

The Road of Life: Learning to Give

Matthew 7:7-12

For the purpose of our lesson, the **Road of Life** will be characterized as a **Bicycle Ride** with Jesus. Our journey begins on a bicycle built for two with you in the front seat leading the way. As we learn to Trust Jesus, He takes the front seat and leads the way.

Trusting Jesus to lead the way, He can take us to people with gifts of acceptance, forgiveness and healing that we need. As we continue our journey, Jesus wants us to give those gifts away to people along the **Road of Life**. Are we ready for that? Several questions come to mind:

Do I really have anything to give?

Can I afford to give?

How can I tell who really needs something?

Will Jesus help me learn to give?

We will assume that everyone here today has asked Jesus to take the lead position on their bicycle. Our life now begins to take the path He chooses. We will begin to “see” people from the Lord’s perspective. This may be dramatically different from our own day to day human perspective. It is only possible to see people through the Lord’s eyes when He is leading us to them.

Have you ever gone on a tour of a local business or organization? I have been privileged to follow along on tours at TV 6 in Negaunee. As the tour guide begins to explain what happens in each area of the studio, I am able to “see” from an insider’s perspective. So much of the mystery of TV could be understood when I allowed myself to be led through the studio by an insider.

Jesus allows us to see people from an insider’s perspective. He knows the heart—the struggles—the fears of everyone. With Jesus leading the way, we will be able to share the gifts we have received with those who need them most. Is Jesus leading the way in your life? Are you going places and meeting people who need the love offered through our Lord? I’m aware that not everyone knows they need His love, but Jesus can open hearts in a way we are not able to. He can show us the way!

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

9 "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! 12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 7:7-12

Let's ask Him right now. Will you pray with me?

Lord, do I really have anything to give? Show me the gifts you have already given to me so I can begin to share those with others. Lord, I'm concerned about my schedule. I'm not sure I can afford to give. Help me Trust. I need you to give me insight so I can tell who really needs something. Please open the hearts of the people to whom you want me to give gifts. Lord, will you help me learn to give?

Jesus can teach us how to give our gifts away through a parable He told to an expert in the law. Open the eyes of your heart as we allow Jesus to show us the important things on our **Road of Life**.

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.”

Luke 10:25-37

Religious Pretension

Jesus knew how to cut to heart of the matter. Religion is not “church-going.” Pure religion is helping the widows and orphans.¹ The parable pointed to a group of people who hide behind religion but never really practice it. The priest and the Levite should have been more than aware of God’s teaching throughout the history of the Law and the Prophets. God has always directed them to be kind to the foreigner, compassionate to the less fortunate and concerned for those who stumble.² What happened to the priest and the Levite? Why were they unable to “see” the man bleeding and broken on the side of the road?

They were able to see him physically but did not make the connection that they should help. How often does that happen to us? I can’t remember finding someone physically beaten and bleeding, but I do remember times when people have been emotionally battered and torn. When Jesus is leading the way, I am able to “see” them in need of some of the gifts He has brought to me.

51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; 53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them, 56 and they went to another village.

Luke 9:51-55

This passage gives us an understanding of the kind of love we are to have for our neighbor. When Jesus and the disciples were treated unkindly by the Samaritans, He did not retaliate in like manner. No, the Samaritan became the hero in His next parable! “**Love your neighbor as yourself.**” The word for love used in the discussion between Jesus and the expert of the law was not *phileo* which is an expression of feelings. Rather, the word *agapao* was used which is a love expressed in an action to do what is right, regardless of feelings. This type of love is a **choice**. That’s how we can learn to *love our enemies*³ and fulfill the instruction of Jesus.

Capturing the Spirit of Jesus

I encourage you to be confident of your obedience to the call of Jesus by turning away from self and sin, being born again in the waters of baptism and receiving His Spirit to dwell within you. In doing so, you are now able to begin bearing the fruit of the Spirit...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. ⁴

How do we do it? Does it just automatically happen? Apparently not, based on the parable of the good Samaritan. We have to be engaged in the process of bearing fruit. Keeping our "eyes" open to serving others.

5...make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:5-8

What "gift" can I share?

Be a neighbor. When our eyes are connected to our heart...we begin to see the people who need the gift of love. Jesus told the law expert to **"Go and do likewise."** Are we able to see as clearly as the law expert that Jesus wants us to be merciful and loving to our neighbor?

Experiencing **JOY** in our journey here is when we get our priorities in the right order. This is what Jesus did by putting our need above His own well-being.

Jesus first

Others next

Yourself last

The Crossword Puzzle

A man was working a crossword puzzle and asked, "What is a four letter word for a strong emotional reaction toward a difficult person?"

Someone standing nearby said, "The answer is hate."

A lady interrupted and said, "No, the answer is love!"

Everyone is working that same crossword puzzle, but the way you answer is up to you.

(Kent Crockett, 911 Handbook, p.22)

Presented on Sunday, October 26, 2008 in Escanaba, Michigan by Dave Grant.

¹ James 1:27

² Proverbs 24:17-18

³ Matthew 5:43-48

⁴ Galatians 5:22-23