

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair lying in bed. She is looking directly at the camera with a thoughtful expression. She is wearing a dark-colored top. The bed has a red blanket and a red pillow. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a moody atmosphere.

# Awake All Night

by Michaele "Micki" Satterlund

**I**'m not a good sleeper. Several nights a week, I lie awake for hours, wondering how I can change the world into a place where everyone gets along. No wonder I can't sleep! I'm trying to figure out how to change ALL OF HUMANITY!

From a young age, I connected with the parable of the Good Samaritan. I love to be helpful. And I can't imagine not having a big, soft heart, despite the emotional price I often pay because of caring so much.

I try to be the opposite of the lawyer who inspired Jesus to share the parable of the Good Samaritan. I want to help and bring positive changes to as many people as possible — well, more than possible, as there is no earthly way for me to impact everyone. The lawyer in Luke 10 hoped to be accountable to a small, exclusive group of people.

## **REACHING ETERNAL LIFE**

In Luke 10:25, a lawyer approached Jesus to find out what must be done for a person to "inherit eternal life" (NIV). It's almost strange that he asked because he'd already read the answer. Jesus, knowing the man was a lawyer, asked the man how he interpreted what was written in the law.

Why would the lawyer ask about what he already knew? I think he hoped there was a loophole or shortcut. Thinking about what needs to be done to receive this eternal reward

can be so overwhelming that it can keep a person awake all night.

What was the answer? “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” (Luke 10:27).

## **WHO WAS THE LAWYER’S NEIGHBOR?**

The lawyer then asked, “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). The Jews in the time of Jesus liked to keep to themselves. They called people who weren’t Jews “Gentiles,” and they thought Gentiles were lower than dogs.

I’ve lived in many places and had many different types of people as neighbors. The 2020 interpretation of “neighbor” is someone who lives near you. I am white and a US-born American citizen. I’ve had Hispanic neighbors, black neighbors, Jewish neighbors, Asian neighbors, rich neighbors, needy neighbors, friendly neighbors, mean neighbors, and Christian neighbors. I’ve even had a pagan neighbor!

What have I learned? Each time a new family moves in next door, I learn a bit more about how to be a neighbor and a living example of the Good Samaritan parable.

How did Jesus answer the lawyer’s question? As Jesus often did, He illustrated His point with

a story. This tale was about a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, who was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him, and left him for dead.

Two different Jewish religious leaders, a priest and a Levite, saw the man but stayed on the other side of the road and continued their journeys. They didn't even check to see if he was alive!

A traveler saw the robbery victim, checked for signs of life, bound the man's wounds, took care of him overnight, and left money with an innkeeper to ensure the man continued to receive care.

The man who helped the robbery victim was a Samaritan. That doesn't mean much in our world, but it was a big deal back then. Samaritans had a shared ancestry with the Jews, but they intermarried with outsiders. The hero of this parable was an impure Gentile, by Jewish standards.

Why did Jesus choose these three types of people to include in the story? Priests were religious leaders and pillars of the community in Jewish society. Levites worked with the priests, maintaining the temple and the worship sacrifices. The story doesn't reveal what role the Samaritan played in his community — he could also have been a religious leader, or he could have been a construction worker — we just don't know. What we do know is that within the Jewish community, the Samaritan

would have been considered subhuman. It seems that Jesus wanted to broaden the Jewish ideal of whom to treat humanely.

## **WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?**

Who are today's Samaritans? Who are the oppressed? The outcasts? Black people? Asians? LGBTQA folks? Poor people? Immigrants? People who are disabled? Yes, to all of those, and many more.

Honestly, most of us are Samaritans some of the time. You. Me. Your friends. Your enemies. Most of us have experienced discrimination. There are a lot of mean people looking to pick on anyone for anything.

I've been judged because I'm a female, because my family was on food stamps, because people outside of my church thought my church was weird, because fellow members of my church thought I was too progressive, because my mom was mentally ill, and because I'm overweight.

What about you? Have you been judged?

I'm sure the lawyer had a lot of judgmental thoughts about the Samaritan. With those thoughts bouncing around in the lawyer's head, Jesus ended the story, asking, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor?" (Luke 10:36).

The lawyer saw the answer. He responded that the neighbor was the man who showed mercy to the robbery victim.

How does this parable apply to you and me? Where does the Samaritan/neighbor fit into your life today? It means the same thing now as it meant back then. After the lawyer admitted to Jesus that the Samaritan was the neighborly character in the story, Jesus said, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

## **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

I started by explaining how I can't sleep at night because I'm trying to think of ways to fix the problems of the world. That's true. It's also true that I can put myself into the shoes of that lawyer and feel the same disappointment that he must have felt. The lawyer probably hoped that he was accountable to a smaller group of people. Living as the kind of neighbor the Samaritan was is physically and emotionally exhausting.

If you were the lawyer, how would you answer? If this question were on a test in school, I'd know what to say. To please my teacher and get a good grade, I'd respond it was the Samaritan, who showed compassion to the robbery victim, that was the neighbor. When you look at it like that, it's easy to find the right answer.

However, I'm not a student answering a question on a test; I'm an adult with a husband, a cat, and a dog. I have work to do, bills to pay, and mouths to feed. I'm busy. Just living my life takes time and energy.

Sometimes, I wish I could be detached and unconcerned, like the priest and the Levite. Sometimes, I wish I didn't see everyone as my neighbor. Sometimes, I wish I could crawl into bed and drift off to sleep without a thought in my head. Sometimes, I'm too drained to "go and do likewise."

## **WHOSE NEIGHBOR ARE YOU?**

The Bible makes it seem like Jesus told this story to speak to the heart and mind of the lawyer, but I also think this story is for me. I want to change the world for the better, and I believe I should be a neighbor to everyone, but sometimes I become weary and default to focusing exclusively on "my people." Sometimes, I step back from the world and pretend that taking care of just my loved ones honors all my responsibilities. It certainly is essential to take care of loved ones, but that's not where my responsibility ends. My accountability reaches far beyond that.

There will always be people who are oppressed, abused, or overlooked, who need the rest of us to take care of them, stand up for them, and make a better world for them. Also, those of us who feel oppressed, abused, or overlooked have a responsibility to be good neighbors.

That's the bottom line of this parable. The message to the lawyer was that everyone was

his neighbor — no exceptions. The message to all of us is that, even if we are outcasts like the Samaritan, we still have a responsibility to be neighborly.

Luke 10:25-37 tells us to love God and our neighbors with everything inside of us and that everyone is a neighbor. It's not easy, and it could make you lose sleep, but putting love into the world sure feels better than trying to find loopholes.

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Puzzle, pg 29  
Answers  
Across: 1. Conscience; 5. Faithfully; 9. Pharaoh;  
10. Secret; 11. Committed; 14. Blameless;  
16. Enough; 18. Righteousness; 19. Withstood;  
20. Journey; 21. Servants  
Down: 2. Stricter; 3. Ministry; 4. Caught;  
6. Abraham; 7. Answer; 8. Business;  
11. Condemnation; 12. Judgment; 13. Hearts;  
15. Governors; 17. Bishop