



A 7-week Study on Biblical Reconciliation

“Agents of Healing” Discussion Guide Session 6

Key Verse: *A Samaritan...came where the man was and when he saw him, he took pity on him. (Luke 10:33)*

Point 1: Jesus used the story of the good Samaritan to challenge his listeners to change their perspective.

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 neighbour 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 neighbour?” ³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.” (Luke 10:25-30)

At the beginning of this study we discussed the image of God and how God desires for us to experience unity in diversity. We noted the dangerous tendency to gather around a cultural or ethnic “sameness”, where some are not made to feel welcome. Jesus was radical in his approach to confronting this problem. In this passage, when the religious leader was trying to justify himself, and to test the Lord Jesus, he prompted the discussion, “who is my neighbour?”. Jesus used the story of the good Samaritan, who may very well have been a real person, to teach his listeners. He described the trouble experienced by a man on his journey, a familiar scenario which many of his listeners might have feared could happen to them.

This man's life circumstances unexpectedly took a bad turn, and he was attacked by robbers. In our communities today, often people are exposed to complex experiences of trauma. In a moment, any life, however stable, can take a dramatic turn for the worse. Even in the stable and peaceful city of Geneva, trauma can result in an inability to cope with the challenges of everyday life. This is especially true when the suffering is the result of injustice and mistreatment. Some people face great tragedies and emerge with their foundational beliefs unharmed. They know they are loved by a just, loving God who values them and is able to redeem their suffering. Others may face similar experiences but no longer feel safe and feel they have lost their trust in God. Jesus also experienced injustice and great suffering (read 1 Peter 2:21-25).

? Have you or someone you know faced trauma or suffering that has resulted in a form of paralysis?

Point 2: The Holy Spirit can use the Word to reveal any areas where we might need to grow and change.

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. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii 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 neighbour 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 10:31-37)

Jesus describes two religious people who passed by, probably on their way to church, and saw their neighbour in need. It's possible that they were concerned for their reputations, or their own safety, in any case, they both made a choice to walk by the hurting man. We jump quickly to judgement over these two men. Remember though that the "bad guys" were the robbers, these were the "busy" guys, busy working for God, but too busy to take time for the beaten-up man they passed on the side of the road. Maybe they were caught up in the demands of their religious activities, maybe they were just too self-absorbed.

If we are willing to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal God's Word to us, we may be surprised at how this passage speaks to us. Are we so busy with religious activity that we are in danger of not seeing the suffering of those right in front of us? The men in this story were not necessarily "bad people", but they were bad neighbours. Could our ability to be "good neighbours" be being hindered by our own fears or preconceived ideas or prejudices? A probing question for our community might be: does this attitude describe the Church today? In Corinthians Paul says, "None of you should be looking out for your own interests, but for the interests of others" (1 Cor 10:24). The external culture glorifies self-sufficiency and self-reliance, Jesus calls us to be "other-focused". The Holy Spirit wants to transform us into good neighbours!

? **What part of the story of the Good Samaritan do you feel is most challenging to you personally?**

Point 3: God desires for our church community to break down barriers and bring about healing

Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of his household. (Ephesians 2:12-19)

In order to experience healing, people need to be able to express their pain, anger and brokenness. For many of us this is a very hard thing to do. We may prefer to deny our pain, suppress it and appear strong. We may have had trouble trusting others and be afraid of being vulnerable. Maybe people are sending signals that they don't care or have time to help us. We may have a false understanding of what it means to be spiritual, believing that we should always be "victorious" and never admit suffering. Sadly, this belief can lead to people to feel the need to 'wear a mask' and hide their feelings, a dangerous thing. Different cultures teach different things, and in the meeting of cultures, we may miss the signals of suffering.

Through His work on the cross, Jesus has broken down the dividing walls between the nations, cultures and ethnic groups. In this way God is forming from believers of all nations a special new people group, who are equipped to become agents of healing in His world. Let's pray together that we will experience this reality, gathering almost 80 nations but all part of one family ("his household"). It starts with trusting one another enough to share our suffering, breaking down barriers and then making time to really help one another.

? **Can you think of an area where our church might be able to take some steps to break down barriers?**

