

How Jesus Loved People We Don't Think Are Important



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Luke 4:16–19; James 1:27; Leviticus 23:22; Matthew 19:16–22; Luke 19:1–10; Job 1:8.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Then the King will say to those [holy people] who are at his right side, “Come! My Father has blessed you. The kingdom was made ready for you when the world [skies and earth] was first made. Come into it now” ’ ” (Matthew 25:34, WE).

THE BIBLE often talks about strangers, the fatherless, and widows. Many people may think these persons are not very important. But Jesus cares for the “ ‘least [less] important of these brothers and sisters” ’ ” (Matthew 25:40, NIV). Jesus says the strangers, the fatherless, and widows are His own.

Who are these people today? In Bible times, some strangers left home because of war or because there was no food. Today, the strangers are often the poor around us who lost their homes because bad things happened to them. The fatherless are orphans who have lost their fathers because of war, accidents, or sickness. This group may include children whose fathers are in prison or who are missing. We can do so many things to help the people in this group. Widows are women with husbands who have died. Many widows are single parents. They can use help from the church, too.

We are God's managers. We must follow Jesus' example and obey His commands. So, we must help the poor. We must help the strangers, the fatherless, and the widows, too.



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THE LIFE AND WORK OF JESUS (Luke 4:16–19)

When Jesus first started His work, He traveled to Nazareth in Galilee. Nazareth was Jesus' hometown. The local people there already knew about Jesus' work and His miracles. On the Sabbath, Jesus went to the Jewish church. Someone gave Jesus the book of Isaiah and asked Him to read. Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1, 2.

Read Luke 4:16–19. Compare it with Isaiah 61:1, 2. Why do you think Jesus chose to read Isaiah 61:1, 2 that Sabbath? What do these verses teach us about the promised Savior, God's Chosen One? What do these verses teach us about the work the Savior will do? (Read also Luke 7:19–23.)

The religious leaders paid no attention to the verses in Isaiah 53 that talk about a suffering Savior. The religious leaders only were interested in the promises about God's kingdom. The leaders taught everyone to expect those promises to happen at the First Coming. (Their mistake should help us to remember that we must be careful to understand what the Bible really says and means.) So, most of the people in Jesus' day believed a false idea about the Savior's work. The people thought that the Savior was coming to free Israel from the Romans. But Jesus told them that Isaiah 61:1, 2 showed the Savior's work. Jesus, the Savior, came to work for the poor. This news must have been a real shock of surprise for the Jewish people!

Tax collectors, businessmen, and rich Jews often didn't like the poor. Many Jews felt that God cursed the poor. These Jews blamed the poor for having no money or land. Few people cared for the poor or their needs.

Jesus loved the poor. His love is powerful proof that He is the Savior. Look at how Jesus answers John the Baptist's question when John asks Jesus if He is the promised Savior (read Matthew 11:1–6). Jesus' answer shows that He cares so much for the poor. "John the Baptist didn't understand about Jesus' kingdom. John expected Jesus to sit on David's throne. John felt worried and confused when Jesus didn't try to become king."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 215, adapted.

How should James 1:27 help us understand what God asks of us?



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GOD PROVIDES FOR THE POOR (Leviticus 23:22)

Many Bible writers include God’s commands for taking care of the poor, the strangers, widows, and orphans in their books. God gave Moses this special command that talks about the poor: “ ‘Plant seeds, harvest your crops, and work the ground for six years. But the seventh year must be a special time of rest for the land. Don’t plant anything in your fields. If any crops grow there, allow the poor to have it. And allow the wild animals to eat the food that is left. You should do the same with your vineyards [grape fields] and with your fields of olive trees’ ” (Exodus 23:10, 11, ERV).

Read Leviticus 23:22 and Deuteronomy 15:11. What important rules can we learn from these verses?



In modern times, some thinkers said it was wrong to help poor people.

As we already saw, Jesus says the poor are “ ‘brothers and sisters of mine’ ” (Matthew 25:40, NIV). The Psalms tell us what we should do for people in need: “Defend the poor and orphans. Protect the rights of [the things that by law belong to] the poor. Help those who are poor and helpless. Save them from those who are evil” (Psalm 82:3, 4, ERV). This verse shows us that we must give poor people more than just food. We also must stand against the ones who hurt the poor or are not fair to them.

God promises to bless the ones who help the needy. “Whoever gives to the poor will have plenty. Whoever refuses to help them will get nothing but curses” (Proverbs 28:27, ERV). “If a king judges the poor fairly [in a fair way], he will rule [control his kingdom] for a long time” (Proverbs 29:14, ERV). King David said, “Those [people] who help the poor succeed will get many blessings. When trouble comes, the LORD will save them” (Psalm 41:1, ERV).

In modern times, some thinkers said it was wrong to help poor people. The thinkers used science and nature to excuse their evil behavior. They argued that weak things in nature die. Only the strong live. So, when we help the poor, the poor will have weak and sick babies. These babies will make a country weak. This thinking is mean and nasty. These ideas come from replacing Bible truth with false science.

Jesus died for everyone. What does this Bible truth teach us about why we should show love and kindness to all people?

THE RICH YOUNG LEADER (Matthew 19:16–22)

We don't know much about the rich young man who came to Jesus. We know he was young, had a lot of money, and was a leader. He was interested in spiritual things, too. This young man had so much energy! He didn't just come to Jesus. He ran to Jesus! The young man was excited to learn more about everlasting life. This story is so important that we can read about it in three books of the Bible: Matthew 19:16–22; Mark 10:17–22; and Luke 18:18–23.

Read about the rich young leader in Matthew 19:16–22. Why does Jesus say to the young man, “If you want to be perfect, then go and sell all that you own. Give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven. Then come and follow me!” (Matthew 19:21, ERV)?

Jesus doesn't ask most of us to sell everything we own and give the money to the poor. But money must have been very important to this young man, the same as an idol or statue of a false god. Jesus' answer may seem tough to us. But Jesus knew that this young man's only chance of being saved was to sell everything he owned and give the money to the poor.

The Bible says the young man went away very sad because he was very rich. We can see that the young man loved his money very much. Jesus offered the young man everlasting life. Jesus also invited the young man to join His close group of followers. How do we know this? Jesus said to him, “Come, follow Me.” These words are the same ones Jesus said to His 12 followers. But we never hear about this young man again. Why? He traded everlasting life for all the treasures and riches he had in this life.

This young man made a terrible choice! He did not want to give up his riches and follow Jesus. Riches may give us happiness now. But God will judge us by our behavior and everything we did in this life. So, we want to make good choices now. Then we will be ready to meet Him. Many rich people discover that their riches didn't give them the peace and happiness they hoped for. Ecclesiastes shows us that riches do not make us happy. Money can't “buy” us peace or happiness. (Read Ecclesiastes 5:13.)

In Mark 8:35–37, Jesus says you must “give up your life for me and for the Good News” (Mark 8:35, ERV). What does Jesus mean?



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ZACCHAEUS (Luke 19:1–10)

Zacchaeus wanted to make some changes in his life. He heard about Jesus and wanted to see Him.

Zacchaeus was a rich Jew. He made a lot of money working as a tax collector for the Romans. The Jews hated the Romans. So, the Jews hated Zacchaeus, too. The Jews also hated Zacchaeus and other tax collectors because they collected more taxes from the people than was fair. That's why the people called Zacchaeus a sinner.

Zacchaeus lived in Jericho. Jericho was a busy city. Many people did business there. Jesus and Zacchaeus didn't meet by chance. Zacchaeus wanted to make some changes in his life. He heard about Jesus and wanted to see Him. Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was on His way to Jericho that very day! Jesus needed to pass through Jericho from Galilee on His final trip to Jerusalem. Jesus' first words to Zacchaeus show us that Jesus knew all about Zacchaeus before He entered the town.

Read the story about Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10. How is Zacchaeus's story different from the story about the rich young man?

Zacchaeus and the rich young man were the same in some ways. Both men were rich. Both men wanted to see Jesus. Both men wanted everlasting life. But they think about money in different ways.

Do you see that Zacchaeus says he will give half of everything he owns to the poor (Luke 19:8)? Jesus accepted this offer. Zacchaeus's offer shows us that he is a changed man. Jesus doesn't say to Zacchaeus, "Sorry, Zac, but you have to give Me everything, just as I asked the rich young leader. I won't accept half." No, Jesus doesn't say this at all. Why not? Because Zacchaeus doesn't worship his money. Sure, Zacchaeus likes his money, but money is not his idol. An idol is a statue of a false god. Jesus doesn't need to tell Zacchaeus to give half his money to the poor. Zacchaeus tells Jesus that he will give an offering to the poor. But Jesus must tell the rich young leader to give up everything. If he didn't do this, his riches would destroy him. Sure, Zacchaeus needed to be careful about the dangers of money. But he controlled his money problem better than the rich young ruler did.

**“ ‘HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT MY SERVANT JOB?’ ”
(Job 1:8, NlrV)**

Read God’s words about Job in Job 1:8. What does God say about him?

God says that Job is “ ‘without blame [does no wrong; is perfect], a man who is right [obeys God’s law] and good’ ” (Job 1:8, NLV). Wow! Job is so perfect and good that no one else on the earth at that time is as good as Job. This praise of Job comes straight from God.

Job has many terrible experiences. After all these disasters, God says again what He first said about Job. There is no one on earth the same as Job. Job is perfect and good. Then God adds some new information. Job “ ‘honors God and stays away from evil. You [Satan] caused me [God] to ruin [allow evil things to happen to] him [Job] for no good reason. But he [Job] continues to be without blame’ ” (Job 2:3, ICB).

Soon after, Job’s wife says these awful words to her husband: “ ‘Are you still holding on to your faith? Why don’t you just curse God and die!’ ” (Job 2:9, ERV). For sure, Job felt very hurt because of what his wife said. But then we learn something more about Job that shows us who he was before all these bad things started to happen to him.

Read Job 29:12–16. What do these verses show us about Job and who he really is?

Job says, “ ‘I was like a father to the poor. I helped people I didn’t even know win their case in court’ ” (Job 29:16, ERV). What does this verse show us? Job didn’t wait for needy people to ask him for help. Job went looking for people in need. Then he did everything he could to help them.

Ellen G. White says, “Don’t wait for the poor to tell you what they need. Do what Job did. He searched for needy and poor people to help. Go do the same thing. Learn what people need and figure out the best way to help them.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, page 151, adapted.

Read Isaiah 58:6–8. How can we follow the Bible truth in these verses today?



Job went looking for people in need. Then he did everything he could to help them.



“What we do for poor and suffering people, we do the same for Jesus.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Jesus is the Son of Man. When He comes, all the holy angels will be with Him. At that time, Jesus will sit on His throne. All people will stand in front of Him. Then Jesus will separate all the people into two groups. Jesus explained this future happening to His followers on the Mountain of Olives. Jesus wanted His followers to understand how God will judge His people. When the people stand before God, there will be only two groups. God’s final decision will depend on what they have done for the poor and the suffering. What we do for poor and suffering people, we do the same for Jesus. What we fail to do for the poor and suffering, we also fail to do for Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 637, adapted.

“Jesus has many suffering and needy followers. When you open your homes to His needy ones, you welcome angels into your home. You can’t see these angels. But they are your companions. These angels bring joy and peace. The angels come with praise on their lips. Angels in heaven hear the angels on earth praise God. Then the angels in heaven praise God, too. Every time someone shows mercy to another person, the angels make music in heaven. The Father on His throne sees every unselfish act that His workers do. These workers are part of God’s most precious treasures.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 639, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Some people use the first part of Deuteronomy 15:11 as an excuse not to help the poor. They say, “Well, God said in Deuteronomy 15:11 that poor people will always be with us. So, that’s normal. Why should I bother helping the poor when nothing will change?” What’s wrong with this thinking? (Read the second part of Deuteronomy 15:11 to answer the question.)
- ② Read what Paul says about riches in 1 Timothy 6:17–19. Do you see what the danger from riches is? Paul warns us not to trust in riches. We must trust in the living God. Why do so many people trust in their riches when all their money won’t help them stay alive? Why must we all be careful to trust only in the living God?

TWIN SURPRISES IN FINLAND

When Simo Vehkavuori was a young man, he sold Bible books in Finland. Simo got a big surprise at a house he visited. Simo rang the doorbell. A woman opened the door. When she saw Simo outside, the woman said, “I want to order the set of ten Bible story books from you!” Simo was very surprised. Before Simo said anything, the woman was ready to buy. Simo didn’t even get a chance to tell the woman he was selling books or that he had Arthur Maxwell’s set of ten Bible story books for children.

“You must be surprised that I’m buying all these books from you,” the woman said. “Last night, God gave me a dream. In the dream, He showed me your face. God said, ‘This man will come to your house. Buy from him the set of ten Bible story books.’ So, that’s why I was ready to buy them right away.”

Another time, Simo stopped by a local business. Simo offered the business owner a copy of Ellen White’s *The Great Controversy*. The man said, “My wife and I know about this book. But we don’t understand anything about it. Our daughter is the manager for a religious school. She will be here tomorrow. Can you come back?”

Simo agreed to come back. Simo told his twin brother about what the local business owner said. Simo’s twin brother was selling books with Simo in town. Simo asked his brother, “Please pray that everything will go well tomorrow during my meeting with the business owner and his family.”

The next day, Simo went to the business. The owner introduced Simo to his daughter. The daughter became angry when she learned that Simo was Seventh-day Adventist. The woman said mean and nasty things about his church.

When the woman finished, Simo asked her for permission to speak. “Dear lady,” Simo said, “we serve a wonderful God in the Adventist Church! I want to follow and serve this God with my whole heart. We can trust Him wherever He leads us.”

The woman looked surprised. “Young man, I can see that God means so much to you.” Then the woman turned and said to her mother, “Mother, can you give me some money? I want to buy all the books that this young man has.”

Simo sold her the books. Then he prayed with the woman and her parents. When Simo went back to his room, he found his twin brother on his knees. Simo’s brother was praying for him and his meeting with the business owner and his daughter. Simo was so excited to share his good news. He told his brother about God’s miracle.

Simo is now retired. He said, “It was a powerful experience for me to see God work a miracle in that family.”

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



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