

October 15, 2026

Start Here, But Don't Stop Here

October Series: Love Your Neighbor

Week Focus: Start Right Here

Scripture – Luke 10:36–37 - *“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor... to the man, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”*

Devotional Reflection

This week, we have been learning that loving God must become visible in the way we love the people around us. Yesterday, we were challenged to recognize the opportunities for love that already exist within our families, friendships, workplaces, churches, and communities. Today, Jesus invites us to consider what happens when loving our neighbor requires us to move beyond the people and relationships that feel familiar. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus challenges the assumption that our responsibility to love should be limited to those who are most like us or easiest to reach. **LOVE MAY BEGIN WITH THE PEOPLE CLOSEST TO YOU, BUT CHRISTLIKE LOVE MUST NEVER BE LIMITED TO THE PEOPLE MOST COMFORTABLE FOR YOU.**

When the expert in the law asked Jesus who his neighbor was, he was attempting to clarify the boundaries of his responsibility. Rather than simply providing a definition, Jesus told a story in which a Samaritan demonstrated mercy toward a wounded man whom others had passed by. The Samaritan did not allow social divisions, personal convenience, or the man's circumstances to prevent him from responding with compassion. Jesus then shifted the question from identifying who qualified as a neighbor to recognizing who had actually behaved like one. **THE QUESTION IS NOT SIMPLY, “WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?” BUT ALSO, “AM I WILLING TO BE A NEIGHBOR?”**

This teaching confronts a tendency that can quietly develop within our hearts: we sometimes reserve our greatest kindness for people with whom we already agree, identify, or feel comfortable. We may find it easier to demonstrate compassion toward someone who shares our experiences while becoming hesitant when another person's background, perspective, or circumstances are different from our own. Yet the mercy demonstrated in Jesus' parable reminds us that genuine love cannot be governed entirely by familiarity, convenience, or personal preference. This does not mean we can meet every need, solve every problem, or ignore the wisdom and boundaries necessary for healthy relationships. **IT MEANS THAT DIFFERENCES SHOULD NOT AUTOMATICALLY BECOME EXCUSES FOR WITHHOLDING THE COMPASSION CHRIST CALLS US TO DEMONSTRATE.**

As we consider today's challenge, we must remember that Jesus is not merely calling us to become more generous or socially considerate people through our own determination. His command to love our neighbors reveals how deeply we need the grace of the Savior who loved us when we could never have earned His mercy. Because we have received compassion through Christ, His Spirit can transform the attitudes that cause us to overlook, dismiss, or distance ourselves from others. Today, ask God to reveal whether there is someone beyond your usual circle whom you have been hesitant to acknowledge, understand, encourage, or serve. **START RIGHT HERE WITH THE PEOPLE GOD HAS PLACED AROUND YOU, BUT DON'T STOP THERE WHEN HE GIVES YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND HIS LOVE BEYOND WHAT FEELS FAMILIAR.**

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Love may begin with the people closest to you, but Christlike love must never be limited to the people most comfortable for you.

Following Jesus means allowing His love to move us beyond familiarity, personal preference, and convenience so that others can experience genuine compassion.

PRACTICE — EXTEND YOUR CIRCLE OF COMPASSION

- Examine your boundaries. Consider whether you are more willing to demonstrate kindness toward certain people because they share your background, experiences, or opinions.
- Notice someone outside your circle. Pay attention to a person you regularly encounter but rarely acknowledge or engage.
- Challenge an assumption. Ask God to reveal whether you have allowed an unfair judgment or personal preference to influence how you treat someone.
- Take one practical step. Offer encouragement, assistance, a thoughtful conversation, or another appropriate expression of compassion to someone you might normally overlook.
- Remember the mercy you received. Reflect on how Jesus extended grace to you, and allow that truth to influence the way you respond to others.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for demonstrating Your love and mercy toward me through Jesus Christ. Thank You that Your grace was not reserved for those who could earn it or prove themselves worthy of receiving it. Forgive me for the times I have allowed familiarity, personal preference, discomfort, or assumptions to determine how willing I am to demonstrate compassion toward others. Search my heart and reveal any attitudes that have caused me to overlook people You have called me to love.

Lord, teach me to see others through the lens of Your grace rather than the limitations of my own experiences and preferences. Give me a heart that is willing to demonstrate mercy, even when doing so requires me to move beyond what feels comfortable or convenient. Help me exercise wisdom, maintain healthy boundaries, and recognize the opportunities You place before me to respond with genuine love. Continue transforming my heart so that my compassion is not limited to those who are easiest to love. May my life increasingly reflect the mercy I have received through Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

REFLECTION QUESTION

Are there people you have unintentionally excluded from your circle of compassion because they are different from you, unfamiliar to you, or inconvenient to love—and what would it look like to respond to them with Christlike mercy?