

Lesson 22 - Forgiveness and Neighbors (Jan Walsh)

FORGIVENESS

1. Why did Peter suggest that he might forgive someone seven times?

Jewish rabbis taught that you were obligated to forgive a person three times for a given offense, but not the fourth time. So Peter probably thought he was being generous by suggesting that he might forgive someone seven times. But Jesus responded with an answer (70x7) that made it clear that forgiveness should be unlimited.

2. What can we deduct about the ‘servant’ in this parable and the debt he owed?

‘Servant’ here may refer to a vassal who served under a King, to collect taxes from a certain geographical area. He possibly collected a great amount, but had not paid the king the share that was due him. Ten thousand talents was equal to the lifetime earnings of the population of several good sized villages (Haley’s Bible Handbook).

3. Why did the king suggest taking the man, his wife, and his children and selling them to get money to pay the debt?

Hebrew law allowed for a debtor to be sold into servitude along with his wife and children until such a time as they earned sufficient money to pay the debt. (Lev. 25:39-46; II Kings 4:1).

4. How could the forgiven man treat another person so harshly?

According to Roman law, a creditor was allowed to drag his debtor by the throat before the judgment seat. (Lange’s Commentary).

NEIGHBORS

5. What do we know about the road from Jerusalem to Jericho?

Jericho was about 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem, and the road between the two passed through a rough, rocky mountainous area called the ‘wilderness of Jericho.’ It was known to be one of the most robber-infested roads in the whole country, not only in the time of Jesus but for many centuries afterward.

6. Why would a priest and a Levite travel along that road?

At that time in history, though some of priests and Levites lived in Jericho and traveled to Jerusalem when it was their turn to perform official duties. The job of the priests was to offer sacrifices at the temple and to burn incense and give morning and evening prayers. The Levites were the assistants to the priests. They were to keep the temple clean and to prepare supplies for the sanctuary services.

7. Why would they be expected to stop and help?

The text implies that the Priest, while passing by, saw the injured man, but stayed on the other side of the road. The Levite, came over and looked at the man, but then turned and walked away. Israel was always known for hospitality to strangers. The Rabbis taught that no man was to account a house as only his own. Of all people, the spiritual leaders especially were obligated to show compassion on someone in need.

8. Why was it so surprising that the Samaritan stopped and helped?

Generally speaking, Jews and Samaritans despised each other. The culture gave the Samaritan plenty of reasons to hate this Jewish man and pass by without helping: yet he stopped.

9. Why did he pour wine and oil on the man’s wounds?

These were often used in medicine. The wine served as a disinfectant and olive oil helped

to heal wounds. (Sometimes they were mixed together.)

Points to Ponder

- The fact that the Samaritan put the injured man on his own beast, meant that he himself now had to walk alongside. Thus he sacrificed his personal comfort as well as giving his possessions and money to help the man.
- It is interesting that Jesus never did answer the lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus made the lawyer be his own judge.
- The real question is NOT "Who is my neighbor?" Rather, ask the question: "To whom am I a neighbor?" When you become a true neighbor, you will find someone who needs your help. You will be willing to sacrifice your time and use your resources to minister to them.