



NAC-USA  
DEVELOPMENT  
INSTITUTE

# Midweek Experience Curriculum

Who is my neighbor? | Loving our neighbor | The Last Supper

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**2015**

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March

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# 2015 March FACILITATOR GUIDE

## Session 1: Who is my neighbor?

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### Facilitator Note

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#### “Good Samaritan”

Maybe we should start by reflecting briefly on the term “good Samaritan.” Today we use the term as if it were not peculiar. To label the Samaritan, any Samaritan, a “good Samaritan” should be, in today’s climate, seen as offensive. It’s tantamount to saying, “He’s a good Muslim” or “She’s a good German”, as if the alternative were bad. The problem with labeling is not simply a lack of sensitivity towards the Samaritan people. It is also a lack of awareness of how odd the expression “good Samaritan” would have seemed to Jesus’s Jewish contemporaries.

Have you ever thought of this term as being strange?

Why do you think it’s labeled in the Bible this way?

Does it effect how you read the story?

Let’s start this month’s discussion on the parable of the Good Samaritan by thinking about what you would do if you encountered a homeless person on the street. Would you react in disgust, would you be afraid or embarrassed in this situation? Would your first impulse be to form a connection with the person? I think many of us have the same answer, but how does that compare to what the Good Samaritan does in the 10th chapter of Luke ?

Let’s look into the story.

A lawyer wants to test Jesus so he asks, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replies by asking him “what is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” (Luke 10:26). The lawyer, who is an expert in that field, replies with a verse from Deuteronomy (6:4-9), “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.” He also adds a verse from Leviticus, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Lev. 19:18).

Jesus commends him on his answer replying, “Do this and you will live.” But the lawyer, either justifying himself, or trying to trick Jesus, asks a further question, “And who is my neighbor?”

Who is your neighbor? Please pause the video now and make a list for yourself, then read the parable in Luke 10:30-37 together.

## Facilitator Note

### Controversial issues

In the video Bishop Whited talks about immigration policy, race, special needs, and sexual identity. These are not mentioned to start a debate on these controversial topics, and as the facilitator, you must take care to not let the conversation get to that point. The reason these topics were included is because they are the things that we are dealing with right now in our lives. These topics are very relevant to us, and the Bible is just as applicable today as it was then.

## Going Deeper

### Who is not my neighbor?

For our parable, the lawyer's question is misguided. To ask "who is my neighbor" is a polite way of asking, "Who is not my neighbor?" or "Who does not deserve my love?" or "Whose lack of food or shelter can I ignore?" or "Whom can I hate?" The answer Jesus gives is, "No one." Everyone deserves that love – local or foreigner, Jews or gentile, everyone.

How can we start to move toward Jesus' teaching of loving our neighbor?

What gets in the way of us doing this?

Jesus tells us to love our neighbor. Think about the people on your list in light of that. Can you imagine having a relationship with each one of them?

Our Chief Apostle pointed out that you can't serve God if you don't love your neighbor. The love for God is inseparably linked with the love for our neighbor. But who is our neighbor? It's the one who is sick, who is in prison, and the stranger who is so different, whose culture is different, who has a different faith, a different nature, and who has a different opinion from your own. They are your neighbor! They are the people we are called to love! You cannot choose your neighbors; God puts them in your life.

"Who is my neighbor?" is a central question in the church and in congregations today. It's a question you've probably heard not only in church, but in conversations about immigration policy, race, special needs, and sexual identity. It's a question that ultimately relates to the way we treat those on the outskirts of society, such as the homeless or the poor. The answer to "who is my neighbor" is easy—the one in need. What a simple answer! It changes the whole worldview of the lawyer. Mercy does not ask first about color or sexual identity or economic status or political party. Mercy is not concerned with purity or piety. Mercy is what comes from God to the community and to each of us. It is a gift given.

You'll remember, the lawyer had asked about how to inherit eternal life. There was nothing the lawyer could do to inherit or earn eternal life and neither can we. It is not possible. It only comes by grace from God. If you have the ability to help someone, then you have a responsibility to be their neighbor the way the Good Samaritan was. We'll talk more about what that responsibility entails next time.

For now, please discuss the questions found in this section of your participant guide.

### Discussion Questions during video:

1. Make a list of who you think your neighbors are.
2. Read the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37 together.
3. Share any insights you gained by reading that you may never have considered before.

### Discussion Questions after video:

1. What does "reaction" mean to you? What does the term "relationship" mean to you? How might you "react" to a homeless person on the street? How does that compare to what the Good Samaritan does in the parable?





## Going Deeper

### A different view

Martin Luther King Jr. once preached on the parable of the Good Samaritan: "I'm going to tell you what imagination tells me. It's possible these men were afraid...And so the first question that the priest [and] the Levite ask was, 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?'...But then the Good Samaritan came by, and he reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'"

Discuss this viewpoint.

Think of someone that you listed as a neighbor. Are you afraid to help? Or can you turn the question around?

## Facilitator Note

### re Charitable Ministry

Look at the re Charitable Ministry website/Facebook page before the discussion so you are able to answer questions from your participants. [re.nac-usa.org](http://re.nac-usa.org).

First, make time for others. Galatians 6:2 says *"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"*. It may not be possible to take away all the pain, all the suffering, or all the problems of our neighbor, but we can make it easier for our brother or sister when we help them bear their burden. We have to have an open ear and an open heart in order to perceive their suffering.

Second, help others in concrete ways. James 2:15-16 says *"If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?"*

Walk through these 5 words and discuss how the Samaritan lived them in his interaction with the man in the ditch. You will find questions in your guide that help explore each of these words.

### Recognize      Respond      Relieve and Restore      Renew

These 5 words are the core values of re Charitable Ministry, an affiliated ministry of the New Apostolic Church USA. Through these 5 values we desire to turn the call of Jesus to love our neighbors into real, actionable service in the world.

Ultimately, we should all be neighbors and serve others, whether on our own, among our families and friends, or in our congregations and communities. When we serve others in this way, we demonstrate a practical understanding of these concepts. Often, however, understanding the need for such a transformation is easy, but we struggle with the question – how and where to start? If the journey of becoming a true neighbor is such an experience for you, serving with re Charitable Ministry might broaden your awareness.

To learn more about one of their humanitarian projects or ways that your congregational initiatives can be supported, visit their website at [re.nac-usa.org](http://re.nac-usa.org) or find them on Facebook.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss how you can make helping your "neighbor" a way of life. What teachings from Jesus can be directly applied to our lives to make this happen? Discuss the challenges of these teachings.
2. How can your church or family support each other to make this possible?
3. Making time for your neighbor and helping in concrete ways are two practical approaches in following the steps of the Good Samaritan. As the person in the ditch, what are some ways that you would want to be helped?



**4. Renew:** As we work to relieve and restore people, the result is a reciprocal faith, hope and feeling of excitement. This work brings us to new perspectives and a renewed relationship with Christ.

*Think of when the Good Samaritan returned after his journey. What was renewed in his life? How was the man he helped renewed? When you serve others, how is your relationship with Christ renewed?*

## Session 3: The Last Supper

In the last two sessions we talked about the parable of the Good Samaritan and how we have the responsibility to act as a neighbor when we are able to help someone in need. This week we're switching gears a bit. In preparation for Passion Week we will be talking about the Lord's Supper.

There is a strong connection between the Last Supper and the sacrament of Holy Communion. Jesus instituted this sacrament in the presence of His apostles by sharing a meal during Passover. Matthew 26 (17-19) reads, *"Now on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, 'Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?' And He said, 'Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'"*

The Passover—a tradition still celebrated today by Jewish people—celebrates the lamb that was sacrificed and whose blood was painted upon the door mantels of the Jewish slaves to deliver them from the angel of death during Moses' time. This experience was the catalyst for the slaves' freedom from bondage.

Jesus is sometimes referred to as the Paschal Lamb whose death delivers all mankind from the slavery of sin and eternal death. John 1:29 reads *"John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.'"* In the Old Testament, the Paschal lamb was an unwilling sacrifice. In the New Testament, the Lamb of God freely lays down His life in answer to the will of God.

The Holy Communion we celebrate today means a few different things for us.

1. It is a **meal of Remembrance** of the suffering and innocent death of Jesus Christ for our salvation. It emphasizes that Jesus Christ is true Man who had to suffer real death. This is not only a matter of remembrance directed toward the past, but rather also a reminder of the certainty of Christ's current presence and His future kingdom. How can remembering Christ's sacrifice

## Additional Content

### The scapegoat & The Lamb

We can find some similarities to Jesus' sacrifice when we look at the "scapegoat" designated by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. Once a year, The High Priest of Israel sacrificed a bull for a sin offering for his own sins and subsequently took two goats to the door of the tabernacle with a view to dealing with the corporate sins of God's people. One was "The Lord's Goat", which was offered as a blood sacrifice, and the other was the "Azazel" scapegoat to be sent away into the wilderness. The High Priest confessed the sins of the Israelites to Yahweh placing them figuratively on the head of the Azazel scapegoat, who "took them away" never to be seen again.

The Passover—a tradition still celebrated today by Jewish people—celebrates the lamb that was sacrificed and whose blood was painted upon the door mantels of the Jewish slaves to deliver them from the angel of death during Moses' time. This experience was the catalyst for the slaves' freedom from bondage.

Jesus' sacrifice was so far above these two traditions from the Old Testament. He is sometimes referred to as the Paschal Lamb, but He gave His life willingly (unlike the Passover lamb) and His death delivers all mankind from the slavery of sin and eternal death.

on the cross, or His current presence in your life change how you participate in Holy Communion?

2. Holy Communion is a **meal of Fellowship** between the Son of God and His apostles, repeating the original institution of Holy Communion at the Last Supper. The Risen Lord also has fellowship with the circle of believers who worthily partake for their salvation. Those assembled in the congregation also have fellowship with one another in Holy Communion. This can also be heard in the communal aspects of the Lord's Prayer, where we pray for provision, deliverance, and forgiveness for each other.
3. Holy Communion is a **meal of Profession**. When we partake we "proclaim the Lord's death till He comes". The profession of the death, resurrection, and return of Jesus Christ is part of the fundamental profession of the Christian faith. The emphasis on the confessional nature of the holy meal also serves to counteract thoughtless or purely habitual partaking in the sacrament. When you celebrate Holy Communion, do realize you are publically professing your faith?
4. Holy Communion is a **meal of the Future**. We celebrate the future Marriage Feast in heaven. In Jesus Christ the kingdom of God has drawn near. Until the future and ultimate unification of the bride with the bridegroom, the congregation experiences its most intimate fellowship with the Lord through Holy Communion.

Although Holy Communion is communal, how we celebrate it is quite individual. Each disciple experienced the Last Supper differently based on their personal relationship with Jesus at that moment. John feels such a closeness to Christ that he lays his head on Jesus' breast. Peter overemphasizes his loyalty to Christ, even as Jesus foretells his denial. Perhaps Thomas' doubts are already surfacing. Philip's relationship is characterized as somewhat immature or undeveloped when he asks the Lord to 'Show us the Father'. Judas was far from Jesus and was unable to stay at the table. As Christ knew already, all the disciples would sleep, and then flee in the garden, when He needed them the most.

Yet to each one, in spite of their weaknesses Christ said: "Take and eat; this is My body."

In every divine service we can experience the presence of Christ during Holy Communion. Our personal relationships with Him create different experiences for each one of us. We may come to the amazing intimacy of John or conversely to the distance and despair of Judas. We may come with each of the conditions of the soul demonstrated by the disciples. Yet to all of us the Lord says, "Take".

## NAC Catechism

### 8.2.5

#### The institution of Holy Communion by Jesus Christ

Already before Jesus Christ established Holy Communion in the presence of His Apostles, He said: "... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6: 53). "Flesh and blood" are a reference to Holy Communion, which, as the Lord hereby emphasized, is indispensable for salvation. Also significant here are the additional statements of the Lord: "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life ... He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in Him" (John 6: 54, 56).

The Synoptic Gospels relate that Jesus Christ shared a meal together with His Apostles on the Feast of Passover. Matthew 26: 26–29 describes how the Lord instituted Holy Communion: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom'" (Mark 14: 22–25; Luke 22: 14–20).

While the account in the gospel of Mark largely coincides with the account in the gospel of Matthew, we find the following additions in Luke: "Do this in remembrance of Me" and "this cup is the new covenant in My blood" (Luke 22: 19–20). With the words: "Do this in remembrance of Me", the Lord gave His Apostles the commission and authority to celebrate Holy Communion in the same way as He Himself had done.

Thanks for joining us today. We hope you see Holy Communion in a different way, and that you enjoyed this month's discussions about the Good Samaritan.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. As we look at the Last Supper, what are some initial thoughts or feelings you have about all that Jesus did and experienced?
2. **Remembrance** What parts of Christ's suffering and death have personal meaning to you? In every divine service, do we visualize the suffering and death of Christ and stand in awe of this moment of Holy Communion? How does Christ's victory and resurrection strengthen you today?
3. **Fellowship** Discuss the three components of the meal of fellowship from the Catechism.
4. **Profession** What about Christ's death are you proclaiming? Is Holy Communion your only profession of the Lord during the week?
5. **The Future** Discuss how Jesus words during the Last Supper also spoke of the future.

Although Holy Communion is communal, how we celebrate it is quite individual. Discuss the personal relationships each disciple had with Jesus in that moment. How, through your life have you shown characteristics of each of these in your relationship with Jesus? Share one or two with the group.

- John:
- Peter:
- Thomas:
- Philip:
- Judas: