



Outline

Lesson 12 - Community & Involvement: God Cares, Do I?

- I. Introduction – The Greatest and Second Greatest Commandment
 - A. Matthew 22:34-40 – “And a second is like it...love your neighbor as yourself.”
 - B. Luke 10:25-29 – “He wanted to justify himself, so he asked ‘Who is my neighbor?’”
- II. Who is my neighbor? – Radical design of this sphere: Christ, a neighbor, the needy
 - A. Story of the good Neighbor – Jesus didn’t answer the question “Who is my neighbor?” but instead told us what a good neighbor is
 - B. Who are the needy? – poor, orphans, widows, sick, prisoners, outcasts, unpopular, neglected, left out, homely, last – The needy are great in a sphere we neglect
- III. Seeking the Heart of God
 - A. God’s heart for the needy and lowly – He saves the poor and lifts up the lowly – Who is this God?
 - B. Foundational Presuppositions - God is and He has revealed Himself to us
 - C. What is it about the nature of God that causes Him to reveal Himself to us?
 - 1. Isaiah 65:1-2 “To a nation that did not call on my name I said, “Here am I, Here I am. All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people...”
 - 2. Matthew 23:37 “...I have longed to gather your children together...”
- IV. “Tapeinos” – The humble heart of God
 - A. Matthew 11:28-29 “For I am gentle and humble in heart” - Jesus washes the feet of his disciples and in John 14:4-9 tells them “Anyone who has seen me, has seen the father.” – Man of steel and velvet
 - B. Psalm 35:10 - My whole being will exclaim “Who is like you, O God!”
- V. Involvement – God’s Involvement and Ours

- A. Seeing others as God sees them and recognizing that they have eternal significance
- B. Jonah and Nineveh - Jonah running from the face of God – “Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city?”
- C. Transforming Culture - “How Christianity Changed the World”
 - 1. William Wilberforce –Abolished slavery through a deep sense of calling, band of like-minded brothers, and sustained public persuasion
 - 2. We are in good company - Hebrews 11- Cloud of Witnesses
- D. “What do I do?” – Get your calling from the One who made you, the One who gifted you. Continue to gaze upon the face of God, pursue Him and continually be transformed into the very image of Christ. May God’s truth be a fire in your bones.



Lesson Guide

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Introduction

For this final installment of our “worldview tour” we will head southeast and gaze upon the face of God as it is revealed to us in the last of our six social spheres: the sphere of *Community and Involvement*. Here, perhaps more than in any other sphere or field of inquiry, we will have an opportunity to draw near to the Creator and learn what it is that has compelled Him to draw near to us. We will find that the God of the Scriptures is in fact the Lord of the lonely, the Savior of the outcast, the Defender of the defenseless, and the Sustainer of all who find themselves in need. Our call is to become *like* Him by discovering what it means to not only love Him, but to love our neighbor.

Themes

Involvement in this sphere – the sphere of community outreach, practical service, and active love expressed in Christian *charity* – has been the distinguishing hallmark of the Church for many centuries. For a number of reasons, says Dr. Tackett, it has fallen into neglect in our day. Not only that, but the general call for involvement in culture at large, in all of the spheres, has actually become a matter of debate in some contemporary Christian circles. And yet a careful examination of Scripture will reveal that believers have a mandate to reclaim their place in this important arena. We dare not, like Jonah, try to escape God’s call to be involved. Over and over again, the Scripture clearly presents the perplexing reality that God entrusts us with carrying out His mission and purpose with the world. We cannot deny the link and dependency God has created between His divine plan and the faithfulness with which His followers embody biblical truth in their behavior and reflect the heart of Jesus in their lives.

What *is* the heart of Jesus? This is not a difficult question to answer. In Matthew 11:28-29 Christ tells us plainly that He is *gentle* and *humble* in heart. The heart of Jesus stands radically opposed to the principle of “survival of the fittest.” It identifies closely with the plight of the weak and disenfranchised. It is a heart that compels Him to wash the feet of others and lay down His life for His friends. In doing these things, Jesus not only becomes our example – He also reveals to us the deepest concerns of His Father in heaven (John 14:9).

In the final analysis, we must realize that this is *why* Jesus sums up the entire law in two “Great Commandments”: “Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36-40). Here at the end of our tour we come back again to the great fountainhead and source of all truth, the divine nature itself. “God is love,” writes the apostle John, “and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). And

love, in the practical sense, means *being* a good neighbor to the people around us – like the Samaritan in Christ’s famous parable.

Points to Watch For

If God cares enough to get involved with the needs of people, we need to care and get involved as well. This is the thrust of Dr. Tackett’s message. So forceful is his presentation of this concept that it is almost certain to impact participants at a deep emotional level. When it does, they will probably ask the question that has been asked so many times before: “What should I *do*?” At this point it will be important to emphasize the thought that active love is not a matter of following a “to-do checklist” or establishing a system of “rules” or “simple steps.” Instead, it is a question of developing an attitude of humility, openness, sensitivity, and creative compassion. It is a matter of using our God-given gifts and talents in the service of others and pursuing the passions He has instilled in our hearts.

Discussion Questions

- 1) **What did you see on this final tour? Which of these were particularly striking to you? Why?**
- 2) **Which ones stood out to you? Did any of them strike a chord with you?**
- 3) **In Luke 10:29 we are told that the teacher of the law who questioned Jesus about the way to inherit eternal life was driven by a desire to “justify himself.” What does this mean, and how does it provide the motivation for his second question: “Who is my neighbor?” How do *we* seek to “justify ourselves?”**
- 4) **Did Jesus answer the lawyer’s question? If so, how?**
- 5) **How does the sphere of Community differ in structure from the other social spheres we’ve examined? How does this difference constitute a special challenge for us as God’s people?**
- 6) **Name some of the ways in which Christianity has *changed the world* (according to author Alvin Schmidt). What has motivated believers to become agents of change in these areas? How do their actions differ in tone and spirit from the works of pragmatic philanthropy?**
- 7) **“You can be a risk-taker without being a world-changer,” says Dr. Tackett, “but you cannot be a world-changer without being a risk-taker.” How is this principle illustrated in the life of William Wilberforce? How can you and I step out and take greater risks for the advancement of God’s kingdom in our own cultural context? How can we engage in the battle in a more active way?**
- 8) **Since this is our final tour, do you have any closing comments about our twelve weeks together and the ground we have covered? Has the Lord begun any transformational work in your life since we began together? If so, how?**



Key Terms

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Needy: The poor, orphans, widows, sick, prisoners, outcasts, unpopular, neglected, left out, homely, last, etc. See the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

Story of the Good Neighbor: Often referred to as the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus reveals what a good neighbor is and how a good neighbor should act. See Luke 10:25-37.

Tapeinos: Greek for humble. The same word is used by Jesus to describe his heart as well as the many verses that call us to be humble. For example "for I am gentle and humble in heart." See Matthew 11:29, James 4:6 and Philippians 2:8.

Triclinium: A room in a Roman building used to entertain company. Hosts and guests would recline on pillows around three sides of a low square table; the fourth side of the table was left open to allow service to the table. Dining was the defining ritual in Roman domestic life, lasting from late afternoon through late at night. Typically, 9-20 guests were invited, arranged in a prescribed seating order to emphasize divisions in status.

William Wilberforce (1759-1833): An English parliamentarian and leader of the campaign against slavery.