. Over the years, they’ve exchanged letters with these kids, and we’ve even traveled down there a few times to see them. (By the way, traveling to visit them isn’t part of the commitment—it was just an amazing opportunity we couldn’t pass up.) So parents, if you’re looking for a way to get your kids involved with missions and awaken them to global realities at an early age, this is it.

For those of you without kids in the home—young professionals, older singles, senior adults—sponsoring a kid allows you to play the role of big brother or big sister in a kid’s life for less than you probably spend on coffee at Starbucks each month. This is a low-investment, high-impact ministry.

- In this church’s history, we have sponsored 4,830 kids. (By the way, that makes us the tenth-largest sponsoring church in the US.)
- I’d love to see us grow that number by a couple thousand today. The last time we did this (2022), 1,731 of you stepped forward to sponsor a child, which was the second-highest amount of sponsorships Compassion had ever had in a single weekend. The only church who’s ever had more is the Church of Eleven22, led by our friend Joby Martin—who did 1,900 in one day.
- And so now you know why I said our goal this year is 2,000, because I’d love to call Joby and wipe that smug smile off his redneck face. Could y’all help me do that?

- By the way, one of our members, who loves Compassion, told me that if we hit our goal this weekend, he's gonna give a \$150K cash gift to Compassion, specifically to care for pregnant women and babies at risk in some of the regions where our church sponsors kids. So there's some motivation. Full disclosure, however; he told me: "Listen, even if we don't hit our goal, I'm going to do it anyway." So there's that, but at least let his generosity inspire yours.

I want to spend some time in Luke 10 considering the call of Jesus on our lives to be involved in the world—and then I'm going to introduce you to an incredible story of a guy whose life was changed through all this.

You say, "**Well, Pastor J.D., I was really looking forward to getting back into Exodus. I don't like taking a break to talk about something else.**" We'll get back into Exodus, I promise, but understand that the core purpose of this church is mobilizing for mission. In Luke, Jesus summarized his objective as seeking and saving the lost, and that means if we're his followers, that will be our primary agenda too. So we take moments like this to elevate that calling.

Listen, Jesus made clear that it's simply not possible to be his follower and not be engaged in his rescue mission. The call to get personally involved in that mission was *included* in the call to follow Jesus, and Jesus made that clear in one of the most important and most recognizable parables he ever told, what we call "*The Parable of the Good Samaritan*"—or as our kids call it, the good Samara-FRIEND.

**Luke 10:25** Then an expert in the law stood up to test him, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

- "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" seems like a really important question, right? "How can I know for sure I'm going to heaven?"
- **It's a great question, but Luke indicates that it is not a sincere question.** This lawyer had asked Jesus this to TEST him. By the way, had it been a sincere question from someone truly worried about their soul, Jesus likely would have answered it differently. But because it was a trap question, Jesus turned it around on him—and Jesus was so good at doing that. He was so brilliant.

**Verse 26:** "What is written in the law?" he asked him. "How do you read it?" 27 He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "your neighbor as yourself."

28 "You've answered correctly," he told him. "Do this and you will live."

- I almost want to **laugh out loud** when I read that. I mean, that's a **big old "DO,"** right? "Yeah, just love God with ALL your heart, soul and mind. Make **God the highest passion** of your heart, the one you think about **first and foremost in every decision you make.** AND ... also, while you're at it, love EVERYBODY ELSE as much as you love yourself, care about your neighbor's **needs** as much as you do your own, rejoice in **their happiness as much as you do yours, worry about their futures, and weep about their sorrows** as if they were yours. And when you do that, then you'll be ready for heaven!"
- (Anybody wanna raise their hand right now and say, "*Oh yeah, that describes my week!*"? Anybody's hand raised? Of course not!)

<sup>29</sup> But (watch this) *the lawyer, wanting to justify himself* (that's a key word), asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

- This lawyer is **feeling the squeeze** of the commandment—realizing how far he is from living up to it, and so he tries to limit the commandment's SCOPE so he can wriggle out of it. Which is what lawyers do, right? I have a great deal of respect for those of you in the legal profession and am very grateful for a lot of what you do, but lawyers will often try to reframe the law so that they, or their client, can fit within it. This guy thinks if he can limit the scope of the commandment by identifying who technically counts as his neighbor, then he can meet the requirements.

And so Jesus tells a story that shows this commandment has no limits—that true followers of Jesus have an instinct that makes them move toward need or suffering wherever they encounter it.

You see, let me back up for a minute and set this conversation in the larger context of Jesus' overall message. The main problem with how this lawyer phrased his question is that **there is nothing we CAN do to inherit eternal life**. If there had been something we COULD do, Jesus wouldn't have had to come to rescue us. The whole point of Jesus' life is that we couldn't earn our way to heaven, so he came to do it for us by living the life we were supposed to live and then dying the death we were condemned to die, in our place.

This religious leader was looking for a set of "to-do" items on a list that he could perform and check off. What Jesus gave him instead is an illustration of the transformation that takes place in the heart of someone who has been saved by *grace*, not good works.

And that's extremely important for understanding this parable. Don't read this story as "a new set of good works you must do to be saved." Read it as a description of the kind of love and generosity that grows in your heart after you've met Jesus and been saved by grace.

Verse 30 "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho ... By the way, when Luke says "**down from**" Jerusalem to Jericho, he was being literal. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a 17-mile stretch that dropped 3,000 feet in elevation. That's a half-mile drop, and that's extreme. And all along the way, it had these **rocky outcroppings** which provided ideal places for robbers to hide. So, this man (again, vs. 30) **... fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and fled, leaving him half dead.**

Now, 31 A priest happened to be going down that road. [But] **When he saw him, he passed by on the other side.**

- Now, when I learned this story in Sunday School on flannel graph, we were always really **really hard** on this priest. I even remember the expression on the face of the character: He had this pious "I'm better than you" look on his face, stepping over a bleeding man on his way to the **donut shop** or something like that. But **Jesus' audience would have immediately recognized a few things** about this priest that would have made him a much more sympathetic character.
  - First of all, as I explained, the **Jericho road** was extremely dangerous. It was literally called, in those days, the "Pass of Blood" because of all those places robbers could hide. The one rule on the Jericho road is YOU DON'T STOP. It would be like driving through a really dangerous part of town late at night. You don't just stop because if you do, you might get mugged.

- Second, if the **priest was returning from Jerusalem**, that means he'd just finished his purification rites, which were required in order for him to be able to perform his religious duties back in his hometown. And purification was a seven-day process—and, **according to Jewish law, if you touched a dead man** after you'd been purified, you had to go back to the temple in Jerusalem and purify yourself again, which would take another seven days! So in other words, for this priest to stop and help this guy would have been both **dangerous and massively inconvenient**. Which might be a decent excuse, except that this man on the side of the road is *dying*. And isn't a man's life worth at least a week of your time?

**32** In the same way, a Levite, when he arrived at the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. (Levites were like JV priests.<sup>1</sup> And the Jericho road was **really straight, so in most places you could see three to four miles down it**, so this Levite would have seen the priest pass by the wounded man, and he **probably thought**, "Well, if the *PRIEST* doesn't feel compelled to help, I can't be expected to either.")

**33** But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and when he saw the man, he had compassion.

A couple of things here: First, if you're familiar with the Bible at all, you know that **Samaritans were the ethnic and religious enemies** of the Jews. The Samaritans were the **half-Jew/half-Gentile** offspring that came about when the Assyrians, who had conquered the Northern part of Israel, forced the Jews there to intermarry with them. The Jews thought of Samaritans as racially defiled: half-bloods; or, for you Harry Potter fans, **mud-bloods**. They were extremely racist toward them.

- The **Samaritans, for their part, weren't that pleasant of a people either. They built their own alternate temple** and said that their altar was the true altar of God.
- One Jewish historian records that on the eve of one of the Passovers, some Samaritans catapulted dead pigs into the middle of the temple courtyard so the place would be defiled and the Jews couldn't celebrate Passover. Which sounds like a fraternity joke, but the Jews didn't find it funny at all.
- Samaria was right in between the northern and southern part of Israel, but the Jews hated Samaritans so much that if they were traveling from north to south in Israel, they would walk around Samaria, even though it added a couple of days to their journey, just to avoid contact with Samaritans. Just touching a Samaritan, they believed, made you dirty.

But shockingly, this Samaritan (**vs. 33**), when he saw the bleeding Jewish man, felt **compassion**—and that's one of my favorite Greek words, *splagma* (the word for compassion is "splagma"—it's onomatopoeia, where the word sounds like what it is. Splagma refers to a pity that just rises up from the core of who you are. Like a gut-wrenching compassion: *splagma*. And, vs. **34** "went over to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on olive oil and wine (which, calm down, is not an affirmation of the essential oil industry; it's just what they used back then for medical care. If Jesus had been telling the story nowadays, he'd have said he gave him Advil and penicillin.) Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. **35** The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him. When I come back I'll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.'" He paid for the guy out of his own account and even opened up a line of credit for him! What do you

<sup>1</sup> They were of the **priestly clan**, but they just weren't full priests.

notice here about this Samaritan's love? It's unrestrained, limitless. He literally opens a line of credit and says, "Whatever it takes to get this guy to health, put it on me!"

Then Jesus asks, <sup>36</sup> "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" <sup>37</sup> "The one who showed mercy to him," [the lawyer] said. (See that? This Jewish lawyer can't even bring himself to say, "The Samaritan!" He just says, "That one who showed him mercy.") Then Jesus told him, "Go and do the same."

In this story, Jesus shows us WHAT it means to love our neighbors and then WHY **those of us who have been saved by grace will do it instinctively.**

### 1. WHAT it means to love our neighbors

Let me **subdivide** this question into the who, the when, and the how much.<sup>2</sup>

**First: A. WHO do we love? Answer: Anyone we see in need.**

- The **Samaritan and the Jew** couldn't have had less in common. And see, it's **natural for us to help those** who are like us, those with whom we have an affinity. **But Jesus taught that we are to help those**—especially those—with whom we have little in common, even those we might consider enemies.
- **Which could mean:**
  - Those on the other side of the political aisle from you
  - Or the immigrant family in your neighborhood
  - Or the boss at work who has taken you for granted and consistently failed to acknowledge your efforts
  - Or the person who sits on the other side of the classroom who is just SO DIFFERENT from you
  - It also includes people around the world in cultures vastly different from your own.

**It's anybody in need, regardless of who they are or how they got there.** Which leads me to the WHEN question:

**B. WHEN do we show love? Answer: Whenever you see the need!**

- **We come up with all kinds of excuses** for why not to help someone in need. We say things like, "Well, **I don't mind helping people** who are truly victims of injustice. But *those people* over there don't really deserve our help—because their suffering is their fault. It's their family structure. They don't have a good work ethic. I don't think we should help people when their suffering is their fault."
- But get this: The **Samaritan would have had plenty of reasons** to believe this Jewish man deserved his suffering. As I showed you, **Jews were downright cruel to Samaritans**, even explicitly racist toward them. If anybody ever had an excuse not to show kindness, it was this Samaritan. "Serves you right, you bigot. Sow the wind, reap the whirlwind!"

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<sup>2</sup> These questions I adopt from Tim Keller's "Neighbors: Luke 10" sermon given at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in NYC.

- But this Samaritan shows mercy because he's moved with splagma.
- **Proverbs 3:27** says, "Do not withhold good from your neighbor when it is in your power to act." Which means, if we have the opportunity to act, we have the responsibility to act.

Third ... **C. HOW MUCH love should we show?** Answer: Until we are sharing in the burden ourselves.

- The Samaritan put himself at great personal risk and then used his own money to meet the need.
- The essence of love is when you share in someone else's burden.
- Listen, you can't meet every need of every person in the world. But to love others means to share in their pain, which means you, through your generosity, enter into their pain to the point that you feel it yourself.
- I often tell you—there's **no magic number** when it comes to how much you should give, but to give from love means you give to the point you share in others' burdens.
- Paul said in Galatians, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (6:2).
- **C.S. Lewis** said the only safe rule when it comes to giving is to give more than you think you can spare. In other words, he's saying, "Give until you share in the burden." **Our giving should be to a level that we experience some of the difficulty of those in need because of the amount that we give.**

**Friends, listen: This is the core of what it means to follow Jesus. And let me say something really serious: Christians often function like this priest and the Levite. We're all into religious duties—reading our Bibles, tithing, volunteering, going to small groups ... but when you look at our lives, there's very little sharing in the burdens of others or truly giving ourselves away. The essence of following Jesus is entering into the pain of others!**

OK, so that's **WHAT** it means to love our neighbors. So now, let's consider the **second** question, which is the most important one:

## 2. WHY those of us saved by grace love our neighbors instinctively

Jesus puts an interesting twist into this story: He uses a Samaritan as the hero. Couldn't he have made the point without doing it? **Why not just make another Jew the hero?** He could have said something like, "And first, a priest came by, and then a Levite, but then a really kind, elderly grandma Jew came by and she helped the man—and you should **be like the good grandma Jew, not the stuffy religious guys!**" But instead, Jesus made a Samaritan, their enemy, the hero.

**Why?** Well, let me ask you a second question: Who do you think is supposed to represent you and me and this lawyer in this story? Which character represents us? We typically read this story and say, "I know, I know, I'm like the busy priest and the uncaring Levite, but I should really be more like the Good Samaritan."

But what if the person **we** are supposed to most identify with in the story is not the priest, or Levite, or the Good Samaritan—what if the person **we** are most supposed to identify with is **the guy** bleeding on the side of the road? And **WHAT IF SOMEONE** who had every reason to hate us and be our ENEMY chose to put himself into danger to save US?

What if the *true* **Good Samaritan** is Jesus, who **took upon himself the suffering we had caused ourselves** and poured out his own resources to save us, who not only put himself in danger but yielded his body to crucifixion to save us, and then gave us an unlimited credit at the bank of his grace to cover whatever else we needed? And what if he did that even though our situation was our own fault, and we didn't deserve any help?

**If that's true**, and we're the man on the side of the road who got rescued, that changes how we approach others in need, right?

The point of the story is that those who have been the recipients of great grace can't help but show it to others. It just becomes an instinct. And if you don't have that instinct, have you really experienced the gospel?

**You see, Jesus is not giving the lawyer a new rule** as much as he's making him aware of a new reality. Each of us had made God our enemy and instead of hating us, God saw us and felt compassion. Instead of paying us back, he poured out his life to save US.

We are saved because he stopped, because he turned aside and got involved in our pain. And those who believe the gospel can't help but become like that gospel.

**Which brings us back to today. We live in a world where there's a lot of people—a lot of children—in need.** And what do people who've been truly impacted by the gospel do when they encounter that kind of need? They do what Jesus did. They stop, and turn aside, and get involved.

Listen, there's **all kinds of reasons people engage in generosity**. You might do it because it makes you feel like a good person. You might do it because you want to be seen as generous in the eyes of others. You might do it because you believe if you are generous to others, they will be generous back to you. You might even do it because it gives you a tax write-off.

But the purest reason for generosity is that you recognize that you were a spiritual orphan when God rescued you; you were beaten up by sin, lying near death on the side of the road when Jesus rushed to your rescue and laid down his life, and opened up the storehouses of his grace so you could be brought back to health and life.

**Old Testament scholars** talk about **"the quartet of the vulnerable,"** which were four groups of people that God repeatedly called Israel to care for. In fact, how Israel treated these groups, God said, showed whether or not they were truly his children. These groups were:

- the poor
- the orphan
- the widow

- **the foreigner** (the sojourner, the refugee, the immigrant)

There's all kind of verses that talk about these groups, but here's one straight out of the time of Exodus: **Deuteronomy 10:18–19**: "He [God] executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. *Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.*"

Love the foreigner, the immigrant, the sojourner, the poor, the orphan, *because that's what you were when I rescued you!*

In fact, in studying this story this week, this phrase in Luke 10:33 caught my attention: "But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and ***when he saw the man, he had compassion.***"

It caught my attention because that's the exact same thing it said about God when he saw the suffering of the children of Israel in the book of Exodus. When he heard their groans in slavery, he felt compassion. He turned aside and came down to help them. And now he's saying to Israel, "If that's how I was with you, I want you to be like this to others."

**Deuteronomy 10:18–19**: "He [God] executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. *Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.*"

That's the whole point of the Good Samaritan parable: Those who believe the gospel—those who understand that they were the ones rescued by grace—*become like the gospel.*

And so in light of all that, I want you to listen to this [story](#).

#### **QUESTIONS for Jonathan:**

Friends for a long time, met on first trip to DR

Now part of the leadership of one of our church plants, City of Grace church, led by Pastor Manuel

1. **I've heard you talk before about how God used your sponsor in your life. Can you tell us more about that? How did your sponsor show you the hope of the gospel?**
2. **How is your life different now because of Compassion?**
3. **What are you doing now?** (At one of our church plants in DR/ministry: going to plant)
4. **What would you say to The Summit Church?**

**Deuteronomy 10:18–19**: "He [God] executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. *Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.*"

I told you that you have a chance to be a part of this today. Sponsoring a child in poverty costs \$43/mo, and that helps provide the education and spiritual formation and medical attention for people like Jonathan. Compassion projects break the cycle of poverty.

\$43. I know that's not nothing ... \$43/mo adds up! But we're not being asked, like the priest, to give up a week of our life or even to literally put ourselves in danger. You can afford \$43/mo in your family. Aren't their lives worth that?

I'm asking God to move in the hearts of The Summit Church to **sponsor 2,000 Compassion children this weekend.**

You can see all around at our different locations there are **tables set up with packets on them.** Each of those packets contains the profile of a child in need waiting for a sponsor. Again, I'd love to see 2,000.

**Jonathan, I'm gonna have you pray,** and then I'm gonna stand you up at all of your campuses and call you to come to one of the tables there at your campus if you want to take one of these. After he prays, you'll simply step out, grab a packet to sponsor a child, and come back to your seat, and from there you can either **scan the QR code** on your packet or fill it out physically with a pen and put down your credit card information. If you do the QR Code, keep the packet with you, put it on your fridge, and start praying for them. If you fill it out physically, make sure to tear off the little turn-in thing before you go—you'll see it; we'll have volunteers at the back of each campus to collect them.

OK ... listen ... it's not uncommon for me to call you to the altar for prayer for one of YOUR needs; today, I'm calling you to step out to offer yourself to help meet someone else's. Jonathan, you pray, and then you come.