

Death . . . Bondage: Life . . . Freedom

Ann sits in the pew of her church every Sunday morning trying to smile to keep the wounds from her relationship inside her heart from being discovered. Slowly the life within is dying. Dreams have been shattered, and life seems hopeless.

Fearful of anyone knowing she clenches her hands together trying not to be anxious. She longs for friendship, but trust is an issue. Will this church love and accept me as Jesus does? She listens carefully to the sermon. The parable in Scripture catches her attention.

Luke 10

²⁵ On one occasion an *expert in the law* stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ 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.*’”

²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But he wanted to *justify himself*, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. *They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.*

³¹ A *priest* happened to be going down the same road, and when he *saw* the man, he *passed by* on the other side. ³² So too, a *Levite*, when he came to the place and *saw* him, *passed by* on the other side.

³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he *saw* him, he *took pity on him.* ³⁴ He *went to him* and *bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.* Then he *put* the man on his own donkey, *took him to an inn* and *took care of him.* ³⁵ The next day he *took out two silver coins 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.*’

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “*The one who had mercy on him.*”

Jesus told him, “*Go and do likewise.*”

In this parable a man had been beaten, robbed, and left to die. Bloody and dirty this man was in desperate need of help. His very life was in the balance.

How did the priest, Levite, and the Samaritan love his neighbor? What were their actions when they discovered this wounded man?

A Priest

- Saw the messy, dirty, bloody man
- Passed by on the other side

A Levite

- Saw the messy, dirty, bloody man
- Passed by on the other side

A Samaritan

- Saw the messy, dirty, bloody man
- Took pity on the man
- Went to him
- Bandaged the man's wounds pouring oil and wine on them
- Took the man to an inn, a place of safety and away from evil
- Took care of him
- Paid for all expenses

Unlike the priest and Levite, the Samaritan went beyond seeing the problem. He became involved in the messiness of the wounded man's life and willingly risked even his own safety to reach out.

He used the resources he had to dress the wounds after assessing the situation. Realizing he could not do it all, he took the man to a safe place away from any further attack where he could recover. He was willing to pay whatever it cost to assist him.

The Samaritan did not ask the man to pay him back nor did he ask about his finances at home. He did not question him to see if he provoked the attack nor did he demean him for being on the road alone.

He did not tell the man to pray harder and hang in there. "Suffering is just part of life." He did not judge the man claiming he received his just punishment. The Samaritan did not require the wounded man to prove his need for help.

The Samaritan simply saw the need and did something about it. He knew of a safe place and sought out other resources. He was willing to be involved in a complicated situation despite the dirt and mess. He extended mercy to the helpless man.

If this parable is Christ's example of loving our neighbor, why do we not apply it to women and children who are victims of domestic violence when they approach the church? Why do we place condemnation on the victims by assuming they provoked the violence? Why is the perpetrator believed and not the victim?

Why do we tell them to pray harder, submit more, and place the total responsibility for the relationship on their shoulders? When we see the victim's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, why do we give with strings attached? Shouldn't the church be the hospital for the wounded and hurting?

The domestic violence victims with barely any strength and resources left turn to the church for help sometimes as a last resort. Often times they are met with resistance. Their relationship is quickly categorized as a marriage issue, or lack of communication and conflict resolution skills. The real issues in the relationship are power and control, sense of entitlement, and superiority by the perpetrator.

In too many incidences, the church pushes for reconciliation in the relationship without proof of consistent change by the perpetrator just because he **seems** repentant. The preservation of life and safety is more important than reconciliation. If a victim goes back into the relationship too soon, the perpetrator will often be more abusive and all accountability will stop.

When a woman who experiences domestic violence comes to the church, she needs to be viewed as the beaten, bleeding, and deeply wounded person found in the parable. Stopping the “bleeding” is critical for her to live. Standing up against evil, holding the abuser accountable, believing her, and taking action against the abuse is essential. Just seeing the wounded is not enough. It is the beginning of walking the difficult journey with her. Are we in the church willing to get our hands dirty and take a risk or will we further oppress and re-victimize the victim?

As the body of Christ, the choice is ours to be like the Samaritan or the priest and Levite. Are we going to be part of setting the captives free or putting them in more bondage? The Lord is watching and will judge our choices.

“Rescue those who are unjustly sentenced to death; don’t stand back and let them die. Don’t try to avoid responsibility by saying you didn’t know about it. For God knows all, hears, and he sees you. He keeps watch over your soul, and he knows you knew! And he will judge all people according to what they have done.”

Proverbs 24:11-12, NLT

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