

Lesson 12 Outline - 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?'"
- C. Story of the good Neighbor – Jesus didn't answer the question "Who is my neighbor?" but instead told us what a good neighbor is
- D. 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
- E. Seeing others as God sees them and recognizing that they have eternal significance
- F. Jonah and Nineveh - Jonah running from the face of God – "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city?"
- G. 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
- H. "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.

II. Who is my neighbor? – Radical design of this sphere: Christ, a neighbor, the needy

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

Lesson Guide for Tour 12

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.

The Truth Project – Lesson 12: Community & Involvement

Matthew 22:33-40

When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching. Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

Luke 10:25-29

"On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 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.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "**And who is my neighbor?**"

Community & Involvement

The art of community and God's radical design to love your neighbor

God's design for social systems – His divine image stamped on each

Community – A Different Kind of Sphere

This sphere does not have any authority roles, but it has clear "responsibility" roles
There is no power balance or submission involved

Who is my neighbor?

Luke 10:29

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

What was he looking for? A checklist

Luke 10:30-37 – Parable of the Good Samaritan (Neighbor)

"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. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 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, took him to an inn and took care of him. 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.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Remember: At that time the Jews hated/despised the Samaritans.

The Question: Who is my neighbor?

The Answer: Jesus did not answer the question directly. He responded with what the guy needs.

Jesus told him what a neighbor was, what a neighbor looks like.

Jesus said go and be a neighbor.

God's Design for the Community, how do we find it?

Pondering the Word of God & Looking for the Heart of God

1 Samuel 2:8

"He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor."

Job 5:11

"The Lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety."

Psalm 12:5

"Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the LORD. "I will protect them from those who malign them."

Psalm 72:4

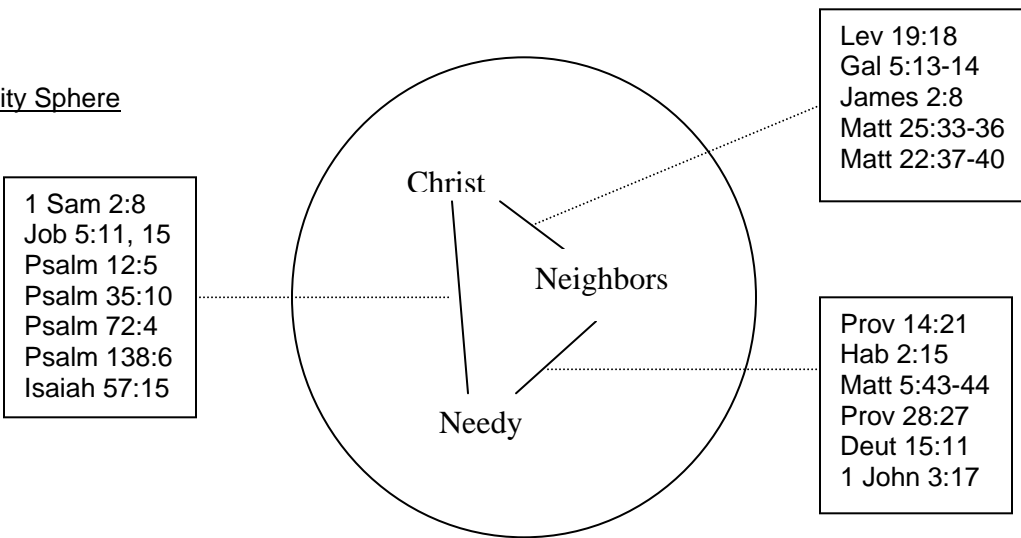
"He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor."

Psalm 138:6

"Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar."

God has a deep heart for the needy, He will arise to protect them.

Community Sphere



Psalm 12:5 – The Heart of God

"Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, **I will now arise**," says the LORD. "**I will protect** them from those who malign them."

Who are the Needy?

Poor, Orphans, Widows, Sick, Prisoners, Outcasts, Unpopular, Neglected, Left Out, Homely, Last

The heart of the Father – Thinking of the outcast

The needy are everywhere

Alvin Schmidt – How Christianity Changed the World

- Romans casting unwanted children off a bridge
- Christians in boats with nets fishing them out

John Pounds – John Pounds Ragged School for Children

Why not apply the “survival of the fittest”?

- The weak need to be destroyed
- Cleanse society – makes us better

God's Heart for the Needy – 1 Samuel 2:8

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap...

Deuteronomy 24:14

Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy...

Job 5:15

He saves the needy from the sword in their mouth; he saves them from the clutches of the powerful.

Psalms 72:4

He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor.

Job 5:11

The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.

Psalms 138:6

Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar.

Psalms 35:10

My whole being will exclaim, "**Who is like you, O LORD?** You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them."

Who of the other gods that man has created has a heart for the lowly? Do those gods care for the weak? Have a contrite heart?

Who is this God? Foundational Presuppositions

- God Is
- God Reveals Himself
 - ⇒ Generally in His creation
 - ⇒ Specifically in His written Word

God Reveals Himself to Man – Isaiah 65:1-2

"I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—"

Who is this God? – Matthew 23:37

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

The Heart of God – Matthew 11:28-29

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, **for I am gentle and humble in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls."

Metamorphosis – 2 Corinthians 3:18

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being **transformed** into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

Tapeinos – Luke 1:51-52

"He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble."

John 14:4-9

"You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

We serve a God who is Humble!

Don't Mistake This – 2 Timothy 1:7

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Humility is not “**Timidity**” – “Man of Steel and Velvet”

Think about what the Spirit gives us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Do you see the heart of God?

Who is like You? Psalm 35:10

“My whole being will exclaim, “**Who is like you, O LORD?** You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them.”

The First and Greatest Commandment – Matthew 22:37-38

“Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.”

And the 2nd is like it – Matthew 22:39-40

“And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

You’ve never met a mere mortal. Everyone you meet has an immortal soul, that will live for eternity.

Do you take time to listen to the stories of others? Let’s listen.

Why are we not involved? Because we don’t care.

How do we know that God has not called us to shrink away? Let’s look to Him and His involvement:

He listens and He touches. He comforts and He disciplines. He dwells within us and He intercedes. He protects us, He guides us, and He provides for our every need. He is the Vine and He gives us life. He has spoken to us in His Word. He keeps us from temptations that we can not bear. He is deeply involved. God is not apathetic. He does not abstain. He does not abdicate His responsibilities to fulfill His promises. He is faithful to the end. He is the Father to the fatherless. He defends the weak and the needy. He is righteous and He does what is right. He sends rain on the just and the unjust. You can not accuse God of copping out. He doesn’t bail. He doesn’t flee. He never retreats and He never abandons the battle. He is deeply involved. He takes the evil king to task and He judges the wicked. He opposes the proud but He gives grace to the humble. He hears the cries of His people, He listens to them and answers their prayers. His providential hand has been felt by those who have come before us and will be felt by those who come after us. He brings peace in the midst of trials. He opens the prison doors and sets the captives free. He is present in the foxhole and He knows when a sparrow falls. He is the ever-present, the ever-near, the everlasting Father. He has not abandoned us and He will not forsake us. He is involvement. If you want to follow Him, then you must engage in the battle.

Jonah 4:9-11

But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" "I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die." But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. **Should I not be concerned about that great city?**"

“How Christianity Changed the World”

- People Transformed by Christ
- Sanctification of Human Life
- Elevation of Sexual Morality
- Charity and Compassion
- Dignity of Women
- Hospitals and Health Care
- Education, Labor, Science
- Liberty, Justice, Slavery
- Art, Music, Literature

William Wilberforce, 1759-1833

- “God has put before me two great objects; the abolition of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.”
- 46 years later – 3 days before his death – in 1833 the bill to abolish slavery in the British Empire was passed.
- Wilberforce was “the single most decisive force in Britain and the rock on which 19th century English character was formed.”

J. Douglas Holladay on William Wilberforce

1. His whole life was animated by a deeply held, personal **faith** in Jesus Christ.
2. He had a deep sense of **calling** that grew into conviction that he was to exercise his spiritual purpose in the realms of his secular responsibility.
3. He was committed to the strategic importance of a band of like-minded **friends** devoted to working together in chosen ventures. *Do not work alone!*
4. He believed deeply in the **power of ideas and moral beliefs to change culture** thought sustained public persuasion.
5. He was willing to pay a steep cost for his courageous public stands and was persistent in pursuing his life task.

We are in Good Company – Hebrews 11, “Hall of Faith”

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses...” Hebrews 12:1

Early Christians and Later Christians

Hebrews 11:38 – “...the world was not worthy of them.”

We need to stand and take care of, what God has called us to take care of.

What do I do? I have **no** clue... but, God cares, do I?

Key Terms Lesson 12

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.