

# Bible Studies

## The Good Samaritan

### **Read Luke 10v25-37**

Jesus parables were usually told in response to an incident or a question. The incident gives us the meaning Jesus intended us to grasp. In this case an expert in the Law, that is the Torah (first five book of the Bible) and the oral law, a set of traditions believed to have come from Moses, asked Jesus a question.

**What question did he ask Jesus? Is this a reasonable question?**  
**Why do you think he asked it? How would you answer this question?**

You do not do anything to inherit eternal life, it is not achieved by works. The lawyers whole question was flawed. Eternal life is God's gift to us. We receive it by believing in Jesus Christ and making Him our Lord and Saviour. Jesus answered the lawyers question with another question, He wanted to know what the lawyer thought. This is a good technique to use when people ask us questions about God. **How did he answer?**

This is a quotation for the Law, Deut 6v5 & Lev 19v18. Within Judaism of the day, this was the right answer. It is also consistent with what Jesus Himself taught. Matthew 22v37, Mark 12v30-31. Jesus first agrees with him and then tells a story that turns the man's whole world view on it's head.

### **Read Matthew 19v16-21, Mark 12v28-31**

**What did this young man need to do to inherit eternal life?**

There are similarities in this account but here Jesus adds the need to follow him. The lawyer and Jesus probably had quite different understanding of what it meant to love God. For the lawyer it meant to obey the commands, for Jesus it meant to commit yourself to God wholly and from the heart. This is the basic requirement of salvation. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD. Leviticus 19v18

**Why did the lawyer ask who his neighbour was?**

It says he wanted to justify himself. This means he wanted to look good, but it also means that he sought to be justified by obeying the Law. Something the New Testament tells us is impossible. Perhaps he also wanted to avoid doing anything he did not need to.

**Why did Jesus tell this parable?**

He wanted the lawyer to expand his idea about who he should show love to.

### **The Story**

Jerusalem is in the high country and Jericho in the Jordan valley. It was a long, winding, descent of about 20km though hilly, arid terrain. Ideal country for bandits. Wadi Kelt, with an all year stream flows from Jerusalem to Jericho. People could follow the wadi or a road that ran parallel to it some distance away. It is interesting that this is not referred to in the Bible as a parable, it could well have been based on a recent event. It is unlikely such an event featured a Samaritan as it's hero.

**What state was the man left in by the bandits?**

**Who were the three man that followed down the road?**

**Why did Jesus choose these people to pass by?**

The first two were a Priest and a Levite. The Levites were responsible for the upkeep of the Tabernacle/Temple. After the time of the Exile the distinction between the two groups diminished greatly. Both were greatly respected people, just the kind of people you would have expected to be the first to help. Jesus is not directly criticising the priests.

It has been speculated that they avoided the man because they thought he was dead or was about to die and would therefore make them ritually unclean and could have stopped them performing their priestly responsibilities, Numbers 19v11. (They were going AWAY from Jerusalem.)

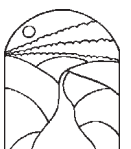
**Was this a good reason not to help the man? Why didn't they help him?**

**What did the law say they should do?** Exodus 23v4-5

Judaism has always upheld the sanctity of human life, it holds that almost all the laws can and should be broken in order to protect life. Luke 13v15, this concept is called Pikuach Nefesh. Only the high priest would be constrained from helping under these circumstances. Lev 21v11.

Equally assuming they thought he was already dead, they were still not off the hook. Providing burial

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for a stranger was one of Judaism's ultimate good deeds.

The Priest and the Levite passed by because they concluded, this man was not their neighbour.

**What did the Samaritan do?**

**What characteristics did he show?**

**What made his actions stand out? Why did he help?**

**Would he have been criticised for not helping?**

No one would have expected a Samaritan to help. The priest's concern was 'am I obligated to help this man? Is it my duty?' The Samaritan acted out of love. Jesus is calling for a change not only in the lawyers behaviour but in his total outlook. A change for law to grace.

**Did the Samaritan do the minimum for the man?**

The Samaritan left the man at an inn where he could rehabilitate. He paid generously for his care.

The Jews and Samaritans hated each other. John 4v9. The Samaritans were gentiles that had been settled in the north of Israel by the Assyrians. 2 Kings 17v24. They had taken on many of the beliefs of the Jews in a divergent form. They were if you like renegade Jews. Hatred often gave way to racial violence. The animosity was real. To the Jews "good Samaritan" was an oxymoron.

**What were the current relations between Jesus & the Samaritans?** Luke 9v51-55

**Why do you think Jesus picked a Samaritan to be the hero of the story?**

**What point is He trying to get across?**

**Is Jesus saying the Samaritans are better than the Jews?**

**Who would be the equivalent of the Samaritan for you?**

The Samaritan was the last person you would ever have expected to help and the person you most despise. Jesus intends this story to be scandalous, even offensive. When the lawyer answers Jesus parting question, he avoids the word Samaritan. If Jesus were telling this story in a Samaritan village He would have made the hero a Jew!

**Would the story have had the same edge if it had been a Jew helping a Samaritan?**

**What was the answer to the lawyers question, who is your neighbour?**

If even a Samaritan is your neighbour, then everyone is.

**What does this story say about racism among believers?**

**Can a Christian maintain racist views?**

In a way Jesus is speaking against racial stereotypes. This was not the actions people expected from a Samaritan. Jesus found something good where others could find only evil.

**What happens when you look for good in people?**

### **The Allegory**

Some people have found an allegory in this story. Jesus is the Good Samaritan, we are the beaten wretch. The Priest represents keeping the law something that could not help us. Meanings are found in the oil and wine, the inn is the church. Some have even found a meaning for the donkey!

**What barrier did Jesus cross to help us?**

**Can you think of a problem with interpreting the story this way?**

You could say the story has a secondary meaning. It illustrates how we receive eternal life. At His own cost, Jesus became our neighbour. He acted like the good Samaritan, when we were helpless He came to our aid. It is a beautiful picture and has blessed many. But this is not the reason Jesus told the story. By emphasising an allegorical interpretation, we find ourselves in the embarrassing position of ignoring what Jesus wanted to tell us! Like the lawyer, who could not admit that it was the Samaritan who helped. Like him we want to avoid the point, it is too uncomfortable.

**What about you?**

**What is the moral of this story?**

**What was Jesus concluding remark to this man?**

**Did he want the man to change his attitude or his actions?**

**Read Matthew 5v43-46, 1 John 3v16-18, James 1v27**

The man's original question was about inheriting eternal life. Jesus is saying, that inheriting eternal life requires you to reach out to the unloved, as God did for us.

**Is there a connection between loving God and loving others?** 1 John 4v20-21

**How will you behave differently because of this story?**

**How are you going to do likewise?**

**Who are you going to do likewise to?**

**How should we behave toward those we hate or despise?**

**Is the Gospel just for people like us?**

**Is it just people like ourselves that we should help?**

# Bible Studies

## A Page from Deuteronomy

Most Christians get very confused when they read the Law (the first five books of the OT). They are part of the Scripture, we feel we should obey them but there are large parts of them that we have no intention of keeping. Some of them the NT endorses, others it abrogates.

Mark 7v19	<b>What part of the law did Jesus free us from?</b>
Matthew 5v17-19	<b>Did Jesus say we are free to ignore the law?</b>
Matthew 5v38-39	<b>How did Jesus interpret the law?</b>
Acts 15v10-11	<b>Are gentiles required to keep the law?</b>
Romans 3v21	<b>Are we made righteous by keeping the law?</b>
Romans 3v31	<b>Do we nullify the law?</b>
Romans 6v14	<b>Are we under (required to keep) the law?</b>
Romans 7v6	<b>Are we bound by the law?</b>
Romans 10v4	<b>What does it mean that Christ was the end of the law?</b>
1 Corinthians 9v8-10	<b>How did Paul use the law?</b>
1 Timothy 1v7	<b>What does use it properly imply we can do?</b>
James 2v10	<b>What happens if you do not keep the whole law?</b>
Romans 13v9-10	<b>How do you keep the law? Matthew 22v37-40</b>

This is a really big subject on which we can only touch. The law was central to the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai. We are under a different covenant, a New Covenant. The law is not our covenant. We cannot be saved or made righteous by keeping it. In fact one of the reasons God gave the law, was to highlight our inability to be righteous. It was intended to force us to throw ourselves on God's mercy. This does not mean it has no relevance for us.

We are not obligated to keep the law for our salvation, but there are parts of the law that we need to obey, the New Testament tells us this and it is clearly God's will.

**What is the difference between keeping the law and obeying the law?** Rom 2v14-15

The question remains, how are we to treat the law?

**Do we reject it all?**

**Do we keep it all?**

**What parts do we keep, what do we reject?**

**And how do we know?**

The danger is it becomes subjective. We go on our gut feelings, we accept the bits we like and reject the bits we don't. In doing so, we know we are being inconsistent, so we file it in the *to difficult* folder, and argue about whether verses like Leviticus 19v28 ban tattoos. There has to be a better way. **What parts of the law don't we keep today?**

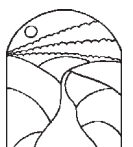
### **Some considerations for application**

- ?** Does the New Testament endorse it, comment on it or abrogate it.
- ?** Does it have a cultural application. Cooking a goat in its mother milk was thought to bring good luck, (sympathetic magic) it was part of pagan occult practice. It was also a rotten thing to do!
- ?** Does it have reasoning behind it that no longer applies (banning pork & shell fish in a hot climate is a very good idea.) Like many laws they were intended for Israel's good and safety.
- ?** Some parts of the Law were civil law which is no longer part of our system. (eg cities of refuge.) They may still have implications for us.
- ?** Some part we cannot keep and have been superseded (eg. animal sacrifice and ritual purity.) Again they have principles that are still important.
- ?** Is there a spiritual reason behind it? (eg the law of the kinsman redeemer teaches us who Jesus acted in redeeming us)
- ?** What does this law tell us about God and His will. Many of these laws express God's love, care and wisdom even when we are not obligate to keep them we can still learn from them. (eg not harvesting the edge of our field to provide for the poor)

The OT laws are given as examples to be applied, not as an exhaustive description of everything you should and shouldn't do. Eg Lev 19v14, says we are not to mistreat the blind or the deaf, but it says nothing of the dumb or crippled are we therefore allowed to mistreat them? No the law is an illustration not a description. It's paradigmatic.

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- 1** **Deuteronomy 21v22-21** Joshua 8v29 & 10v26-27  
**Why do you think this law might have been given?**  
**How does the New Testament use this law?** Galatians 3v13  
**Why did hanging on a tree equate to God's curses?**  
**Why did the body have to be buried the same day?**  
 To be hung on a tree was the ultimate humiliation.
- 2** **Deuteronomy 22v1-3** Exodus 23v4-5  
**What is this law telling us to do?**  
**Was this command for the sake of the animal or it's owner?**  
**How does it apply to us today?**  
**What does this command teach us about social responsibility?**
- 3** **Deuteronomy 22v1-3**  
**What is this law commanding us to do?**  
**Can you think of a modern equivalent?**  
**What does it tell us about the way we need to treat each other?**  
**Does the New Testament touch on this subject?**
- 4** **Deuteronomy 22v5**  
**Why did God give this command?**  
**What did men and women wear in biblical times?**  
**Does this commandment mean that women should not wear trousers?**  
**Do you think this command is exclusively about clothes?**  
**Could this be linked to the prohibition of homosexual acts?** Lev 18v22, 20v13  
 It could well be that this command is intend to maintain distinction between the sexes.  
**Is this distinction still important?**
- 5** **Deuteronomy 22v6-7**  
**What does this prohibit you from doing?** **Why?**  
**What does this say about our responsibility to the world around us?**
- 6** **Deuteronomy 22v8**  
**Why did you have to build a parapet around your roof?**  
 Middle Eastern houses had flat roofs, where people meet & talked. Josh 2v6, 2Sam 11v2  
**If someone fell from your roof, who's fault would it be?**  
**What application does this have for us today?**  
**Is this law found in our legal systems today?**
- 7** **Deuteronomy 22v9**  
**What is wrong with sowing two kinds of seed?**  
**How would this apply to genetic engineering or hybrid crops?**  
 The most likely explanation is that this is another command against a practice that was associated pagan ritual and intended to bring luck. It could also be about keeping species separate and protecting biological diversity.
- 8** **Deuteronomy 22v10**  
**What will happen if you plough with an ox and a donkey?**  
**What effect will it have on the weaker animal?**  
**Why was the command given?**  
**How did Paul apply this verse?** 2 Cor 6v14  
 It is possible that all these 'keep separate' commands, were intended to remind the Israelites that they had to remain distinct from the surrounding nations?  
**What things do we need to be careful to keep separate?**
- 9** **Deuteronomy 22v11** Leviticus 19v19  
**How many of us are breaking this command right now?**  
**Does God give pointless commands?**  
 This is probably another sympathetic magic command. Others have seen in this an illusion to the historical enmity between those who raise crops and those who herd animals.
- 10** **Deuteronomy 22v12**  
 Jews today still have four tassels on their prayer robes. In Jesus day all outer garments had these tassels. It was the tassel on Jesus robe that the women with the issue of blood reached out and touched. Matthew 9v20  
**What were these tassels for?** Numbers 15v37-41  
**What would be a good equivalent for us?**



# Bible Studies

## The Parable of the Workers



### **Read Matthew 20v1-16**

The question we have to answer in this study is , what aspect of the kingdom of heaven did Jesus want us to understand? Why were the last to be hired who did almost not work given the same as those who worked hard? How is this parable relevant to us? Jesus intended this story to be disturbing. It still elicits strong reactions.

**How do you feel about this story? Who do you identify with?**

The scene is self explanatory. There is an employer with work to be done and a market place where casual labourers gather waiting for work and a chance to feed their families. At dawn (first hour) he hires a group of workers. At three hour intervals, the land owner returns and finds another group of workers and invited them to come to his vineyard to work.

**Who is the landowner? What is the vineyard?**

The landowner is obviously God. Frequently in the Scriptures, Israel is represented by a vineyard. Isaiah 5v7. Here it seems to be a broader idea, there are several things it could be. Living as a Christian seems the most obvious. It can also be doing God's will or His work. It represents salvation.



**Who are the workers?**

**What does the hour they started work represent?**

**What did evening and settling of accounts represent?**

The workers are us. People who get saved. The hour at which they are employed is the time when they got saved. The evening is judgement day.



**How many groups of workers were employed?**

**How long did the last group work?**

**How long was the working day?**

A standard working day would have been about ten hours, at harvest time it would be longer.

**What agreement did the landowner make with the first group?**

A denarius was the standard rate of pay for a days work.

**What agreement did he make with the second group?**

**What agreement did he make with the third & subsequent groups?**

The first group had a clear bargain struck, a denarius for a days work. The second were told that they would be paid 'what was right', the groups after that had were not given any expectation. They had to trust the landowner.

**Can you see a parallel here?**



**What is the denarius?**

This is an important question, how you answer it changes the way to interpret the parable. The passage preceding this one, (19v16-30) deals with how you get saved and what reward their will be for those who sacrifice for the kingdom.

The Bible tells us that we will be rewarded for our labours for God. If the denarius is our reward, then all receive the same reward no matter what they have done for God, or not done for Him. Other passages in scripture suggest there will be degrees of reward. 1 Cor 3v15, Rev 22v12. However...

Alternatively the denarius can be taken as God's gift of eternal life, our inheritance, our final salvation. It seems this is the meaning Jesus wanted us to understand.

**If this is so then what is the meaning of the parable?**

The basic meaning is that it is not the amount of work you do or how long you have been saved, that gets you into heaven, it is the fact that God called you to work in his vineyard. It is by grace and not works.

**At the end of the day what happened?**

**What did the first group expect when they saw the last get a denarius?**

**Why did the first workers get angry?**

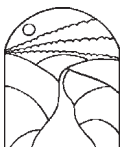
**What was their grievance?**

**Would they have felt aggrieved if the latter workers had got less?**

**What characteristics did they show?**

**Was this fair?**

Yes and no. It was fair, in that they got what was the day's rates, they got what they agreed to. If the others had not received the same they would have been happy with it. They got greedy and wanted more. This parable portrays human nature very well, when we have we



always want more. They based their claim not on the rate for the job. But as a comparison to what the others got.

On the other hand, the point of this parable is that it's not fair! They had worked harder, they had born the heat of the day. God does not treat us according to what we deserve but according to His generosity.



**What argument does the land owner use to justify himself?**

**Did the last lot of workers deserve the full denarius?**

**Why did the land owner give them the same wages?**

The landowner paid them according to his generosity not according to what they deserved or the requirements placed upon him.

Those who had waited all day in the market wanted to work, but no one hired them.

**Were their needs any the less for the fact that they could not find work?**

They had the same size mouths to feed. The land owner paid them according to their needs not their work.

**How do these two facts apply to us?**



**The application**

Jesus spoke this parable for the benefit of the Pharisees. They were those who had 'worked hard all day'. They had kept the Law of Moses to the best of their ability.

As a result they thought they deserved eternal life. Then along comes Jesus and starts offering this same reward to sinners, not because they were good, or deserving or had kept the law, but by grace through faith. A salvation that depends not on how hard they had worked but upon the generosity of God and the fact that God called them and they responded.

Things got even worse in the early Church when this same reward is offered to heathen gentiles, who did not know God or the law, and who did not deserve anything. This is a salvation based not by works but by him who calls-Romans 9v12. The Pharisees were offended they thought they deserved better.

**How are we like the last group of workers in this parable?**

**What attitude should the first group of workers in this parable have taken?**

**Read Romans 9v30-33**

**How does this passage connect with the parable?**

**In what way is Jesus a stumbling stone?**

**Does this attitude find it's way into the Church?**

Jesus is still a stumbling stone for many. The cross tells us that we can do nothing to achieve our own salvation, it is all dependent on God. We have to admit our need and our inability to help ourselves. Calvary is a very humbling place.

**What two roles does Jesus fulfill?** 1 Peter 2v6-8

**This parable also applies to us today.**



**Read Luke 23v39-43**

**What did this man do to deserve eternal life?**

**What did the man do to receive eternal life?**

This man had sinned his whole life long. His execution was a fitting end to the way he had lived. With his last breath he asked for mercy and he received it in full.

**How does this express God's generosity? Is this fair?**

You probably said yes. But it is not fair! It is just, it is right and it is wonderful. Parables are stories that convey a meaning. They are not always perfect similes. The truth is that no matter how hard we work or how long we have been believers, neither the Pharisees or us can earn eternal life, it is always God's gift. We never deserve it. If salvation was based on God being fair, none of us would attain it.

**If a serial killer, who has done horrendous, inhumane things, repents just before he dies how will God treat him?**

Lots of people find this hard to accept, it is offensive to them. **Why do you think this is?**



**Read Romans 3v21-24**

**What does 'there is no difference', mean? (between who?)**

**In God's sight are we any better than the serial killer?**

**Does this mean you can safely wait till the end of your life to accept Christ?**

The Bible does indicate that there are degrees of reward for the service we render Christ. But, if you got to heaven and found someone who had been a total failure as a Christian, got the same reward as you, (having worked incredibly hard.) **How would you feel? How do you feel when God blesses someone who does not deserve it?**

# Bible Studies

## Your enemies



“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ Matthew 5v43  
In this passage Jesus mentions the need to love your neighbour. He goes on to comment that it is said love your neighbour and hate enemy.

**Is this a quote from the Old Testament?**

**Read Leviticus 19v18**

**Is the command to love your neighbour in the context of friends or enemies?**

Confronted with this verse from Leviticus, one man asked Jesus, “who is my neighbour”  
Jesus went on to tell the parable of the good Samaritan.

**In the end who did the mans neighbour turn out to be?**



**Read Matthew 5v43-48**

The Bible is very specific about how we treat people we do not like. It is a test of our maturity and the genuine nature of our faith.

**What did Jesus say it was easy to do?**

**Do you get any credit for this?**

**What Point is Jesus making by comparing us with tax collectors and Pagans?**

Perhaps the reason that Jesus approaches the issue in this way is to avoid the embarrassing position of his followers acting no better than sinners. He is pointing out that we have to live by a higher standard and that sometimes this standard requires us to do painful things, like loving our enemies.



**According to this passage what should we do to our enemies?**

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**Which of these do you think is the hardest?**

**What tends to happen if you pray for someone?**

If we follow Jesus instruction it will eventually lead us to reconciliation.

**What is the result for us before God when we do this?**

This passage says that by doing so we show ourselves to be sons and daughters of God. The reason for this is that we are acting Just as God does. God’s Standard here is very high. It is not natural to love your enemy, it requires God’s divine help.

**In what way does God show love for His enemies?**



**Read Romans 5v8-10 & Colossians 1v21-22**

**How did God treat us when we were His enemies?**

**Who is my enemy?**

We need to start get personal and practical.

**Who is my enemy? What makes them my enemy?**

Spend any time thinking about questions like this and you will realise there are all kinds of enemies. In Matt 5 Jesus described our enemies as those who persecute us. In Luke 6v27 He called them those who hate you, or ill-treat you.

The list of our enemies may include;

- Those who are against us because we are Christians.
- People who have somehow acted against us.
- People we are in competition with.
- People we do not like. Someone you hate.

These can be individuals or the can be ethnic groups or nations. Some times the reasons for hostility are very strong at other times they are very weak or even non existent.

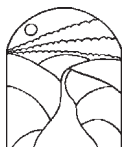
**How do you make a person your enemy?**

If you are mean or unpleasant you will make enemies.

**Is it inevitable that we are going to have enemies?**

The fact that Jesus tells us how to act towards them assumes that for one reason or

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another we will always have enemies. This is certainly true of those who are against us because of our faith. God, after all, has enemies. Heb 10v27

Our language lets us down. The word enemy given no indication as to where the antagonism rests. Paul came to our rescue

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Romans 12v18

We may be other people's enemies, but we are not to have enemies ourselves.

***Paul's verse implies we have a responsibility to our enemies, what is it? When might it not depend on us?***

You cannot stop people from being your enemy. But the fault should never rest with us. If we have done wrong we should put things right. We should be the ones who seek reconciliation. Paul acknowledges that this is not always possible, but where it is we should take the initiative.

**2 According to Romans 12v14-21 how should we treat our enemies?**

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***What are we not to do?***

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***What will happen to them as a result?  
What will God do as a result?***

Paul explains the danger to us if we do not do this. Face with evil, unless we do what is good, the evil swallows us to. We end up bitter and isolated from God. If we take retaliation we usurp a position that belongs to God.

**3 According to Luke 6v32-35 how should we treat our enemies?**

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***What will the result be?***

***Is it OK just to avoid someone who irritates you?***



***Read 1 Corinthians 6v7-8***

***What does this passage say about the way that we should treat people who have become our enemies?***

This is a useful passage because it helps to explain one of Jesus' difficult teachings. Paul applies this to believers, Jesus applies it to unbelievers.



***Read Matthew 5v38-41, Luke 6v29***

(Notice that main passage about loving your enemy follows on from this teaching)

***Does this mean that if someone attacks you, you should not protect yourself?  
Does this mean we should not stop someone from stealing from us?***

Some people have taught that this means you must never stand up for yourself, defend yourself or even resist against evil in society. An 'eye of an eye' is all about retaliation, (in OT context it was about Justice), Jesus is telling us that we must not retaliate. We are not the ones to use evil and be overcome by it. Even if it means sacrificing or being unjustly treated we must not respond with evil. Better have two bruised cheeks than become the aggressor or evil doer. Jesus is saying that we should not even harbour resentment. You must respond out of grace not retaliation. Jesus gave us a very clear precedent in the way He suffered injustice and sacrifice.

***What is the connection between forgiveness and loving our enemies?***



We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1 John 4:19-21

***Are you allowed to hate people?***

We are allowed to hate sin. We are allowed to hate what people do, but not to hate people.

We have listed the ways we should treat our enemies from three passages of Scripture.  
***What will happen to you and your enemy, if we obey what we have learned?  
What should our goal be towards our enemies?***



# Bible Studies

## A Question of Friendship



**Read John 15v12-15**

**What does Jesus call us?  
What is the difference?**

**What else could he have called us?**

**How did Jesus show us His Friendship?**

When Jesus calls us friends, it creates a level of intimacy with us, it suggests that He takes us into His confidence, it defines the kind of relationship Jesus wants with us. Jesus friendship for us was not only in words, it's ultimate expression was found in his death for us.

Jesus is a friend. The way he lived showed friendship. The Pharisees accused Jesus of being the friend of sinners, not the acquaintance of sinners. Three expressions of love  
v9a The father lovse me v9b IloveYou v12 Loveeachother

From this we can see an order of friendship that God has given us; friendship with God, friendship with each other and if we are to follow Jesus example, friendship with sinners. Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. 1John 4v7

**Why do we need friends?**



**God made us social creatures.**

**What happens if you are isolated from other people?**

It has been claimed that to maintain mental health you need contact with 8 people every day. We need other people around us. Consequently friendships add stability to life.



**Friendship takes away the pain of loneliness.**

This is only achieved when people take a genuine interest in other people.



**Friendship adds texture to life.**

It brings fulfilment, joy, fun, excitement and relaxation.



**We need friends for practical, emotional and spiritual reasons.**

On a physical level sometimes you needs someone's help. Emotionally you may need a shoulder to cry on or a person to encourage you. Spiritually you may need a mentor or someone who can speak into your life.



**Because we are made in God's image.**

Friendship is an attribute of God and He made us like him. Job 29v4, Isaiah 41v8

**If someone says "I don't need friends". how would you reply? Is it true?**



**What is a friend?**

Someone you trust and love.

Someone you feel comfortable with.

Someone you like to be with.

Someone you want to spend time with.

Someone you can talk to.

Someone you can be honest & intimate with.

Someone you can depend on.

Someone you can laugh and cry with.

Someone you support and stand up for.

**We associate love&intimacy with romantic relationships, are they found in friendships?**

One of the things that stands in the way of friendship is that everyone has a different view of what a friend should be. This view is based on a persons own needs. A friend is someone who meets my needs.

**Is this a realistic view of friendship? What will happen if you hold this view?**

There are different levels of friendship. They range from people you say hello to, acquaintances, to best friends who you open your heart to. Strong friendships grow, they do not develop over night. People move from Acquaintances to best friends. If the friendship builds too fast it can create pressure that the new friendship cannot sustain. One of the reasons for a lack of friendship is that people want a best friend, but they cannot be bothered to form acquaintances.

Seldomsetfootinyourneighbour'shouse—toomuchofyou,andhewillhateyou.Proverbs25v17

**How does this relate to friendship?**



**How do you make friends?**

*A man that bath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Proverbs 18v24 KJV*

**What does this mean? If you are not friendly what is going to happen?**

Are you friendly? If you want a friend, be a friend. You have to reach out, don't let fear of rejection or failure inhibit you, just be yourself.

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**What do you think stops people from making friends?**  
**Why is it easy for some people to make friends and not others?**  
**How do you become friendly person?**



**How do you make a tree?**  
 You need a tree seed, like an acorn.  
 Then you care for it, water it, give it sunshine, sing to it, etc.  
 And then the tree grows all by itself.

The seed is us saying hello to someone & making an acquaintance. We need to nurture that seed, which given time, will grow into a friendship.

In a forest, you are going to plant maybe four seedlings for every tree you want to reach maturity. The same is true in friendship. Not all acquaintances are going to be good friends.



**You build a repertoire of friends eg.**  
 30 acquaintances, 10 friends, 5 good friends, 2 best friends.  
 Strangely enough, the top end of this pyramid are going to select themselves.  
**Why do you think this is?**

When you are making friends it is the base of the pyramid that is all important. **Why?**

Church is a great place to make friends.  
 In making acquaintance friends, which is the first step, no one wants to make the first move.



Everyone in Church wants to be talked to - no one wants to talk.  
 Everyone wants a friend - no one wants to do anything about it.  
 We suffer from fear of rejection and suspicion, 'why is this person talking to me?'

It's a bit like asking a girl out on a first date - a very traumatic experience.  
 So if you want friends, do something about it, don't complain "I've got no friends" - be friendly.



**Why are we so scared to talk to other people?**  
**How do friendships within the Church benefit the Church?**  
**How do friendships outside the Church benefit the Church?**  
**Will everyone you want to make a friendship with become a good friend? Why?**  
**Can you force someone to be your friend?**  
**What kind of things help a friendship from?**

**When people say "I have no friends" is it true?**  
 Sometimes it is, most of the time it isn't. What they usually mean is, "I don't have the kind of friends I want." or "I don't have friends at the level I want."

**What is the solution to this problem?**



- Ask God for friends.
- Make a list of the people you get on with.
- Grow acquaintances into friends.
- Have realistic expectations of people.

Perfect friends do not fall from the sky they need to be grown. Friendship grows between people.

Start talking to people. Talk about them, not yourself. Start finding out who they are, what they like. Don't stalk them. Phone them and say hello. Spend time together. Ask them for lunch after Church. Yes we are all busy so sometimes you need to work at it. Let it grow. Keep in touch.

What damages friendship? Proverbs 16v28, Proverbs 22v24, Proverbs 17v9



**Can you have ten best friends?**  
**Should we only make friends for social standing?** Romans 12v16  
**What are the dangers of trying to be friends with just popular people?**  
**Should we only make friends for our own benefit or to fill our own needs?**

**What will happen if:**

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| all you do is talk about yourself?                              | all you do is boast about yourself?      |
| you are only friendly when you want something?                  | you continually take people for granted? |
| you are not trust worthy?                                       | you live in your friends back pocket?    |
| you are only a friend because of their material goods?          | you are not there in their time of need? |
| you get jealous over your friends success or other friendships? |  |

**What will happen if you criticise your friends family/house/lifestyle ?**  
**If you have an 'acid' personality are you likely to make friends?**  
**What is the worst thing a friend can do? What is the best thing a friend can do?**



**Foundations of friendship.**  
 Communication. Reciprocity. Forgiving. Caring. Realism.

# Bible Studies

## Your enemies



“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ Matthew 5v43  
In this passage Jesus mentions the need to love your neighbour. He goes on to comment that it is said love your neighbour and hate enemy.

**Is this a quote from the Old Testament?**

**Read Leviticus 19v18**

**Is the command to love your neighbour in the context of friends or enemies?**

Confronted with this verse from Leviticus, one man asked Jesus, “who is my neighbour”  
Jesus went on to tell the parable of the good Samaritan.

**In the end who did the mans neighbour turn out to be?**



**Read Matthew 5v43-48**

The Bible is very specific about how we treat people we do not like. It is a test of our maturity and the genuine nature of our faith.

**What did Jesus say it was easy to do?**

**Do you get any credit for this?**

**What Point is Jesus making by comparing us with tax collectors and Pagans?**

Perhaps the reason that Jesus approaches the issue in this way is to avoid the embarrassing position of his followers acting no better than sinners. He is pointing out that we have to live by a higher standard and that sometimes this standard requires us to do painful things, like loving our enemies.



**According to this passage what should we do to our enemies?**

Love

Pray

Greet

**Which of these do you think is the hardest?**

**What tends to happen if you pray for someone?**

If we follow Jesus instruction it will eventually lead us to reconciliation.

**What is the result for us before God when we do this?**

This passage says that by doing so we show ourselves to be sons and daughters of God. The reason for this is that we are acting Just as God does. God’s Standard here is very high. It is not natural to love your enemy, it requires God’s divine help.

**In what way does God show love for His enemies?**



**Read Romans 5v8-10 & Colossians 1v21-22**

**How did God treat us when we were His enemies?**

**Who is my enemy?**

We need to start get personal and practical.

**Who is my enemy? What makes them my enemy?**

Spend any time thinking about questions like this and you will realise there are all kinds of enemies. In Matt 5 Jesus described our enemies as those who persecute us. In Luke 6v27 He called them those who hate you, or ill-treat you.

The list of our enemies may include;

Those who are against us because we are Christians.

People who have somehow acted against us.

People we are in competition with.

People we do not like. Someone you hate.

These can be individuals or they can be ethnic groups or nations. Some times the reasons for hostility are very strong at other times they are very weak or even non-existent.

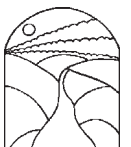
**How do you make a person your enemy?**

If you are mean or unpleasant you will make enemies.

**Is it inevitable that we are going to have enemies?**

The fact that Jesus tells us how to act towards them assumes that for one reason or

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another we will always have enemies. This is certainly true of those who are against us because of our faith. God, after all, has enemies. Heb 10v27

Our language lets us down. The word enemy given no indication as to where the antagonism rests. Paul came to our rescue

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Romans 12v18

We may be other people's enemies, but we are not to have enemies ourselves.

***Paul's verse implies we have a responsibility to our enemies, what is it? When might it not depend on us?***

You cannot stop people from being your enemy. But the fault should never rest with us. If we have done wrong we should put things right. We should be the ones who seek reconciliation. Paul acknowledges that this is not always possible, but where it is we should take the initiative.

**2 According to Romans 12v14-21 how should we treat our enemies?**

Bless, live in harmony, Give food & drink.

**What are we not to do?**

Curse, repay evil, take revenge.



**What will happen to them as a result?**

Convicted

**What will God do as a result?**

Justify / avenge.

Paul explains the danger to us if we do not do this. Face with evil, unless we do what is good, the evil swallows us to. We end up bitter and isolated from God. If we take retaliation we usurp a position that belongs to God.

**3 According to Luke 6v32-35 how should we treat our enemies?**

Do good Lend to

**What will the result be?** God will reward you.

**Is it OK just to avoid someone who irritates you?**



**Read 1 Corinthians 6v7-8**

**What does this passage say about the way that we should treat people who have become our enemies?**

This is a useful passage because it helps to explain one of Jesus' difficult teachings. Paul applies this to believers, Jesus applies it to unbelievers.



**Read Matthew 5v38-41, Luke 6v29**

(Notice that main passage about loving your enemy follows on from this teaching)

**Does this mean that if someone attacks you, you should not protect yourself?**

**Does this mean we should not stop someone from stealing from us?**

Some people have taught that this means you must never stand up for yourself, defend yourself or even resist against evil in society. An 'eye of an eye' is all about retaliation, (in OT context it was about Justice), Jesus is telling us that we must not retaliate. We are not the ones to use evil and be overcome by it. Even if it means sacrificing or being unjustly treated we must not respond with evil. Better have two bruised cheeks than become the aggressor or evil doer. Jesus is saying that we should not even harbour resentment. You must respond out of grace not retaliation. Jesus gave us a very clear precedent in the way He suffered injustice and sacrifice.

**What is the connection between forgiveness and loving our enemies?**



We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1 John 4:19-21

**Are you allowed to hate people?**

We are allowed to hate sin. We are allowed to hate what people do, but not to hate people.

We have listed the ways we should treat our enemies from three passages of Scripture.

**What will happen to you and your enemy, if we obey what we have learned?**

**What should our goal be towards our enemies?**



# Bible Studies

## Philemon



### **Read Philemon v1-25**

**How does Paul describe himself in this letter?** v1 v13 v23, v9, v17

It is very likely that Paul wrote this personal letter during his first imprisonment at Rome. At this time he was under house arrest and was free to entertain visitors. It was at this time Paul also wrote Colossians and probably Ephesians. (Paul mentions the same people, Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Archippus, Demas, Timothy & Luke Phil 1,10,22-24 Co 4:7-17.)

**Who delivered the Colossian Epistle?** Colossians 4v7-9

The Onesimus who accompanied Tychicus, is the same one who is the subject of Philemon.



### **Onesimus**

**What had he done?**

**Who was Onesimus?** v16

**What happened to him in Rome?**

Onesimus was Philemon's slave. It appears that he had run away and gone as far as Rome. Some people think that v18-19 means Onesimus had stolen from Philemon or had in some way caused him harm. In Rome, against all the odds Onesimus finds both Paul and Christ. He becomes a Christian.

**How does Paul describe him?** v10, v16b

Onesimus means 'useful', it is from this that the significance of v11 takes shape. Onesimus was the sort of name that would be given to a slave.

**How good a slave had he been?**



### **Philemon**

**What kind of man was Philemon?** v4-7

**Who was Philemon?**

**What was his relationship to Paul?**

v1b, v7 (&20,) v17, v19b.

If the Church met in Philemon's house, it is safe to say that if he wasn't in leadership, he was a significant figure within the Church. Paul calls him his fellow worker, brother, friend and partner. He was in all likelihood someone Paul had personally seen saved. This is probably what he means when he says Philemon owes him his very life. We have no record that Paul ever visited Colossae and no way of knowing where he met Philemon. Philemon must have been quite well off. He had at least one slave and a house big enough to function as a meeting house for the Church. Philemon was almost certainly part of the Church in Colossae, hence the greeting from Epaphras, who was part of the Colossian church. Col 4v12.

Because Paul wrote Philemon and Colossians at the same time and because he probably had this incident with Onesimus, in mind it is interesting to compare the two books. Colossians deals with slave master relationships and inter-Christian relationship. The teaching given in Colossians forms the bases on which Paul calls on Philemon to do what is right.

**What was Paul's relationship with Onesimus?** V12-13



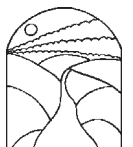
### **Slavery**

The Roman world used slaves extensively. It has been estimated that a third of the population of Italy were slaves at this time. The treatment of slaves was diverse. Some were treated well and had a high degree of freedom. For most, slavery was cruel and oppressive in keeping with the way it has been practised in more recent times. This was especially true for agricultural slaves, working the huge plantations of Italy. The Romans lived in fear of slave revolts and treated run away slaves severely. In Roman law, a slave could appeal to someone, to interceded with their master. It is probably on this basis that Paul writes to Philemon.

**What do you think the chances were of Onesimus ending up with Paul in Rome?**

**Do you think it strange that someone in the Church should have a slave?**

Paul does not directly teach against slavery, although it is clear he is against it. Slavery was a fact of life at the time. He does call for slaves to be treated well. The Bible is against the abuses that became inseparable from slavery. The OT allows a kind of limited slavery, where the slave might even choose to become a bondsman rather than be set free. This parallels our current contractual work environment, better than it does our modern idea of slavery. It is wrong for one person to own another. But there is nothing wrong with one person benefiting from the labour of another, who has no choice but to give it. Our economy is based on this principle, very few people go to work because they want to, most do so because of economic necessity. It was no different for slaves in Paul's day. If we reject this idea, we would all need to become self employed and then working only for ourselves. It is when slavery is forced immorally then it becomes wrong. This is why Paul treats slave traders as evil. 1 Timothy 1v10



**What is Paul's teaching to slave owners?** Colossians 4v1, Ephesians 6v8-9

This was against the contemporary trend, where masters gave their slaves only enough to keep them alive. Christian slave owners must be fair and just. A slave is not an object, he is a person with rights. He must be treated accordingly. What Paul calls for is more like the situation we find in business today. This kind of slavery was practised at the top end of Roman slavery. Many of our modern professions today such as teachers and doctors were exclusively the domain of slaves in the Roman world.



### **Living up to your past**

**Do you think Onesimus ran away because he was badly treated?**

It is unlikely considering Philemon character. It is as likely that he ran away because his master was a Christian and he thought he would get away with it.



**How do you think Philemon felt towards his run away slave?**

**How do you think Onesimus felt about returning?**

**Why did Onesimus go back? What might happen when he returned?**

**What else could he have done? What might happen if he didn't return?**

**Did becoming a Christian mean Onesimus was no longer a slave or had to be set?**

**Does become a Christian absolve us of responsibilities for past crimes?**

**How often do we need to go back and deal with a situation from the past?**

**What happens if you don't? What should our attitude to our past be?**

Our past has been forgiven - totally we do not need to feel guilty, or make atonement for it. We do need to do what is right now.

**What is the Christian response to a past life as a thief?** Ephesians 4v28

**How does the New Testament tell slaves to behave?**

Colossians 3v22-23, Ephesians 6v5-8,1 Timothy 6v1, Titus 2v9, 1 Peter 2v18

**How does this apply to us today? Are slaves inferior?** Colossians 3v11



**Read 1 Corinthians 7v21-23**



### **New Relationships**

**What does it mean to be active in sharing your faith?** v6

**What did this mean for Philemon in his actions towards Onesimus?**

**How do you get a full understanding of the good things we have in Christ?**

**What implications does this have for us?**

Sharing your faith means witnessing. Our faith is not an individual thing, it is a blessing to be shared. But this also means to live out our faith. Paul is saying that Philemon needs to act towards Onesimus out of his faith in Christ. This means forgiving, loving and being just. Our faith has to affect our relationships with other people. Faith in Christ has to change the way we do relationships. We live by new standards and new ways of behaviour. Christ changes everything.

The fullness of the Christian faith is found in doing it, not in understanding it. Jesus made this point in the parable of the wise and foolish builder, hearing Jesus words is no good unless you live by them.

**How did being a Christian change Onesimus' position? How did it not change?**

**Should Philemon treat him better because he is a now Christian?**

The interesting thing about this book is that it presents a test for Philemon and Onesimus.

**On what points were they being tested?**

There were several tests, but both of them were called to live up to their faith and prove it genuine.

**What does Paul want Philemon to do? Failing this what should he do?**

Paul wanted Onesimus back to him in Rome, failing that he be treated as a brother in Christ.

**What was the worst Philemon could have done? What was the best?**

**What parallel is there between Paul and Christ, Onesimus and us?** v18-19



### **Using Authority.**

**On what authority could Paul have to give Philemon orders?**

**Do you need an excuse to do what is right?**

**What does Paul do instead? What love?**

The love Christ has for us, or the love between Paul and Philemon. It is very easy if you are in a position of authority to boss people around, but this is not the Bible's way. Mark 9v34-36.

**Do you think Paul is overbearing or manipulative in this letter?**

You could make this charge against Paul, he certainly makes it hard for Philemon to say no. In Paul's defence, he was writing to a close friend not a stranger. If you like, he is calling in a favour.



We do not know what happened to Onesimus. About 50 years later, Ignatius, referred to the bishop of the near by church at Ephesus, as one Onesimus maybe it was the same man.

# Bible Studies

## Heirs & Co-Heirs

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Romans 8v17  
 Everyone seems to agree that this is a deep, beautiful and meaningful verse. But what does it mean? In this study we are going to try to find out.



**What is an heir?**  
**What is an inheritance?**

The idea of being heirs is closely linked to that of receiving an inheritance. A Heir is someone who stands to receive an inheritance. This idea runs through the Old Testament extensively. Almost all of these references refer to one thing.

The Children of Israel were to receive an inheritance.

**What was it?** Psalm 136v21  Psa 25v13

God also has an inheritance.

**What is it?** Joel 3v2

These two themes reoccur frequently. As if to emphasize the importance of inheritance and that we too are to receive an inheritance. The OT goes beyond this, Abraham desperately wants an heir. The inheritance he wants to pass on is not just his wealth but also the promises God has made to him.

**What are we heirs of?** Acts 3v25

**What does this mean?**

This means that we are included in these things and that we have or are receiving them. To be an heir means to be included.

**According to the New Testament what is our inheritance?**

Matthew 19v29	<input type="text"/>	Titus 3v7
James 2v5	<input type="text"/>	Col 1v12
Hebrews 1v14	<input type="text"/>	
Hebrews 6v12	<input type="text"/>	Gallatians 3v29
Hebrew 11v7	<input type="text"/>	
1 Peter 3v9	<input type="text"/>	
Romans 4v17	<input type="text"/>	

**What do each of these mean?**

**How is this inheritance described?**

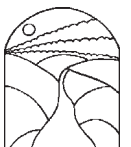
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1 Peter 1v4	<input type="text"/>
Ephesians 1v18	<input type="text"/>



**Read Hebrew 1v2**, cf Matthew 21v38  
**Who is the heir?**  
**What do you think this means?**

Christ's closeness to God, His ownership of all things, His role in revealing God to us  
 When the Bible talks about Christ, or us as heirs of God, it is using human language to convey a meaning. The analogy is good but it is not perfect.

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**Can you think of a problem with this analogy?**

God is never going to die. Nor are we in any way going to take over from God. Nor does it in any way suggest that Christ is anything less than God.



**An inheritance mean;**

We have a Future. An expectation of something beyond this life.

We have a Present. We are a part of something greater than ourselves.

We have a Past. We are part of a heritage.

Being an heir has past, present and future implications.

**What parts of our inheritance are past present and future?**



**What do what do we inherit?**

**When do we inherit?**

**What should our attitude be towards our inheritance?**

However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"—1 Corinthians 2v9



**Read Ephesians 1v13-14**

According to this passage, we have already received a deposit, a part of our inheritance now in the Holy Spirit. **What do you think this means?**



**Read Romans 8v14-17**

**How did we become heirs?**

**What things does this passage emphasis about being an heir?**

This passage is about being adopted into God's family. We are sons (& daughters), children and heirs, God is our *abba*. He has adopted us. Being an heir means being a part of God's family. It means receiving the blessing of the family.

**What does God want us to understand when He calls us sons and daughters?**

There is a common assumption, (which the Bible does not support,) that we are by nature sons and daughters of God.



**In what sense is this true?**

**Why is it significant that we are adopted sons not born sons?**

**How are we adopted?**

We are adopted through being born again into God's family.

What you inherit, you do not work for. Eternal life is God's gift, not something we earn or have as a right.



**Read Galatians 3v26 4v1-7**

**According to this passage on what basis are we heirs?**

Paul is comparing life under the law, the Old Covenant, with life under grace, the New Covenant. He says that the law was like a guardian or a school teacher, preparing us for the time when we would find our freedom in the grace of Christ Jesus. Under the law we were children, no different from slaves, but under the New Covenant we have become sons.

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, Romans 8v17

**What condition is give in this verse? Romans 8v17**

**Does this mean we are equal with Christ?**

**What does it mean?**

Our position as heirs is reliant upon Christ's actions as the heir. It is because of what he has done that we have become heirs and our status as heirs depends exclusively on our relationship with him. We have been included with Christ.

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 2 Peter 1v4



Being an heir emphasises our position before God.

Being an heir emphasises our relationship with God

Being an heir emphasises our future Glory.