Day 2

Who Is My Neighbor?

Today's Bible experience
Luke 10:25-37
Jesus tells the story of a traveler who is wounded by robbers. The one who stops to help, who shows mercy, is the one we are to imitate.

Purpose statement
To recognize what it means to be a good neighbor

Bible memory
“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’” —Mark 12:30

Bible background
The story of the good Samaritan is probably the best-known parable in the Bible; however, it is rarely read in context. Just prior to this passage, a Samaritan village rejects Jesus and his messengers as they begin their journey to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the hero of this parable turns out to be a Samaritan who is also on a journey. As is often the case in Jesus’ teaching in Luke, it is outsiders who model authentic discipleship.

The 3,000 ft / 900 m descent on the deserted stretch of road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a fitting locale for this mugging. This journey was dangerous for lone travelers because of robbers who took advantage of the rocks and caves that lined the road. The victim does not have any identifying attributes, reducing his plight to that of human need.

We are not told why the priest and Levite fail to take action. What we do know is that the Samaritan takes action because he is moved with compassion. He pauses on his journey, tends to the injured man, and leaves enough money to provide care for several weeks.

It was not uncommon to illustrate a point by having an ordinary Jewish person surpass the priesthood by acting in exemplary fashion. Jesus, however, uses the example of a despised Samaritan as the one who embodies compassion.

Instead of asking, “Who is my neighbor?”—based upon race, religion, or nationality—Jesus asks which one acts like a neighbor. The lawyer with whom he is speaking may not be able to bring himself to speak of the hero’s race in his answer, so he responds universally: “The one who showed mercy.” This may have been Jesus’ intention all along. To this is Jesus’ rejoinder: “Go and do likewise.”

When children have heard the word Samaritan before, it was likely in the context of this story, in which the Samaritan is the hero, or in reference to a current-day news story in which someone helps another person and is called a “good Samaritan.” From a child’s perspective, helping is what Samaritans do! So when children hear this familiar story again, challenge them to listen for something new. When have they helped others? When have they felt like looking the other way? When have they been helped?

Pay attention to children who may themselves be wounded, and extend to them the healing presence of Jesus by showing extra kindness.
Session materials
- Bibles
- Bible memory poster or slide show from the Resource CD and projector
- Guide Book (one per child)
- Jar or basket filled with objects such as marbles or buttons

Advance preparation
- Pray for the adults and children who will participate in VBS. May they be open to discovering who their neighbors are and how to be a good neighbor.
- Read Luke 10:25-37 and the Bible background (p. 9) to become familiar with today’s story.
- Read the Bible Response daily plan and choose activities appropriate for your VBS groups. Gather materials.

Daily plan

Introduction
1. Welcome the children to the second day of Who Is My Neighbor?, where they will continue to discover what it means to be a neighbor. Sit in a circle on the floor and pass around the jar or basket. Tell the children to take as many objects as they want. After everyone has taken some, go around the circle and have each child say their name, and then name as many people they consider “neighbors” as they have objects. Encourage the children to think more broadly than simply people who live near them.

2. Remind the children that on Day 1 of VBS, they heard that the most important commandment is to love God, and the second most important commandment is to love neighbors as we love ourselves. Ask if anyone has noticed someone who has loved and cared for a neighbor since the last time everyone met. What examples can they give?

Bible story
Samaritans lived in the northern part of Israel. When the people were captured by the Assyrians, the Samaritans mixed with the Assyrian people. They married each other and developed different ways and places to worship God. Priests, Levites, and experts in the law lived in the southern part of Israel (also called Judah). They looked down on Samaritans because they thought they were not “pure” Israelites.

Encourage children to bring their Bible to Bible school. Help them find the stories and memory passages.

1. Review the drama presented during Worship time.
   - Find Luke 10:25-37 and let the children know that this story, like yesterday’s, is in the New Testament, the collection of books and letters that were written after Jesus was born.
   - Divide the children into three groups, and choose two good readers to be the narrators. Turn to page 8 in Guide Book and read the readers theater together as a review of today’s story.

2. Explain that the Samaritans lived in a separate part of Israel. Many people in Jesus’ time looked down on Samaritans. They didn’t expect Samaritans to do anything good. Priests and Levites worked in the temple. They were the leaders. They
should have been the best at helping people. But were they? Who most acted like a neighbor in this story? Why? Say:

This story that Jesus told is important because it shows that neighbors are not always who we expect them to be. Sometimes even strangers can be our neighbors! The Samaritan wasn’t expected to stop and help the injured traveler, yet he did. Even if we don’t know someone, we can show that we care about them and that we are good neighbors. Maybe there are children at school who don’t have a lot of friends, or children who live on your street who speak a different language than you do. You can be neighbors to them and show that you care, and who knows—maybe one day you will be friends!

**Bible memory**

1. **Today’s Bible memory passage** follows the verses learned yesterday. See if the children can say yesterday’s verses, then use the Bible memory poster or the slide show to see if they remembered correctly. Open your Bible to Mark 12:30 and help the children find it in their Bibles. Read the verse together from the Bible, the Bible memory poster, or the Bible memory slide show.

   “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’” —Mark 12:30

2. **Have the children turn to page 9 in Guide Book.** Have them draw a line through the words to find the Bible memory verse. Older children may help the younger children. When everyone is finished, read the message together.

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<tr>
<th>START</th>
<th>you shall love</th>
<th>Samaritan help</th>
<th>neighbor God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.</th>
<th>Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.</th>
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**Closing**

1. **Pass out Guide Book.** Have the children turn to page 10 and read about people who help strangers, neighbors near and far. Think together about ways we can be good Samaritans.

2. **Pray a closing prayer.** Before you begin, invite the children to silently think about needs in their communities and neighborhoods. You may want to offer some ideas to help children think. Explain that you will offer a prayer but there will be a time of silence in the middle. During that time, children may silently offer the needs they are thinking about to God.

   Dear God, the world has a lot of needs. (Pause in silence about 10 seconds.) Show us how to help you meet the needs we see around us. Amen.
**Additional activities**

Additional activities can be used to extend a session, depending on the amount of time available. Consider the ages and abilities of your VBS children so that you choose appropriate activities.

1. **Take the group outside if possible.** Pass out container of bubbles. Tell the children they can use blowing bubbles as a way to pray for others. Have children blow a bubble and think about a friend. They should pray for that person as long as the bubble lasts. After the bubbles burst, tell the group to blow another bubble and pray for a “neighbor.” Finally, they can blow a bubble and pray for a “stranger”—a person or group of people who they do not know well but who might need God’s help.

2. **Turn to page 11 in Guide Book.** Explain the usual definition of neighbor (someone who lives nearby) and have children name people who live next door to them. Write the names on a whiteboard. Then expand the definition of neighbor with these questions: Who is sitting next to you right now? Who sits next to you at school or church? Who is someone “next to you” in age? (If you are six, name someone who is five or seven.) What cities or towns are next to yours? What states or countries are next to yours? Continue adding names to the whiteboard. Have children write their individual responses on page 11.

3. **Brainstorm ways your church could show love** to the neighborhood. Making sidewalk-chalk art to brighten things up? Picking up trash? Share ideas with church leaders.

4. **Divide children into small groups.** Have them think up a modern-day retelling of this story and act it out for the whole group. Who is hurt? Who helps the one who is injured?

**Media list**

Media connections can be used depending on how much time is available. They come from a variety of different sources that may change over time. Always check a website ahead of time before sharing something with your group.

- *The Friendly Stranger* by Margaret Anne Williams
- *The Quiltmaker’s Journey* by Jeff Brumbeau
- Good Samaritan artwork by Van Gogh, Ferdinand Hodler, He Qi, Vie de Jésus Mafa
- Internet search for “moments that restored our faith in humanity”
- Internet search for “road from Jericho to Jerusalem” (footage of the terrain)
- YouTube search for “Lego good Samaritan” (watch two versions and compare them)