

The good samaritan: assessing the challenges of christianity essay sample

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



In His parables, Jesus shows the people in His time the way to the truth and righteousness, in a perspective, which as some scholars would put it, “eccentric” and even “scandalous” (McCracken 1994). In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus is questioned by a lawyer (meaning, he is conversant in the laws of Moses), what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus, asserting the knowledge of the man, *in turn, tells him to do what is stated in the law. But the lawyer whom we can assume to be putting Jesus to at test in order to humiliate or dishonor Him in front of His followers lest He teaches against the law, cites a follow up question, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus replies with the Parable of the Good Samaritan—a story which does not only give a perspective of how we should treat other people but also a view of the attitude of Jesus Christ.*

The time of Christ was the time Jews were waiting for their savior, the one who would restore the Kingdom of Jerusalem. A number of prophets have come prior to the coming of Jesus to teach the wisdom of God, so that when the real Messiah came, the Jews did not interpret His coming as the proper time, they did not see Him as their savior, or the one who would restore them. Restoring for the Jews could have also meant differently; it could have meant giving them power over other tribes, or giving an end to their sorrows, sickness, and hunger.

The lawyer in the parable questioned Jesus to test his knowledge of the law, and the depth of it. Learned men in Jesus’ time did this not really to seek for answers but a way to test Jesus. Jesus, in His replies can be commended for giving a safe answer by telling them in return to do what the law tells them

[1] , and when discontent with His reply, they throw other questions to Him, which He answers magnificently with parables.

Jesus' use of identities in the Parable of the Good Samaritan is very notable. He identified three men, one a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan. This implies the universality of His teachings, which must be heeded whether one is of high or low rank. In the parable, He states that the man who is robbed is saved by the Samaritan. Scholars believe that "this moral exemplar among first century Jews is so outrageous" and offensive (Dodaro 1994) for it must have been scandalous to the Jews to be compared to a Samaritan, or much more to be asked to do what a Samaritan does. The image of the priest not helping the victim suggests the callousness and blind righteousness of the teachers of the law who only know the law but do not practice it. The second man, a Levite is also mocked for not helping the man though Levites are recognized as the first servants of God [2] . The tone of Jesus becomes more ridiculous with the use of the third man helping the victim, who is a Samaritan and not a Jewish. The Samaritan, as another puts it, is outside the "normal seemly world" (McCracken 1994) and the Jews despised them.

In another perspective, the Parable of the Good Samaritan shows us the wisdom of Jesus as he speaks the Word of God. From the time He answers the question about inheriting eternal life and the telling of the parable. The particular instance in the Bible shows us how well-versed He is and how He perceives life and the Scriptures. In His parables, Hesus uses allegory and symbolism which Biblical scholars later had to infer on to magnify the essence in every word and story. Although to fundamentalists the images

used in this parable may just be as they are—the man is robbed and helped by a Samaritan—to other Christians, these images are profound and have to be deduced in order to understand the meaning in a more sensible way. In this regard, it would be wise to discuss what Biblical scholars believe the images in the allegory represent.

Biblical Scholars believe that the man coming from Jerusalem to Jericho is like Adam committing sin thus being perished from God's kingdom (Jerusalem) to the world (Jericho). He is robbed of his clothes and stricken, left half-dead by the robbers. Some scholars [3] see the loss of his garment as a symbol for the loss of immortality and incorruptibility. The Samaritan who rescues him represents Jesus who “ came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine” (Lk. 10: 34). It is believed that the oil is a symbol of Christ's words of consolation, while the wine is the “ Word of God —something that stings” (Welch 1999) although the earlier Christian interpretation associated the wine with the blood of Christ[4]. In addition, the inn where the victim is brought is the Church where everyone is welcome. The Samaritan's promise that he will come back again and pay whatever debt he owes the innkeeper is related with Jesus' second coming.

Like a literature teacher asking his students at the end of a story-telling, Jesus asks the lawyer, who then is the good neighbor out of the three men who pass by. The lawyer, succumbed to the radical power of Jesus' parable, replies that it is the third one. Here, we can see that the lawyer has no option but to affirm that it is the third man who is pointed out as the one who fulfills his duty to his neighbor in need even though he is a Samaritan.

Through this, Jesus implies that the Jewish or anyone in particular should be kind and helpful to anyone in need even though he is a stranger or coming from another tribe or nation.

It shows us that there should be no limitation set as to who should be helped. No boundaries such as culture, religion or race should hinder us from being kind to others. Applying this principle in the modern times, some states in the U. S. and countries around the world have adopted the Good Samaritan law which exempts anyone of liability for providing medical help to someone needing first aid. In particular, Utah has a Good Samaritan Act, which provides in part that a person who renders emergency care at or near the scene of, or during an emergency, gratuitously and in good faith, is not liable for any civil damages or penalties as a result of any act or omission by the person rendering the emergency care, unless the person is grossly negligent or caused the emergency (Utah Code Ann. § 78-11-22).

In the same way, nations have adopted the idea in the form of providing help to other countries for the betterment of their economic, security, and overall national situation. We may cite the U. S. in its initiative to render economic assistance to other countries[5]. Other countries have also adopted this, however, not all times can we expect people to grant assistance to others without expecting something in return. In the parable, we see how the good Samaritan helps the victim in every way he can without expecting retribution. Unfortunately, this is not always the case with helping countries. Most often, some countries which provide help to others ask the government of the other to sign agreements with them to act in accordance with their

decision, or provide assistance in time of need i. e., sending army troops during war with another nation.

Aside from the lofty idea of helping those in need, Jesus in this parable applauds the Samaritan for providing need without reservations. Indeed, the challenge suggested in the parable is for Christians to act similarly—in kindness, with determination and courage. The Samaritan helps the other man who is half-dead, without fear of being seen by anyone or being attacked by the robbers. He helps without looking at the negative consequence he might bear—losing time, money and energy or even worst, his life—because innately, he knows nothing but what is good for the one in need.

In our everyday lives, we recognize a lot of people whom we can compare with the victim in the parable. When we walk the streets, we often see people in great need, those on the streets looking for food in the trash, who are begging for alms to survive a day's hunger, and who are afflicted with sickness but have no one to turn to. Similarly, there are also those who need care and guidance or spiritual enlightenment. As Christians, what do we do for these people? Are we acting with the same kindness Jesus shows us in the parable? The answer is probably no. A lot of times we live like the priest and the Levite who just pass by and ignore the sufferings around us. We purchase things of luxury, store food we cannot eat in the refrigerator, or buy the newest gadgets that cost a suffering family's one-week meal. Instead of alleviating the poor and the needy of their pains, we add to their sufferings by dumping our trash in their place, criticizing them of their

wretchedness, and pretending to be helping by using them in some political propaganda.

If we are to infer on how the lawyer in the parable reacts to the parable told by Jesus, we may say he was taken aback by his own conscience, having realized his shortcomings. He must have felt ashamed of questioning Jesus and knowing the law but not acting in accordance with it. In the same way, this parable should make us feel conscience-stricken for ignoring what is happening to our poor brothers/sisters, and for enjoying life's pleasures while others live in pain. Looking deeply, we may find that there are a lot of things we can do for the destitute, such as helping in outreach programs, volunteering to educate the poor, etc. From now on, we should make a change and follow what Jesus teaches in the parable in order to attain eternal life. As Christians, we should take a stand and find ways to become good examples like the Samaritan, providing aid to the needy before it is too late.

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[1] See Luke 18: 20.

[2] See Leviticus in the Bible.

[3] Origen (1996) and Augustine

[4] See Matthew 26: 27-29; 3 Nephi 18: 8-11.

[5] See related articles in Center for Global Development Web site