

Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

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Year 4: Session 5 – Parables: The Big 3

Class 15: Luke 10:25-37 – The Good Samaritan

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Introduce the idea of a loophole
- Read the parable of the Good Samaritan
- Discuss how the parable is an argument against finding loopholes about “neighbor”

Materials needed:

1. Movie clip (available on rfour.org) from *We Are Marshall*
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. For activity:
 - Use powerpoint file on rfour.org for the loophole activity

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here’s this week’s question:* What is something that you try to avoid?

TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

- Today’s scripture story begins because there’s a lawyer involved who is trying to find a loophole
- Do you know what a loophole is?
- That’s right! It’s when there’s a rule that you don’t like or don’t want to follow, so you try to figure out how to avoid the rule without actually breaking the rule
- Some people would say loopholes are cheating, but cheating suggests you’re breaking the rules
- A loophole does not BREAK the rule – that’s why they are so attractive to us

- So to help us think about loopholes and how they work, we're going to be given a situation and then we're going to see if we can guess what the loophole is.

OPENING ACTIVITY – Find the loophole (use PowerPoint file)

- **Situation:** In 2007, Minnesota passed an anti-smoking law that banned smoking in pretty much every public building, including bars. However, if you were an actor in a play, and your character smoked, and since the play was in a public building, then the actor would get a pass. How did a local restaurant use that “pass” to allow smoking in their restaurant?
 - **The Loophole:** the owners of the bar declared that they were staging a continuous live performance and that everyone in the bar was an actor. The law didn't bother to specify what was meant by "stage performances." So what if there was no script--there is such a thing as improv. So what if they weren't getting paid--the law didn't say only professional actors counted. So, you enter the restaurant on a Saturday night, and then see that the staff are in costume and voila! You have become a performer in their "Theater Night" and can now smoke.
- **Situation:** In Illinois, it is illegal to build casinos on land – however a casino was built in-state after the law was passed. Where was it built?
 - **The Loophole:** The casino was built on a boat that floated on a river in-state (and was therefore not “on land.”)
- **Situation:** A festival didn't allow vendors to sell bottled water. How did the vendors end up “selling” bottled water?
 - **The Loophole:** The vendors proceeded to sell a single peanut for \$1 with a free complimentary water bottle included
- **Situation:** The Municipal Code of Chicago prohibits people from riding bicycles on the sidewalk. "Bicycle" is defined as "every device propelled solely by human power upon which any person may ride, having two tandem wheels and including any device generally recognized as a bicycle." If someone didn't feel safe riding in the streets, what type of cycle could a person still ride on the sidewalk? Note: Not something motorized!
 - **The Loophole:** Learn to ride a unicycle!
- **Situation:** A high school coach buys airplane tickets for his team. Two students cancel. Two new students are selected to replace the other two students. Airline won't let the coach change the names. Can't even pay a fee to change the name. The tickets are basically lost; coach will have to buy two new tickets. However, customer service is overseas, and they plainly don't care at all about customer service. And, the airline allows passengers to correct misspellings of names. How does the coach change the names without buying new tickets?
 - **The Loophole:** Since the customer support folks don't really recognize nonsense names (since they are in a different country), the coach changes the two names over the course of four calls by changing the names two letters at a time.

TRANSITION to SCRIPTURE

- So those are some examples of loopholes
- We tend to be good at finding them
- Whenever rules are applied, we start to figure out how to get around them
- And that's how the scripture story that we're going to read today starts
- Someone is trying to figure out what the loophole is to what is sometimes called the “Greatest Commandment”
- And Jesus responds to this question about loopholes ... by telling a parable!
- Remember, parables are short stories that Jesus shared with the crowds of people that surrounded him.
- The parables were an invitation from Jesus to the listener to think about God, each other, themselves and the Kingdom of God in a new and/or better way without having an argument

- The parable he tells in today's story is often referred to as "The Good Samaritan"
- Let's see what happens

READ Luke 10:25–37 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

25Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 27He 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." 28And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." 29But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30Jesus 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. 31Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32So

likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34He 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. 35The 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.' 36Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

ASK

- In verse 25, who asks a question? (a lawyer / scribe)
- In verse 27, who answers the the lawyer's question? (the lawyer. The "he" in v26 is Jesus and the "he" in v27 is the lawyer)
- In verse 27, looking at the first part of the answer (*Love your God...with everything*), does that seem extreme to you? Why?
- Still verse 27 – looking at the second part of the answer (*Love your neighbor as yourself*), does that seem easy to you?
- In verse 29 – We're told the lawyer asks a second question to "justify" his asking of the first question. In other words, the lawyer is embarrassed for asking a question he already knew the answer to (and *should* have known the answer to). So what is the second question that the lawyer asks to justify his first question? (who is my neighbor?)
- What do you think – is that a good second question? Do you think it is an easily answered question? How would you answer it – who is *your* neighbor?
- Verse 30 – 35, how does Jesus answer the question? (With a story/parable)
- [*optional fun question*] Is that how you usually answer questions?
- In the story, verse 30, what's the problem? (someone is beaten and left for dead)
- In verse 31 – who doesn't help (a priest)
- In verse 32 – who doesn't help (a Levite)
- In both these cases, these are people who would be expected to help – like we would expect a firefighter or EMT to help in today's world
- In verse 33 – who then walks by? (A Samaritan)
- Verse 34 and 35 – what does the Samaritan do? (bandages the man's wounds and takes him to an inn – in other words, he spends time and money on the man and also applies hands-on care)
- Verse 36, after Jesus tells the story, what question does he ask? ("Which of these three was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robber?")
- Verse 37 – What's the answer to this question? (The one who showed mercy)
 - Note: Students might say "our neighbors are the ones who show *us* mercy." If they do say that, help them to focus on what Jesus says next. Jesus response of "Go and do likewise" helps clarify why Jesus is telling the story – at that point, Jesus is obviously referring to the Good Samaritan – that the lawyer should act like the

good Samaritan. Jesus is not saying, “Go and be like the person who gets beaten up and then love whoever helps you.”

- Verse 37 – What does Jesus then tell the lawyer to do? (Go and do likewise)
- So...does Jesus actually answer the lawyer’s question about who his neighbor is? (Yes, but not directly. Jesus’ story says, “show mercy to everyone and stop wasting time trying to figure out who your neighbor is -- just show mercy”)

TELL

- Samaritans in Jesus’ time were strongly and greatly disliked by Israelites – and vice versa.
- Samaritans and Israelites had a lot in common and a shared history, but over the centuries, there was a splitting apart due to invasions and because of that splitting, the politics and religious practices varied just enough to cause the two groups of people to really dislike each other.
- It’s sort of like in music how two notes that are really close to each other sound the worst when played at the same time.
- So from an Israelite perspective, there could *never* be a “good” Samaritan. They didn’t exist.
- And, this idea that a Samaritan would help an Israelite would be *offensive*. The idea that a Samaritan would help an Israelite when important Israelites didn’t help a fellow Israelite about be even MORE offensive. This is an offensive story to Israelites.
- This is why the lawyer in the story in verse 37 can’t just answer with, “The Samaritan” to Jesus’ question. Instead, he dances around the name by saying, “The one who showed him mercy.”
- But this dancing around the name is probably exactly what Jesus wanted
- Because as a lawyer (and as a human), the desire is to know the limits of a rule – to know what is covered and what is not covered. To know the loopholes of the term “neighbor,” right?
- But that’s Jesus’ point at the end – there are NO loopholes to this command of love your neighbor as yourself.
- Jesus’ point is that we are to show mercy to everyone because “our neighbors = everyone”
- In other words, Jesus is telling the lawyer, “Stop trying to figure out who your neighbors are so you can feel justified in not loving certain people. Instead, get out there and show mercy.”

TRANSITION to MOVIE CLIP

- To help us see what “loving your neighbor” might look like in today’s world, let’s watch a movie clip from the movie “We are Marshall”
- But first, we need a little bit of background for the clip to make sense
- The movie is based on a true story.
- The man in the suit and tie is the president of Marshall University, Don Devon.
- He’s there to interview Jack Lengyel (played by Matthew McConaughey) about a head coaching position for football.
- The reason Don Devon, the president of the university, is looking for a head coach is because four months earlier the school’s football team all died in an airplane crash (this happened in 1971) -- including the coaches and the athletic director.
- No one wants to be the next coach. Everyone the president has asked has said no.
- No one wants the job because there are no players, the town is hurting, the school is hurting, the team will probably lose every game in the upcoming season, and the decision to field another team was extremely controversial.
- But out of nowhere, this Jack person has called to inquire about the job, even though he already has his own coaching job and has ZERO ties to Marshall University.
- The president, because he has no other options, is there to interview Jack for the job.

- And that's the where the clip starts – with the interview at Jack's house.
- Let's see what happens

WATCH MOVIE CLIP

ASK

- Does Jack seem to enjoy football? (yes)
- Does the president? (not so much, nope)
- What *does* the president care about? (why Jack called him to be coach of Marshall)
- What was the "thought" that Jack put into "picking up the phone?" (he imagined what it would be like to be the people who were hurting and thought he should help)
- Did that seem to be a satisfactory answer? (he got hired, so yes)
- What do you think – was that an easy thing for Jack to do?

TELL

- So what we see Jack do is put himself in the place of other people – this is often called "empathy" and it is a helpful way to try and understand what people are thinking and feeling
- And in the case of this movie, that empathy by Coach Jack was a very kind and generous offer to the Marshall University when they were hurt and needing help in that area
- Coach Jack was a good neighbor to Marshall University
- But empathy could become a loophole, too, right?
- What if we don't have empathy for someone – then maybe we don't have to be their neighbor...
- This is why I think what Jesus is saying can be a very challenging thing – to show mercy to everyone; to love *everyone* as yourself is very difficult.
- This is also why that first part of the greatest commandment is so important. The two lines are not meant to be understood separately: Love the Lord your God and Love your neighbor are commandments that work together.
- The way we learn to love *everyone* is by first loving God and in so doing, we receive God's love, mercy and grace that we can then share with others.
- And we KNOW from the previous two parables, right(?), that God is very abundantly offering love, mercy, forgiveness, grace and talents and skills to be used and shared!
- So – let's not pretend that this is an easy thing to do, because it is not.
- But it *is* simple to understand.
- We pay attention to God so that we can receive God's love, direction, mercy, forgiveness, care, etc. And THEN, we have those things to share with everyone. It's not a rule – which means there's no loopholes. That's just how it's meant to work.

CLOSING PRAYER