

ADULT NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

How to Be a Neighbor

Luke 10:25–37 · The Gospel of Luke, Vol. 5

Reformed · Christ-Centered · Baptist | 60–75 minutes

Aim: That disciples would hear the command to love their neighbor without limits, see Jesus as the True Neighbor who has already shown them costly mercy, and go and do likewise from gospel gratitude rather than self-justification.

Leader Snapshot

Thesis. Disciples are messengers and neighbors. Neighbor-love is required, it stretches past the limits we draw, and it is powered either by self-justification or by the gospel. Only the second engine can produce the mercy Jesus commands.

Gospel center. We do not love our neighbor in order to inherit eternal life. Christ, the True Neighbor, found us beaten by sin and paid the full price of our recovery. We show mercy because we have already received it.

Watch-outs for this passage

- Do not flatten the parable into a generic call to niceness or a social-gospel program. The lawyer's question is about eternal life. The answer runs through Christ.
- Do not use the text to erase ordered loves. Scripture honors family, church, and nation (1 Timothy 5:8; Galatians 6:10; Acts 17:26). Jesus forbids sinful exclusion, not vocation and near duty.
- Do not leave the group under “go and do likewise” without the True Neighbor. Law without gospel will crush the honest and puff up the self-justifying.
- Do not let discussion stay at national policy or distant causes. The parable is about the person God has placed in the path.

1. Hook — Get the Room Talking

8–10 minutes

Most of us think we already know this story. A wounded man. A priest. A Levite. A Samaritan. Be kind. The trouble is that Jesus did not tell it to make kind people kinder. He told it to a man who wanted to justify himself—and to disciples who must learn that gospel messengers are also neighbors.

Ask two or three of these. Do not chase every story.

1. When you hear the word neighbor, who comes to mind first—and who almost never does?
2. Have you ever walked past a need you later wished you had stopped for? What stopped you?
3. If someone asked you tonight, “Who counts as my neighbor?” how would you draw the circle?

Bridge to the text. In Luke 10, disciples are first sent as messengers to proclaim the gospel. Then Jesus shows that disciples are also neighbors. The two belong together: we care for spiritual needs by announcing Christ, and we care for material needs by costly mercy. This passage teaches the expectation, the extent, the engine, and the expression of neighborliness.

LEADER HINT

Keep the hook light. Do not preach during the icebreaker. After two or three answers, read the text. If the room drifts into politics or a distant crisis, thank them and say, “Jesus is about to put a wounded man in the road in front of us. Let’s start there.”

2. The Passage — Read, Outline, Summarize

10–12 minutes

Have someone read Luke 10:25–37 aloud (the translation your church uses). In a small group, read it twice.

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” And 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 answered correctly; do this, and you will live.” But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, 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, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

Luke 10:25–37, ESV

Immediate context

The Seventy-Two have been sent to preach. Jesus has rejoiced that the Father reveals himself to the lowly through the Son (Luke 10:21–24). Now a lawyer stands up not to seek truth but to test Jesus. He sees Jesus welcoming sinners and outsiders and suspects that Jesus is dismissing the Law. Jesus will not take the bait. He affirms the Law and then tells a story that exposes the lawyer’s heart.

Simple outline

- vv. 25–28 — The expectation: love God and neighbor. “Do this, and you will live.”
- vv. 29–35 — The extent: “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus refuses a manageable circle and tells the parable.
- vv. 36–37 — The command: the one who showed mercy was the neighbor. “You go, and do likewise.”

Summary

A Torah expert tries to trap Jesus with the question of eternal life. Jesus, like a judo master, uses the man’s own answer against him: the Law is summed up in love for God and neighbor, and it must be done. Unwilling to admit that he has failed that Law—and unwilling to stand with the sinners Jesus welcomes—the lawyer asks a second question to shrink the commandment down to size. Jesus answers with a wounded man, two respectable passersby, and a Samaritan enemy who stops, spends, and stays. Neighborliness is not optional. It is not limited to people like us, convenient moments, or those we judge worthy. And it cannot be powered by self-justification. The only engine strong enough is the gospel:

Jesus is the True Neighbor who did not pass by on the other side.

The text shows	The temptation is...	The gospel word is...
Neighbor-love is required	to treat mercy as optional spirituality	The Law is good. Jesus does not soften it.
Mercy has no self-drawn circle	to love only the similar, convenient, or deserving	Christ loved us when we were enemies.
Two engines can drive the deed	to serve in order to put God in our debt	We show mercy because we have received it.

LEADER HINT

After the summary, pause. Ask, “Where did you hear good news in that—and where did you feel the weight of the Law?” Let one or two people answer. If someone only hears “try harder to be nice,” gently say the parable is a mirror before it is a model. We need both.

3. Discussion Questions

30–35 minutes • Use all four if time allows. If the group is talkative, prioritize Q2 and Q3.

Read the relevant verses again before each question. Leader notes are for you, not a lecture.

Question 1 — The expectation of neighborliness

ASK

The lawyer asks what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus answers by affirming the Law: love God and love your neighbor. “Do this, and you will live” (vv. 25–28). Why does Jesus refuse to soften the Law—and what does that do to the lawyer (and to us)?

Follow-ups: What is a “lawyer” in this setting? Why is he testing Jesus rather than seeking him? How is Jesus using the man’s own words the way a judo master uses an opponent’s momentum? Where else does Jesus ratchet the Law up rather than down (Matthew 5:21–48)?

LEADER HINT

Press the seriousness of the Law without turning the night into a guilt session. Jesus is not an antinomian. He will not let anyone treat neighbor-love as extra credit. Reformed note: the Law is good, and it still shows us our inability and unwillingness. The lawyer is not merely weak. He does not want this love.

If someone says, “Then no one can be saved,” that is the right pressure. Do not relieve it yet with a cheap “just try your best.” Point ahead to Q3. Baptist edge: we do not inherit life by churchly activity or by being a “good neighbor” in the civic sense. Life is in the Son.

Question 2 — The extent of neighborliness

ASK

Desiring to justify himself, the lawyer asks, “And who is my neighbor?” (v. 29). How does Jesus’ parable refuse the limits we still try to place on mercy—and how does it not erase the ordered loves of family, church, and nation?

Follow-ups: Why will the lawyer not say the word “Samaritan” (v. 37)? Which of these limits most tempts you: similarity, convenience, deservedness, abstraction, or outsourcing? How do 1 Timothy 5:8, Galatians 6:10, and Acts 17:26 keep us from turning this text into a demand that we owe every person on earth the same concrete duty?

LEADER HINT

Hold both rails. Jesus forbids using near duties as an excuse to harden the heart against the person in the path. He does not command a doctor to abandon the ER for a distant crisis, and he would condemn her for passing by a dying man because of ethnicity or religion.

Name the five limits from the sermon if the group stalls: similarity, convenience, deservedness, abstraction, outsourcing. Do not let the group confess other people’s hardness. Ask, “Where is my circle too small?”

If the conversation turns into a policy debate, return to the road. The text is about costly personal mercy, not about erasing nations or families.

Question 3 — The engine of neighborliness

ASK

Jesus ends with, “You go, and do likewise” (v. 37). Why would anyone live this way? What is the difference between neighbor-love driven by self-justification and neighbor-love driven by the gospel—and how is Jesus himself the True Neighbor the Samaritan only illustrates?

Follow-ups: When you help someone, do you feel that God owes you? Would you still show mercy if no one knew and God never “credited” it? How did Christ refuse to limit the who, the when, and the what (Romans 5:6–10; Philippians 2:5–8; 1 John 4:10)?

LEADER HINT

This is the hinge. Do not rush it. Self-justification turns mercy into a transaction: I serve so that God will be in my debt, my conscience will be quiet, and I can stay ahead of other people. That engine produces comparison, irritability when help is ignored, and bitterness.

The gospel engine: we grow in neighborliness not to achieve God’s approval but because it is already ours in Christ. He loved us when we were enemies. It was not convenient. He did not love us by abstraction. The Samaritan risked his life; Jesus gave his.

Watch the room. Ambitious moralists need rest. The weary need to hear that the command is heavy precisely because it was never meant to be an engine of life. Life is in the Son. Then the command becomes freedom.

Question 4 — The expression of neighborliness

ASK

Looking at the Samaritan’s actions—and at the people already in your path—what would it look like this week to keep your eyes open, sacrifice your schedule, and share your resources as someone who has already received unlimited mercy?

Possible angles (do not force all of them):

Eyes. Who has God already put on your road—in the church, on your street, at work, in this group?

Schedule. Mercy often means getting less of your own plan done. What would you have to interrupt?

Resources. Time, practical help, hospitality after worship, a word that strengthens the fainthearted.

Limits you still draw. Similarity, convenience, deservedness, abstraction, or outsourcing.

LEADER HINT

Make this concrete and local. Neighborhood groups should leave with names and next steps, not a mood. Hospitality after gathered worship is a Baptist-shaped starting point: linger, greet visitors, learn a name so that you might serve a person. Distinguish mercy from unwise rescue. There is a place for someone to feel the consequences of foolish choices. Bad choices alone are never an excuse to deny mercy when a person is lying in the path.

For the unconverted neighbor in the room: do not hear “go and do likewise” as the way in. Hear first that Jesus has come to you. Receive the True Neighbor. Then go. Leave silence after this question. Then pray.

4. Leader Helps — Running the Night Well

Suggested flow

Minutes	Movement
0–10	Welcome, hook, bridge
10–22	Read the text, context, outline, summary
22–55	Discussion (Q1–Q4)
55–65	Gospel restatement and prayer
65–75	Informal lingering and follow-up conversations

Tone

Warm, clear, unhurried. Do not let the night become either a lecture on ethics or a therapy circle about burnout. You are a shepherd of a text. Keep bringing people back to Luke 10:25–37.

If discussion stalls

- Reread verse 29 or 37 and ask, “What word surprises you?”
- Use the five limits: similarity, convenience, deservedness, abstraction, outsourcing. Which one is yours?
- Ask the diagnostic from the sermon: if no one ever knew about your mercy, would you still do it?

If discussion goes sideways

Politics and nations: affirm that Scripture treats nations as real. Then return to the wounded man in the path. This text forbids hardness of heart; it does not write immigration policy.

Abstract causes: caring about “the poor” in general while avoiding messy people nearby is one of the limits Jesus exposes. Bring it home.

Works-righteousness: if the group starts making a mercy to-do list to feel clean, stop and preach the True Neighbor before you list practices.

Cheap grace: receiving mercy does not cancel “go and do likewise.” Gospel freedom is not passivity.

Doctrinal ballast (use only as needed)

Law and gospel. Jesus affirms the Law’s demand and then, in the whole of Luke’s Gospel, fulfills what the Law requires. The parable exposes; the cross supplies.

Justification. The lawyer desires to justify himself (v. 29). That project cannot inherit life. We are justified by faith in Christ, not by the quality of our neighboring (Romans 3:21–26).

Union with Christ. Neighbor-love is the fruit of having been neighbored by Jesus. “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Believers’ church. Mercy begins among the household of faith and then spills into the street (Galatians 6:10).

Lingering after worship is not small talk. It is how neighbors are seen.

Ordered loves. Family, church, and people are biblical callings. They are not a license to pass by on the other side.

Closing word you can almost read

The command to go and do likewise will crush you or free you.

It crushes those who keep it in order to gain God’s love.

It frees those who have already received unlimited mercy.

Jesus did not pass by on the other side.

He came to us when we were enemies, when we did not deserve it, at the cost of his life.

Because he has been this kind of neighbor to you, you are free to become this kind of neighbor to others. You go, and do likewise.

Pray along these lines

- Confess the limits you have placed on mercy—similarity, convenience, deservedness, abstraction, outsourcing.
- Thank the Son that he is the True Neighbor who bound up our wounds and paid the full price.
- Ask the Spirit to open your eyes to the person already in your path this week.
- Pray that this group would announce the gospel and practice costly neighbor-love together.

This guide follows the sermon *How to Be a Neighbor* on Luke 10:25–37. Use supporting voices sparingly. Let Luke do the heavy lifting.