What should someone do if they see a person injured and in need of help on the side of the road? Should they stop and help them? Should they keep on going, assuming that someone
else will help them eventually? Should they stop and beat them up some more, assuming that their injuries were a punishment from God and that they should further inflict God’s punishment on this person for their own good, so that hopefully they will learn from whatever mistakes they made that led them to this point and so not make them again in the future? It seems safe to say that the first option, namely stopping to help the injured individual, is by far the most moral choice, especially if that person is one of the same nationality and religion as the one passing by. But what if the injured person is an extreme enemy of the one who is passing by? Should the bystander help the person then? Again, the moral answer seems to be yes. This is the situation that takes place in the parable of the Good Samaritan found in Luke chapter 10. As will be seen throughout this paper, the purpose of the parable of the Good Samaritan was simply to teach the questioning Jews who their neighbor really was, and also to challenge the Jews’ thinking about their responsibilities toward helping others. This paper will follow a method of interpretation similar to that of Henry Virkler and Karelynne Ayayo’s as found in their book *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. First, in this paper, there will be a discussion regarding the historical-cultural context of Luke 10:25-37, followed by a brief lexical-syntactical analysis of the passage. After that there will be a quick literary analysis with an emphasis on the fact that this passage contains a parable, followed by a theological analysis of the passage and a comparison of the theological conclusions drawn in this paper with those of other theologians on this same passage. Then there will be a brief application of the exegetical conclusions drawn in this paper, followed by a discussion of how each hermeneutical step contributed to the interpretation and application found in this paper, followed then by a brief discussion of how other methods of interpretation may lead to false interpretations and false

---

applications of this passage, and then there will be a few concluding remarks. The analysis and conclusions found in this paper will be defended as they surface, and so there will not be a separate section for such a defense in this paper.


The first thing that needs to be briefly discussed in this section is the authorship and dating of the gospel of Luke. However, since many other things need to be addressed in this paper as well, these will be very perfunctory comments regarding authorship and dating, but they are necessary comments nonetheless if a decent understanding of the context is to be gained and grasped.

“The Gospel of Luke is anonymous. Like the other three Gospels, it makes no claim to authorship. However, from the late second century until the 19th, no one seems to have questioned that Luke the physician wrote Luke and Acts.”² It is obvious upon examination that the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were written as a pair by the same author, and the “we” sections in Acts, such as Acts 16:10-17, 20:5-21:18, and 27:1-28:16, indicate that whoever wrote these books was with Paul on some of his various journeys. Luke was a physician, friend, and missionary companion of the Apostle Paul, and so along with the “unanimous testimony of early church writers,” it seems fitting to attribute the authorship of Luke and Acts to Luke, Paul’s companion.³

As for the dating of the gospel of Luke, several different theories exist. A.R.C. Leaney argues that the gospel of Luke shows signs of knowledge of events that happened as late as A.D. 66-70 in 19:39-44, “specifically of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple” in A.D. 70. He

³ Mark Straus, Zondervan illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 321.
thinks this is odd since Acts makes no mention of events that happened at such a late date and it was most likely written after the gospel of Luke. This would seem to indicate that Luke was written after A.D. 70. However, if one considers Luke 19:44, the verse that seems to refer to the destruction of the temple, even if it does allude to this event there are other reasons that will be seen below that make it more likely that Luke was written earlier than Leaney suggests. After all, there are many prophecies and allusions to future events in the Bible, so why cannot this be another one? Howard Marshall more or less agrees with Leaney’s date when he says, “On the whole a date not far off AD 70 appears to satisfy all requirements” for dating the gospel of Luke. Nevertheless, others have pointed out that Acts ends with Paul still in prison in Rome, which would have been around A.D. 60, and since Acts was clearly written after the gospel of Luke, Luke would have had to have been composed in at least the late 50s or early 60s. There are of course others, such as Phil Fernandes, who argue for an even earlier date for the gospels, but for the purposes of this paper suffice it to say that the gospel of Luke was probably written in the mid-first-century A.D.

Some other general facts about the gospel of Luke are: (1) it “is the longest gospel and the only gospel with a sequel (Acts);” (2) it highlights God’s plan and explains how Jews and Gentiles could end up as equals; and (3) it “highlights the activity of a mighty and faithful God through Jesus.” Luke’s gospel also “appeared in the earliest lectionaries in Jerusalem and

---

7 Phil Fernandes, *Redating the Gospels* (unpublished paper that was presented at the International Society of Christian Apologetics annual conference, 2012).
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid, 3.
Syria,” thereby indicating the noted importance of its teachings from early on in the history of the church.\textsuperscript{11}

Now that the basics are out of the way, it is time to take a closer look at the specific passage of the parable of the Good Samaritan found in Luke 10:25-37. The passage comes just after the returning of the seventy and the Son revealing the Father, and right before the story about Mary and Martha, and it does not seem to have any necessary connection to these stories, as will be shown in the next section of this paper when the lexical-syntactical structure of the passage is discussed. The lawyer in verse 25 asked the question that he asked to see if Jesus agreed with the other rabbis of that time, thereby giving Him a test. The question that he asked was a common question in those days.\textsuperscript{12} Jesus responded to the lawyer by stating two laws that many Jews believed to be the two most important commandments, namely to love God with all one’s heart and to love one’s neighbor as himself.\textsuperscript{13} Then the lawyer pressed Jesus to qualify the term “neighbor,” at which point Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which He showed that His view of who one’s neighbor is was far different from the typical definition of “neighbor” that was used by most Jews of that time.\textsuperscript{14} There was a Jewish scholar, about two-hundred years before Christ, who wrote that the Jews were to give to the Godly and do good to the humble people, but also that they were not to help a sinner and or even give the ungodly food if they needed it.\textsuperscript{15} So it can be seen here that Jesus’ response to the lawyer regarding who his neighbor was (v. 30-37), namely anyone who treats him well, even if it is a Samaritan or some other “sinner,” was diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Jews of Jesus’ day.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 341.
It also needs to be noted here that the Jews despised the Samaritans. The Samaritans, ethnically, were the result of Israelites intermarrying with the foreign peoples of the Promised Land, something that God had specifically commanded the Israelites not to do in Deuteronomy 7:3, and so they were considered abominations to the Jews. This is what makes the story of the Good Samaritan so striking, because Jews normally went out of their way to avoid Samaritans, and Samaritans were clearly uncomfortable around Jews (John 4:9). The Samaritans had also developed a “quasi-Jewish religion,” and they argued that Mt. Gerizim, not Jerusalem, was the proper place to worship God.\textsuperscript{16} For these reasons the Jews of the first century particularly loathed the Samaritans. This is the historical and cultural context in which the parable of the Good Samaritan is set in the gospel of Luke. Now it is time to take a closer look at the lexical-syntactical aspects of this passage.

\textbf{A Lexical-Syntactical Analysis of Luke 10:25-37}

According to Klyne Snodgrass, “The story’s [the Good Samaritan parable] omission from the other Gospels …and the disjunction between the lawyer’s question…and Jesus’ counter-question…lead many to separate the parable…from its context.”\textsuperscript{17} However, the omission of this parable from the other gospels only becomes a problem if one assumes that all of the gospel writers had the same purpose and that they all attempted to tell the same stories, which is clearly not the case, as can be seen even by a cursory view of the gospels. As far as the “disjunction” mentioned by Snodgrass, there does not seem to be one, and so there is no need to address that issue here.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
Also, according to The Interpreter’s Bible, the lawyer’s question in verse 25 “appears to be an independent version of the account in Mark of a scribe’s question about the greatest commandment (Mark 12:28-34; cf. Matt. 22:37-40).” The Interpreter’s Bible also insinuates that perhaps either Luke, “or his source,” deleted a question that would only have interested the Jews and inserted one in its place that would have been more meaningful to the Gentiles. This of course, along with the previous statement above, not only assumes that this question here in Luke (v. 25) is a parallel to the one in the Mark and Matthew passages mentioned above, but it also assumes a level of editorial freedom for the author of the gospel of Luke that seems far too unorthodox to be worthy of agreeing with, and so it seems best to simply state that this question in verse 25 is the question that the Lawyer actually asked and the question that Jesus actually responded to.

Still, few scholars claim an original unity between verses 25-28 and verses 29-37. One of the reasons for this is that in verses 28-29 the use of the term “neighbor” is passive (a neighbor is helped), whereas in the parable and the discourse afterword the term “neighbor” is used in an active sense (a neighbor helps). Therefore, John Nolland asserts that it seems best to argue that Luke heavily edited this passage and that it is an adaptation of the Markan and Matthean passages regarding the man who asked Jesus what the greatest commandment was. However, it has already been shown above that it seems best to look at this passage in Luke naturally and claim that it is simply original to Luke’s gospel and that the questions and responses found in Luke 10:25-37 were all actually asked and spoken in the same context. The

---

19 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
only time this becomes a problem is when people start assuming that Luke got his information from another source, such as Mark, as many people argue, but as Phil Fernandes points out, “The different dependence theories of the origin of the Synoptic Gospels were formulated by scholars who did not believe the Bible was inspired by God and inerrant.” If one upholds the orthodox teaching of inspiration then the differences and similarities within the gospels are no longer a “problem.” Hence, it is safe to say that this passage fits together syntactically just fine, and that there is no reason to assume that this account has been edited by Luke or anyone else. Besides, as will be shown below, the lawyer’s understanding of the term “neighbor” was corrected by Jesus in the parable that followed his question, which accounts for the difference in the active and passive use of the terms.

As far as how this passage fits into the surrounding context, syntactically it seems to rest on its own, although this does not seem to necessarily be the case. Verse 25 begins with the Greek words Καὶ ἵδον which the HCSB mistranslates as “Just then,” making it seem as though these events directly follow the events of the previous passages. However, the ESV and the NKJV more correctly translate this phrase with the words “And behold,” and the NIV also does justice to this phrase with the words “On one occasion.” These more accurate renderings seem to indicate that this passage, as was stated above, rests apart from the previous passages, since the words that begin this section do not contain any denotations that mandate the assumption that the previous passages are connected to this one. The same can be said regarding the next passage involving Mary and Martha and this passage, as the Mary and Martha passage begins with a phrase that does not necessitate that this passage directly preceded it (chronologically), namely

---

23 Fernandes, Redating the Gospels, 5.
Ἐν δὲ τῷ πορεύεσθαι, which is translated in the ESV as “Now as they went on their way,” and by the HCSB as “While they were traveling.”

Now, in verse 25 the term νομικός is used. This term means a “jurist, lawyer. One conversant w. the law, its interpretation and application.” So this individual already most likely had a firm idea in his mind about the answer to his question before he asked it to Jesus, meaning, as was seen above, that this lawyer was testing Jesus. The lawyer asked Jesus in verse 25, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life (HCSB)” Jesus responded by asking him two questions in verse 26: “What is written in the law (HCSB)” and “How do you read it (HCSB)” The first of these questions is an acknowledgement by Jesus that this lawyer already knows what the law says, and so probably also it is an acknowledgement that this lawyer should already know the answer to his own question, thereby showing that Jesus realized that He was being tested by him. The second question is a prying question, in which Jesus hoped to get the lawyer to state what he already knew regarding his own question, thereby getting him to inadvertently and indirectly admit that he was testing Jesus. Jesus here may have also been indirectly insinuating that He knew that the lawyer’s interpretation of the law was inadequate, which He proceeded to show through the parable of the Good Samaritan. After the lawyer answered Jesus’ question with the response that one is to love God and love his neighbor also, Jesus told him that he was correct, and that he should do so and as a result he would live. The phrase that Jesus used, and the answer that He gave the lawyer in verse 28, namely τοῦτο ποίει καὶ ζήσῃ, “Do this and you will live (HCSB)” was a problem for the lawyer though, for the first part of this phrase is a present imperative (keep on doing this forever) and the second part of the phrase is a future indicative middle and is the natural result of the first part of the phrase, thereby indicating that

one’s continuing to live was conditioned on continually loving God and his neighbor adequately.\(^{25}\) This was a problem for the lawyer because no one can *always* do what the law commands them to do in terms of how they are to act and be disposed toward and treat man and God, and so this phrase used by Jesus would have made it clear to the lawyer that in his current situation he was destined to die.\(^{26}\) This no doubt would have peeved the lawyer a bit, which may be why the next verse (29) states that the he asked another question hoping to justify himself. The lawyer then asked Jesus (v. 29), “And who is my neighbor (HCSB)?” This question then led into the section in which Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The Greek word used for neighbor in this passage, πλησίον, is used 17 times in the NT, and it almost always has the meaning of someone who is near.\(^{27}\) Jesus used the parable of the Good Samaritan to explain to the lawyer and the others that were around who one’s neighbor truly is. He told the story of a man walking from Jerusalem to Jericho who got mugged and beat up by robbers (v. 30). A priest walked by and passes on the other side of the road so as to avoid helping or coming in contact with the man (v. 31). Then a Levite did the same thing that the priest did. Now it must be noted here that since the man in this story who got mugged was coming from Jerusalem, it is possible that he was a Jew, since many Jews lived in Jerusalem. This seems to be what most commentators and preachers assume when they talk about this passage. However, the man could have just as well been a non-Jew. The text does not state that he was a Jew either. The priest also could have been a non-Jew, possibly a pagan priest. Jesus

---


\(^{26}\) This would seem to be a foreshadowing of the theology that would be revealed later on that one may only receive eternal life through Christ, or Jesus may have just been pointing out that the lawyer did not have an adequate understanding of what was necessary to possess eternal life, which at that time was still to have faith in the promises of God, since Christ had not died and risen yet.

does not specify what nationality or religion these two men were, and so it is but folly and bad hermeneutics to make presumptions about such things. The Levite, on the other hand, was obviously a Jew, for all Levites are Jews, and so this man should have known and understood the need for him to help this injured person on the side of the road, but he did not. He just kept on going and did not stop to help. Jesus, being the Son of God and also “well versed” in the Scriptures and the cultural standards of the times, would have no doubt been aware of the fact that the Jews generally asserted the golden rule in the negative, rather than in the positive. For example, “the famed first century rabbi Hillel was reported to have taught, “Whatsoever you would that men should not do to you, do not that to them.”28 So, although one could still say that this maxim obligates someone to “not not help” an injured stranger on the side of the road, most likely this would have been interpreted by first century Jews in a more general sense, as in “do not actively harm others if you would not have others actively harm you.” This would negate their responsibility to actively help the stranger on the side of the road who has been mugged, since they would only be merely passively harming him by not stopping to help. This is the deep seated hypocrisy and indolence that Jesus was always criticizing the Pharisees for, and it is likely that the lawyer whom Jesus was addressing here in this passage was a Pharisee, so this might very well have been a personal verbal jab by Jesus at the typical mindset of the Jews regarding helping others in the first-century.

In the next verse (v. 33) Jesus stated that a Samaritan was on a journey, and that when the Samaritan saw the injured man he “had compassion (HCSB).” The Samaritan then went over to the injured man and poured olive oil and wine on his injuries and bandaged them (v. 34). Then the Samaritan took the man to an inn and took care of him, and the next day the Samaritan went

to the inn keeper and told him to take care of the man, gave him some money for the room, and said that he would pay for whatever other expenses were incurred while he was gone upon his return (v. 35). This section of the parable is pretty straight forward, and so there is not much need for explanation other than to say that the Jews would have been surprised by this part of the parable most likely, since they generally considered Samaritans as “scum – untouchables,” and so they probably would have had trouble with the idea that a Samaritan could show the kind of compassion expressed in this story.

The next part of the passage, namely the final two verses (v. 36-37) include Jesus’ question to the lawyer, the lawyer’s response to Jesus’ question, and Jesus’ final statement on the matter. In verse 36 Jesus asked the lawyer whether the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan qualified as the injured man’s neighbor in His parable. The lawyer responded with the answer that the one who showed mercy to the injured man was his neighbor (v. 37). It is possible that the lawyer chose the Semitic phrase that he used, namely “to show mercy to,” as in “the one who showed mercy to him,” to avoid actually saying the word “Samaritan,” for Jews hated the Samaritans so much that they even tried to avoid using the term. Jesus then responded by telling the lawyer to “Go and do the same.” This statement by Jesus seems to go beyond the question of the lawyer, “who is my neighbor?” and into the realm of further teaching, for in essence Jesus has already let the lawyer answer his own question again in the first part of verse 37, and now he has moved on to make the application of the parable, namely that one is to treat others in the same loving manner as the Samaritan treated the injured man. More about this application will be discussed below.

---

29 Pat Alexander and David Alexander, Zondervan Handbook to the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 610.
Literary Analysis

This section will be brief; as this is a fairly short and simple parable with a clear meaning, and based on the context of the passage Jesus’ intention for telling it is also quite clear, leaving little room for exaggerating the various points of the parable or attempting to allegorize the passage. A parable is “a comparison of two objects for the purpose of teaching.” An allegory on the other hand is “a literary genre that attempts to explain spiritual truths in pictorial forms.” So, it can be seen here by these definitions that the parable of the Good Samaritan is indeed a parable and not an allegory, for the truths being taught in this passage, namely who one’s neighbor is and how one is to treat others, are both general truths and not necessarily spiritual truths.

The fact that Jesus does not explain this parable to his audience even though he is addressing an opponent shows that He assumed that the lawyer would be able to comprehend its meaning aside from any such explanation. This shows that this parable is straightforward and that there are no hidden meanings in it. Also, as Virkler and Ayayo point out, in parables “the story and its meaning are consciously separated.” This is clearly the case in this passage, as the meaning of the parable is not in any way intermingled with the parable itself. The parable has a moral to the story, but the moral itself is not explicitly, or really even implicitly expressed in the story. It is only when one connects the story with the surrounding context of verses 25-29 and 36-37 that he can begin to understand the purpose and meaning of the parable.

31 Kevin Green, Zondervan All-In-One Bible Reference Guide (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 456.
32 Ibid, 42.
33 Generally when Christ taught parables He explained them to the disciples later on and pointed out that He did not intend for everyone to understand them (Matt. 13; etc.).
34 Virkler and Ayayo, Hermeneutics, 227.
The main point of the teaching in the parable is two-fold. First, Jesus wanted the lawyer to get a better and truer understanding of who his neighbor really was. Second, Jesus wanted to teach the lawyer that he was responsible for actively helping others and not just avoiding actively harming others. All of the details of the parable, including the types of people that were mentioned fit nicely into these purposes. The fact that the Samaritan turned out to be the neighbor in the parable helped to show the lawyer that his neighbor could be someone besides a fellow Jew. The priest and the Levite that ignored helping the injured man most likely brought the issue of Jewish (and other first century religions) moral indolence to the forefront of the lawyers mind also. Finally, the fact that the Samaritan took extra steps to show compassion to the injured man beyond just bandaging him up or giving him some water showed the lawyer that the minimalistic mindset that the Jews had toward moral obligations was out of line to say the least.

Theological Analysis and Comparison of Conclusions with Others

It has already been shown above that the Jews in the first century had a different view of the golden rule than Jesus taught in Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31. It has also been stated that the Samaritans were despised by the Jews in those days. A neighbor in the first century, as far as the Jews were concerned, would have normally “been identified as a fellow Israelite,” though this would not have necessarily been the case (see Lev. 19:34). Calvin made a similar comment when he pointed out that, generally speaking, in the first century no man was considered a neighbor unless he was a friend.

---

35 See above discussion regarding rabbi Hillel and the negative form of the Golden Rule.
It seems fair to assume that the lawyer in this passage had not heard Jesus when He stated the golden rule, and perhaps He had not spoken it yet anyway. However, by the time Luke wrote this passage Jesus’ ministry was completed and the Apostles had been preaching the resurrection of Christ for probably at least 15 to 20 years or so, and so this story may have been less shocking to its original audience at the time when it was written down and presented. One must also take into account though the reality that oral tradition was big in the first century A.D. and so most likely the stories in the gospels had been circulating since the time of their happenings, even though they had not yet been written down. So, it does seem reasonable to assume that when this parable first started circulating the mindset of the lawyer in this passage was still the typical mindset of the Jewish audiences who heard the story. Now of course non-Jews would have viewed the story differently, since they probably would not have had the same level of animosity toward the Samaritans, although they might very well have still been just as morally apathetic as the Jews at that time, and so the main point of the story regarding how one is to treat others would still have been just as potentially “moving” to them as to the Jews.

Now, as for the first truth depicted in this parable, according to Straus, Jesus shows the lawyer that one’s neighbor is he who “reaches out in love and self-sacrifice to his enemy.” However, by using the term “enemy” hear Straus seems to be assuming that the injured man is a Jew, and it has already been shown in this paper that such an assumption is unwarranted. Nevertheless, it is true that Jesus in this parable identified one’s neighbor as he who shows mercy and self-sacrificial love to another, whether an enemy or not.

---

38 The chronology of this passage in relation to the rest of Jesus’ ministry is uncertain since this passage is only in Luke and it does not seem to be directly linked to any other passages surrounding it.
Calvin argues that the general truth that is conveyed in this parable is “that the greatest stranger is our neighbor, because God has bound all men together, for the purpose of assisting each other.” At first glance this seems as but a nice sentiment, for it seems to be too much of a stretch considering the meaning for the word used in this passage translated “neighbor.” The Greek term used here for neighbor, as was seen earlier, generally connotes nearness, indicating perhaps a close friend or relative. However, according to Danker a possible meaning of the term πλησίον (neighbor) is simply a member of the human race, and he cites Luke 10:29 as a passage that uses the term in this fashion. So it would seem as though Calvin is correct in his assessment that this parable teaches that one’s neighbor is anyone, including the greatest of strangers. Nevertheless, Calvin misses the point that Jesus Himself makes in this passage, which is that one’s neighbor is the one who takes care of and shows love toward another. Jesus does not in any sense universalize the term “neighbor” in this passage, and so it would be eisegesis for one to extrapolate such a conclusion from this passage as Calvin has done. Having said that, it is certainly true that anyone, even the greatest of strangers, could be one’s neighbor, assuming that they fit the qualifications set forth by Jesus in this passage.

David E. Garland argues that this “parable reveals that love requires self-expenditure for another in need.” This seems to be an adequate principle to take from this passage. It is very true that real Christ-like love requires more than just a certain type of disposition toward another person. The apostle John, in 1 John 3:18, tells his readers this, “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth (NIV).” The Samaritan in this parable has shown true love toward the one who needed his help through his actions. When one looks at this

---

40 Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, 61.
in light of further revelation that has been revealed beyond the teachings of this parable, it can also be seen that Jesus extoled His followers to not only love their neighbors, but also to love their enemies and pray for those who persecuted them. So, while this parable in and of itself teaches that one is supposed to love his neighbor, and that his neighbor is basically the one who treats him right, regardless of his ethnicity, religion, or any other aspects pertaining to him, when Scripture is viewed as a whole it must be further stated that Jesus ultimately taught that people are to love everyone, neighbor or not. Ephesians 4:32 tells Christians to be kind to one another also, which again seems to indicate that the obligation of being kind is limited to fellow believers, but Romans 12:18 and Hebrews 12:14 point out that people are supposed to live at peace with everyone, and again Jesus has said to love one’s enemies as well as one’s neighbors.

Some people have even gone as far as to attempt to give “spiritual” meaning to various parts of this parable. For instance, some have argued that “the inn to which the Samaritan took the injured man represents the church and that the two silver coins given to the innkeeper represent the two ordinances of the Lord’s Supper and water baptism.” This, however, is the result of allegorizing passages that are not allegories, which is, quite simply, bad hermeneutics, and so it is best to negate and disregard such whimsical interpretations.

To close out this section, it has been established that the main purpose of the parable of the Good Samaritan is two-fold, namely to teach the lawyer, and Luke’s readers and audience, who one’s neighbor is, and also to show that people are to treat others the same way that the Samaritan in the parable treated the injured man, i.e. with compassion and real, Christ-like love.

---

43 This is true for at least as far and as much as is possible without compromising one’s Christian beliefs, for Luke 14:26 makes it clear that Christ must always come first ultimately.  
45 Ibid.
It has also been shown that further teachings by Jesus and the Scriptures outside of this parable mandate that people not only love their neighbor and God, but everyone, including their enemies.

**Application**

It has already been shown above that the first principle found in the parable of the Good Samaritan, namely that one’s neighbor is anyone who treats him/her well, is sort of a moot point due to further revelation, since people are called to love everyone, not just their neighbors. There is however a general principle that can be gathered from the portrayal of the neighbor as the Samaritan in this passage, and that is that one’s neighbor, or in other words those close to or potentially close to someone, may be far different than what he/she might expect them to be. After all, the lawyer certainly did not expect Jesus to tell him that he might actually be required to love a Samaritan. This shows that people should not judge others simply based on statistics, outside appearances, or hearsay, because one never knows who the righteous people might really be, since righteousness is something that comes from the heart and is not simply something that can be determined by such flimsy scales. One never knows who might turn out to be a good, godly friend someday.

The other major principle that can be drawn from this passage comes from the final statement by Jesus in verse 37, “Go and do the same (HCSB).” As Dave Early and David Wheeler point out in their book *Evangelism Is...: How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence*, “Just as the Samaritan focused on meeting the robbed man’s needs without selfish considerations, we should do the same.”

While not everyone may encounter an injured person on the side of the road, the principle is nevertheless relevant for any situation in which someone

---

is in need of assistance. If someone sees a need and is able to meet it, then that is what they need to do, i.e. meet the need. Now of course there is a certain level of prayer and caution that must go into helping certain people in certain situations. These days many people are taken advantage of because of their generosity. However, especially if it is a “little thing,” such as someone who has run out of gas and is stranded on the highway, people should go out of their way to help them. This means something like actually stopping and finding out what the problem is, and then maybe going and getting them some gas and paying for it without asking to be reimbursed, not just calling the highway patrol and telling them that you saw someone stranded on the side of the road a few miles back. The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches the principle that if someone is in need, whoever sees that need, assuming they have the means to help, has a responsibility to help them to the extent that they need help, not just on a preliminary level so as to conciliate one’s conscience. Also, even though cautionary measures must be taken at times, that is still no excuse for not helping someone when it is truly within one’s means to help, assuming that the need is legitimate. After all, the Samaritan in the story risked catching a disease or getting mocked, ridiculed, or even abused by the man on the side of the road that he decided to help, but he helped him anyway, because it was the right thing to do.

A Brief Discussion of How Each Step Contributed To These Conclusions and Applications

First off, the historical-cultural aspect of the interpretation process helped to bring together the “scene” of not only the situation in which this parable was taught by Jesus in this passage, but also mindsets of the individuals involved in the passage, such as the Jews, the lawyer, and Jesus. This information is very necessary for a proper understanding of a historical passage such as this.
The lexical-syntactical aspect of the interpretation process helped to clarify that this passage seems to stand on its own, apart from the passages that surround it. This means that one does not necessarily have to be concerned with studying the surrounding passages to properly understand this one. Lexical and syntactical studies are also necessary because the passage is written in a language that uses words and phrases, and if one is to properly understand a given passage in the Scriptures that he needs to analyze the various words and phrases of that passage, which was done above regarding Luke 10:25-37.

The literary aspect of the interpretive process was necessary to establish what type of literary genre the passage was, which in this case in mainly a parable. The definition of a parable was discussed along with the definition of an allegory, since they are often times similar, and it was discovered that this passage is in fact a parable and not an allegory. This is important for the reason that parables are to be understood differently than allegories. The various details of the parable were also looked at to see how they fit into the purpose of the story. This was necessary so as to fully understand both the parable itself and the impact that it would have had on its original audience.

The theological aspect of the interpretation process is the most obviously necessary step. Since theology is the study of God and the Bible is God’s word, it only seems natural that every passage in the Bible would have something to do with theology. The information that was available to the original audience was examined, and additional revelation was also discussed. Since the Bible was written progressively it needs to be viewed as a whole to get the full picture of what God is trying to teach in His Word, especially now that it is finished being written.
The aspect of comparing the conclusions in this paper to comments by other theologians regarding this passage was for the benefit of critiquing both the conclusions of this paper and the conclusions of others. It is always good to know if one is on the right track when he is interpreting the Scriptures, and there are generally some good commentaries out there that can help determine such a thing.

As for the application and how each of these steps contributed to it, each step, done in order and then combined, brings one to a much fuller understanding of the passage as a whole and the context thereof. After all of these steps were completed, the main principles that are taught in the passage were discussed and then contemporized into terms that can be understood and followed today. This was not that difficult to do with this passage since the main point translates quite easily into every culture, time, and place.

**How Other Interpretive Methods May Lead to False Conclusions and Applications**

There are many other ways that one may interpret a biblical passage besides the grammatical-historical method. For instance, one could simply allegorize the passage, thereby making it mean essentially whatever one wants it to mean. Many theologians have done this throughout history. The problem with this method is that it does not take the text seriously, and so one is bound to interpret passages improperly and make false applications, for if one does not abide by the general rules of communication where a word means what its definition is, or where a noun, such as “donkey,” refers to its ordinary ideological counterpart, then the text basically becomes meaningless, and one cannot “properly apply or interpret” a meaningless text.

Another way that someone may misinterpret and misapply this passage could be to leave out the step of seeking to understand further revelation that has been given outside of this
passage. For instance, if someone only studied this passage and neglected to study the rest of the Bible, even if he interpreted the passage properly he would come to the conclusion that he is required by Jesus to basically be nice to those who are nice to him. It is not hard to see that this is a bad and dangerous interpretation, but even more so applying this principle to one’s life would necessarily be a misapplication of this passage, since Jesus has elsewhere told people to love their enemies as well as their neighbors.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the historical-cultural context of Luke 10:25-37 has been discussed above. There has also been a lexical-syntactical analysis, as well as a literary and a theological analysis undertaken in this paper regarding this passage. After that the conclusions that were drawn from these analyses were compared to some of the comments of other theologians regarding this passage of Scripture. Then, how to apply the theological principles found in this passage was discussed at the end of this paper. Finally, there was a brief discussion of how each step of the interpretive process contributed to the conclusions that were made in this paper and then a quick look at how other methods of interpretation could easily result in both poor interpretation and misapplication was taken. It seems safe now to say that the parable of the Good Samaritan is a passage of Scripture with some very necessary truths in it, for as Jesus said in John 15:12-14, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you (ESV).” Therefore, Jesus’ command in verse 37 of Luke chapter 10 to “Go and do the same.” is a command that one must follow if he is to truly be a friend of God.
Bibliography


