

VIOLENCE AND APATHY

Introduction

Violence and apathy are not new. In the time of Jesus in the first century, there was a road that was so notorious for assault and murder that Jesus used it in the parable about the Good Samaritan. (Samaritans were people the Jews despised as half-breeds both physically and spiritually.) Roving gangs would ambush pedestrians on their way to or from Jericho. Often one of the gang would lay down on the side of the road as though they were injured. Then, when a pedestrian stopped to help, the rest of the gang would jump out of the shadows and assault the would-be helper.

Jewish priests and Levites (assistants to the priests) would have been concerned about getting too close to a dead mugging victim. According to the Law of Moses, touching a corpse would have made them "unclean" and unable to perform their religious duties. As you listen to this parable, try to imagine what you would do in this situation. Then, move into groups of 4 and discuss the questionnaire. (In addition—for a case study on violence, designed especially for youth, see page 133.)

1. How would the media respond if something like the story in this parable happened today?
 - ☐ The violence would make big news.
 - ☐ The apathy would make big news.
 - ☐ It would be ignored because stuff like this is so common.
2. Have you ever helped a stranger or been helped by a stranger? What happened?

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

²⁷He 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.' "

²⁸"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰In 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. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He 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. ³⁵The 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.'

³⁶"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Luke 10:25-37

3. If you were on your way to an important appointment and saw someone who looked beat up (but you didn't know if they were faking it or not), what would you do?
 - ☐ find someone to check it out
 - ☐ pass on by
 - ☐ stop and try to help
 - ☐ call 911

4. After reading this parable, who would you say is your "neighbor"?
- ☐ any person in need
 - ☐ those I have a reasonable hope of being able to help
 - ☐ those I'm most afraid of helping
 - ☐ everyone—even my enemies

5. If Jesus wanted to bring home to your community the same lesson as he did in this story, what place would he use?
- ☐ one of our dangerous inner city streets
 - ☐ a convenience store
 - ☐ a public park
 - ☐ the street in front of the high school
 - ☐ the parking lot at the mall
 - ☐ We don't have any place like that in our town.
 - ☐ Any street will do; they are all unsafe.

6. What is the scariest form of violence in your city?
- ☐ drive-by shootings
 - ☐ drug or turf wars
 - ☐ sex clubs / gang rape
 - ☐ date rape
 - ☐ child abuse
 - ☐ other: _____
 - ☐ vandalism / burning of church property

7. What are you doing about the situation?
- ☐ I just try to stay out of the way.
 - ☐ I support the police department.
 - ☐ I pray God will keep my family safe.
 - ☐ I don't go through certain neighborhoods at night.
 - ☐ I try to stand up and be counted.

8. If the Good Samaritan came to your city, what would he do about these problems?
- ☐ He would pass by on the other side.
 - ☐ He would get involved in criminal rehabilitation programs.
 - ☐ He would get our church to do something for broken families.
 - ☐ He would get our schools to offer help for young kids before they turn to violence.
 - ☐ He would hire a crisis counselor.
 - ☐ other: _____

9. On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), rate yourself on the first part of verse 27: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind."

10. Using the same scale, rate yourself on the second part of verse 27: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

11. How can this group help you in prayer this week?

