



## Lesson Guide

### Lesson 12 - Community & Involvement: God Cares, Do I?

#### Introduction

For this final installment of our “worldview tour” we will head southeast and gaze upon the face of God as it is revealed to us in the last of our six social spheres: the sphere of *Community and Involvement*. Here, perhaps more than in any other sphere or field of inquiry, we will have an opportunity to draw near to the Creator and learn what it is that has compelled Him to draw near to us. We will find that the God of the Scriptures is in fact the Lord of the lonely, the Savior of the outcast, the Defender of the defenseless, and the Sustainer of all who find themselves in need. Our call is to become *like* Him by discovering what it means to not only love Him, but to love our neighbor.

#### Themes

Involvement in this sphere – the sphere of community outreach, practical service, and active love expressed in Christian *charity* – has been the distinguishing hallmark of the Church for many centuries. For a number of reasons, says Dr. Tackett, it has fallen into neglect in our day. Not only that, but the general call for involvement in culture at large, in all of the spheres, has actually become a matter of debate in some contemporary Christian circles. And yet a careful examination of Scripture will reveal that believers have a mandate to reclaim their place in this important arena. We dare not, like Jonah, try to escape God’s call to be involved. Over and over again, the Scripture clearly presents the perplexing reality that God entrusts us with carrying out His mission and purpose with the world. We cannot deny the link and dependency God has created between His divine plan and the faithfulness with which His followers embody biblical truth in their behavior and reflect the heart of Jesus in their lives.

What *is* the heart of Jesus? This is not a difficult question to answer. In Matthew 11:28-29 Christ tells us plainly that He is *gentle* and *humble* in heart. The heart of Jesus stands radically opposed to the principle of “survival of the fittest.” It identifies closely with the plight of the weak and disenfranchised. It is a heart that compels Him to wash the feet of others and lay down His life for His friends. In doing these things, Jesus not only becomes our example – He also reveals to us the deepest concerns of His Father in heaven (John 14:9).

In the final analysis, we must realize that this is *why* Jesus sums up the entire law in two “Great Commandments”: “Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36-40). Here at the end of our tour we come back again to the great fountainhead and source of all truth, the divine nature itself. “God is love,” writes the apostle John, “and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). And

love, in the practical sense, means *being* a good neighbor to the people around us – like the Samaritan in Christ’s famous parable.

### **Points to Watch For**

If God cares enough to get involved with the needs of people, we need to care and get involved as well. This is the thrust of Dr. Tackett’s message. So forceful is his presentation of this concept that it is almost certain to impact participants at a deep emotional level. When it does, they will probably ask the question that has been asked so many times before: “What should I *do*?” At this point it will be important to emphasize the thought that active love is not a matter of following a “to-do checklist” or establishing a system of “rules” or “simple steps.” Instead, it is a question of developing an attitude of humility, openness, sensitivity, and creative compassion. It is a matter of using our God-given gifts and talents in the service of others and pursuing the passions He has instilled in our hearts.

### **Discussion Questions** (Pick 3 or 4 for your discussion time.)

(Make these questions your own. That is, don’t just “read” them, but become familiar with them so that they don’t appear as simply an item to get through. Go through them yourself before your group meets and ponder them.)

#### **1) Opening Question: (this may be the only question you need to ask).**

A. Ask your guests to list what they saw on the tour. Here are some of the key items: The greatest and second greatest commandment; loving your neighbor as yourself; the question: "who is my neighbor?"; the story of the good neighbor; a review of God's design for each of the social spheres; the different design of the sphere of community; God's heart for the lowly and needy; "Who is like you, O Lord?"; the humble heart of God; who are the needy?; the story of "Foo" or the girls not asked to dance; our responsibility for the needy; Involvement; God is a God who is involved; Jonah running from the face of God; God's heart for Nineveh; the hall of faith; world-changers who have come before us; Wilberforce; world-changers must be risk-takers; what do you do now?

B. Ask your guests to point out the ones that were particularly interesting or striking to them and why.

C. Ask if this particular area struck anyone else as well.

D. Ask if there were other items that they saw that stood out to them. (You may want to read back through the list if you need to.)

- 2) **In Luke 10:29 we are told that the teacher of the law who questioned Jesus about the way to inherit eternal life was driven by a desire to “justify himself.” What does this mean, and how does it provide the motivation for his second question: “Who is my neighbor?” How do we seek to “justify ourselves?”**

(Dr. Tackett expresses the thought that the lawyer was asking Jesus to supply him with a “checklist”. More than likely, he had a deep sense of his own shortcomings in this area and hoped to assuage his feelings of guilt by reducing *love* to a simple, comprehensible, *controllable* task that he could easily claim to have fulfilled. Discuss some of the ways *we* do this same thing. Instead of “justifying ourselves,” we need to be aware of and open to the daunting hugeness of Christ’s call, cast ourselves upon *His* strength and sufficiency, and allow *Him* to be our justification.)

- 3) **Did Jesus answer the lawyer’s question? If so, how?**

(Not exactly. The man asked Jesus to give him a strict and narrow definition of the term “neighbor” – a definition which he would have been able to use to “let himself off the hook.” Jesus knew that this was not what he needed. What He gave him instead [by way of the “Parable of the Good Samaritan”] was a challenge to think creatively about the unexpected ways in which he might begin to show practical love to the most unlikely people. The man wanted to know, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus turned around and asked *him*, “How do you think *you* can *be* a neighbor to those in need?”)

- 4) **How does the sphere of Community differ in structure from the other social spheres we’ve examined? How does this difference constitute a special challenge for us as God’s people?**

(If we try to graph this sphere according to the “Trinitarian” model we’ve encountered in other areas, we find that it is unique in one very important detail: it lacks a *human* authority figure [analogous, for example, to the *father* in the family, the *shepherd* in the church, or the *king* or *magistrate* in the state]. The structure of this sphere includes Christ at the head; the *neighbor* [i.e., the believer] in submission to Him; and the *needy* person who both stands under God’s protection and depends upon our compassion and charity. Because of this lack of human authority, we must learn to be *self-starters* if we are to remain faithful to Christ’s call and serve Him effectively in this area.)

- 5) **Name some of the ways in which Christianity has *changed the world* (according to author Alvin Schmidt). What has motivated believers to become agents of change in these areas? How do their actions differ in tone and spirit from the works of pragmatic philanthropy?**

(In this connection, Dr. Tackett points out that *individual transformation* through the power of Christ – the transformation of people like Afra of Augsburg or William Wilberforce – necessarily has a transforming effect upon culture. Historical examples of the social expression of Christian transformation include: the founding of hospitals and health care facilities; the elevation of sexual morality; greater regard for the rights and dignity of women; advances in education, labor, and science; a growing understanding of human rights and their connection with the *Imago Dei* in man, expressed in the abolition of slavery, the civil rights movement, and other expressions of concern for liberty and justice; and the powerful impact of the Christian faith and worldview upon art, music,

and literature in western culture. Christian charity, says Father Sirico, differs in motivation from philanthropy in that it is driven by a recognition of and concern for the eternal personhood of the needy, and even more specifically by the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:40 – “As you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me.”

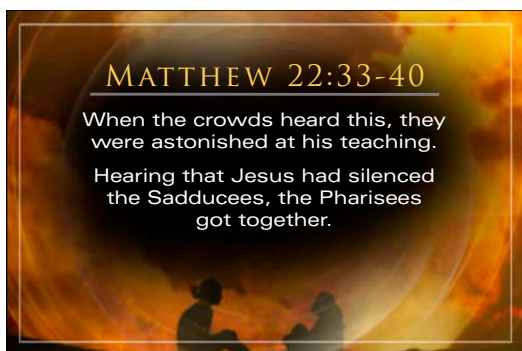
- 6) **“You can be a risk-taker without being a world-changer,” says Dr. Tackett, “but you cannot be a world-changer without being a risk-taker.” How is this principle illustrated in the life of William Wilberforce? How can you and I step out and take greater risks for the advancement of God’s kingdom in our own cultural context? How can we engage in the battle in a more active way?**

(Wilberforce had the tenacity to stay true to the “two great objects” God had placed before him – the abolition of the slave trade and “the reformation of manners” in England – for forty-six years in spite of opposition, defamation, disappointment, and tremendous costs in terms of his political career. He was willing to identify himself with his cause and remain true to it through thick and thin. In our own time there are a number of causes – the sanctity of human life, the plight of the poor, child abuse, the breakdown of the family, the need for decency and morality in arts and entertainment, etc. – that need champions of Wilberforce’s character and determination. There are also marginalized, outcast, neglected individuals in our own communities and neighborhoods who require our attention and care, some of whom [like “Flash”] are not particularly friendly to the church or open to Christian influence. Discuss ways that we can overcome some of the obstacles that hold us back [worldliness, selfishness, apathy, fear] and reach across the barriers to those who desperately need to know Christ’s love.)

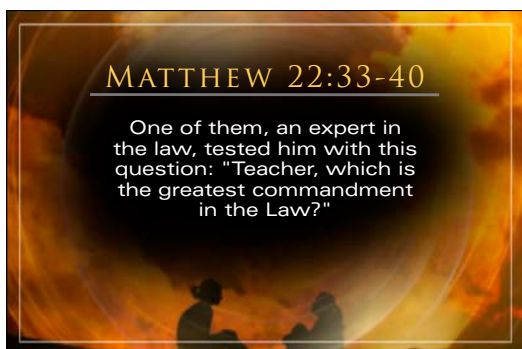
- 7) **Since this is our final tour, do you have any closing comments about our twelve weeks together and the ground we have covered? Has the Lord begun any transformational work in your life since we began together? If so, how?**



1



2



3



4



5

**DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9**

Hear, O Israel:  
The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

6

**DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9**

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road...

7

**DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9**

...when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

8

**LUKE 10:25-29**

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

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

9

**LUKE 10:25-29**

He 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.'"

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

10

LUKE 10:25-29

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus,

**"And who is my neighbor?"**

11

COMMUNITY & INVOLVEMENT

the lost art of community and God's radical design to love your neighbor

12

THE TRIUNE GOD

Perfect Unity, Relationships, Equality, Roles, Authority & Submission

Matthew 28:19

John 10:30  
John 20:21  
John 14:26

John 14:26

John 16:7

Father

Son

Holy Spirit

13

THE FAMILY

Exodus 20:12, 14, 17

Eph 6:4

Eph 6:1-3  
Col 3:20  
Prov 1:8  
Deut 6:6-7

Husband

Wife

Children

Gen 1:26-28  
Gen 2:18-24  
Mat 19:4-8  
Mal 2:13-16  
Eph 5:22-33  
1 Pet 3:1-7  
Col 3:18-21  
Titus 2:4-5  
Heb 13:4

14

THE CHURCH

Exodus 20:12, 14, 17

Eph 5:23

Heb 13:17

Christ

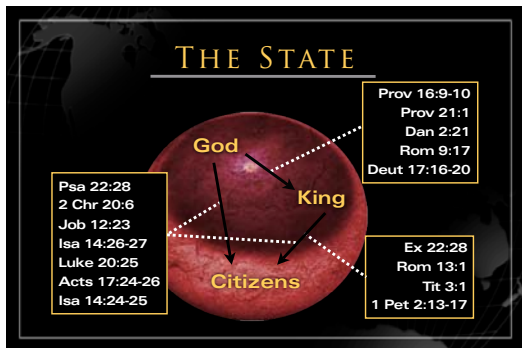
Leaders

Flock

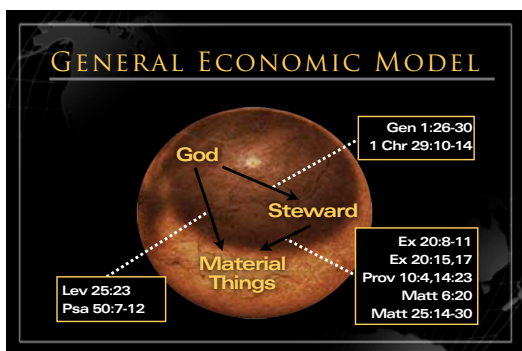
Eph 4:11

Eph 4:12

15



16



17



18



19



20




**WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?**

**Luke 10:29**

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus,

**"And who is my neighbor?"**



21

**WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?**

In 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. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side..."

**Luke 10:30-37**

22

**WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?**

So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

**Luke 10:30-37**

23

**WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?**

Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The 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.'

**Luke 10:30-37**

24

**WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?**

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


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

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

**Luke 10:30-37**

25

**WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?**  
**Luke 10:29-37**  
the story of the **Good Neighbor**  
what was the **Question**?  
did Jesus **Answer** it?  
who are the **Main Characters**?




26

**GOD'S DESIGN  
FOR THE COMMUNITY**  
pondering the  
**Word of God...**  
& looking for the  
**Heart of God...**




27

**1 SAMUEL 2:8**  
He raises the poor from the  
dust and lifts the needy from  
the ash heap; he seats them  
with princes and has them  
inherit a throne of honor.




28

**JOB 5:11**  
The lowly he sets on high,  
and those who mourn  
are lifted to safety.



29


**PSALM 12:5**  
"Because of the oppression of  
the weak and the groaning of  
the needy, I will now arise,"  
says the LORD.  
"I will protect them from those  
who malign them."



30

PSALM 72:4


He will defend the afflicted  
among the people and save  
the children of the needy; he  
will crush the oppressor.



31

PSALM 138:6

Though the LORD is on high,  
he looks upon the lowly,  
but the proud he knows  
from afar.



32

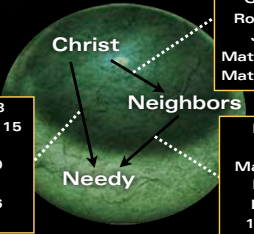
THE HEART OF GOD

**Psalm 12:5**

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33

COMMUNITY



1 Sam 2:8  
Job 5:11, 15  
Psa 12:5  
Psa 35:10  
Psa 72:4  
Psa 138:6  
Isa 57:15

Lev 19:18  
Gal 5:13-14  
Rom 13:8-10  
James 2:8  
Matt 25:33-36  
Matt 22:37-40

Prov 14:21  
Hab 2:15  
Matt 5:43-44  
Prov 28:27  
Deut 15:11  
1 John 3:17

34

WHO ARE THE NEEDY?

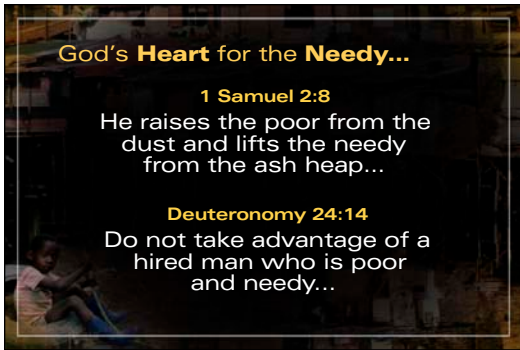
- Poor
- Orphans
- Widows
- Sick
- Prisoners
- Outcasts
- Unpopular
- Neglected
- Left Out
- Homely
- Last
- others...

35

God's **Heart** for the **Needy...**

**1 Samuel 2:8**  
He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap...

**Deuteronomy 24:14**  
Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy...

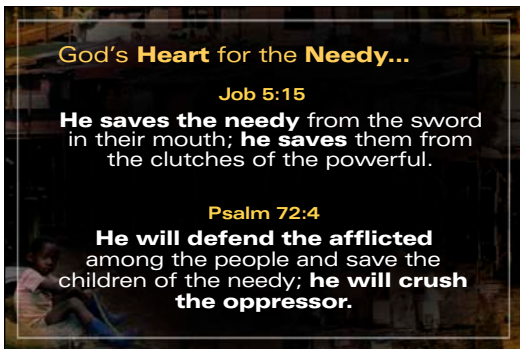


36

God's **Heart** for the **Needy...**

**Job 5:15**  
**He saves the needy** from the sword in their mouth; **he saves** them from the clutches of the powerful.

**Psalm 72:4**  
**He will defend the afflicted** among the people and save the children of the needy; **he will crush the oppressor.**

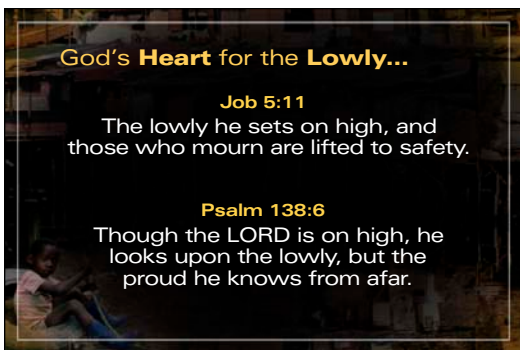


37

God's **Heart** for the **Lowly...**

**Job 5:11**  
The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.

**Psalm 138:6**  
Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar.

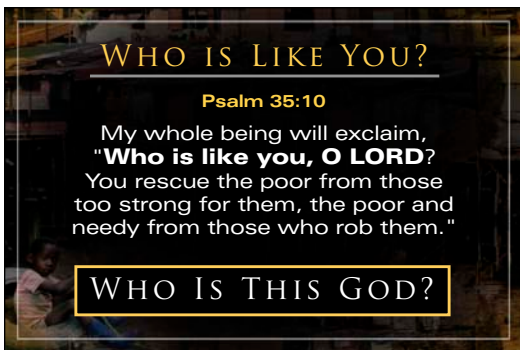


38

**WHO IS LIKE YOU?**

**Psalm 35:10**  
My whole being will exclaim, "**Who is like you, O LORD?** You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them."

**WHO IS THIS GOD?**



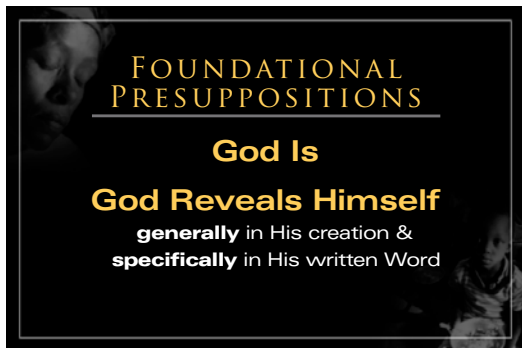
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**OUR SOURCE OF TRUTH**

**FOCUS ON THE NATURE OF GOD**



40

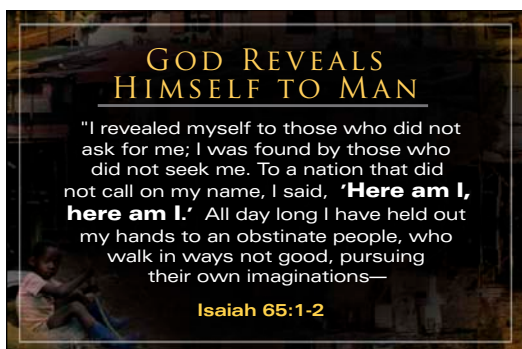


**FOUNDATIONAL  
PRESUPPOSITIONS**

**God Is**

**God Reveals Himself**  
**generally** in His creation &  
**specifically** in His written Word

41

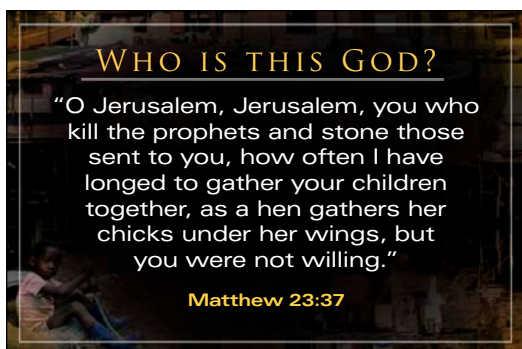


**GOD REVEALS  
HIMSELF TO MAN**

"I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, '**Here am I, here am I.**' All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—

**Isaiah 65:1-2**

42

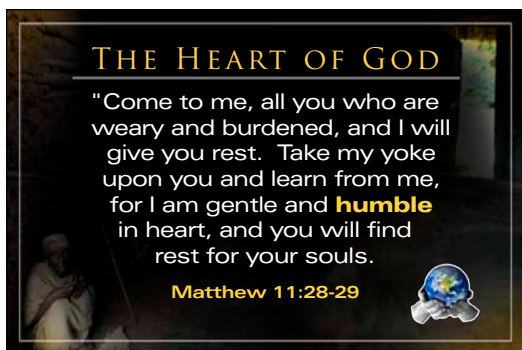


**WHO IS THIS GOD?**

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

**Matthew 23:37**


43



**THE HEART OF GOD**

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and **humble** in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

**Matthew 11:28-29**



44



**METAMORPHOO'**

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being **transformed** into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.


**2 Corinthians 3:18**

45

**THE HEART OF GOD**

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and **humble** in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

**Matthew 11:28-29**




46

**"TAPEINOS"**

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the **humble**.

**Luke 1:51-52**




47

**"TAPEINOS"**

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the **humble**."

**Humble** yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

**James 4:6,10**



48

**JOHN 14:4-9**

"You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well..."

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**JOHN 14:4-9**

From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

50

**DON'T MISTAKE THIS**

**2 Timothy 1:7**

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

**Humility** is not **"Timidity"**!

**"MAN OF STEEL AND VELVET"**

51

**WHO IS LIKE YOU?**

**Psalm 35:10**

My whole being will exclaim,  
**"Who is like you, O LORD?**  
 You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them."

**WHO IS THIS GOD?**

52

**THE FIRST AND GREATEST COMMANDMENT**

Jesus replied:  
 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **This is the first and greatest commandment.**"

**Matthew 22:37-38**



53

**AND THE 2ND IS LIKE IT...**

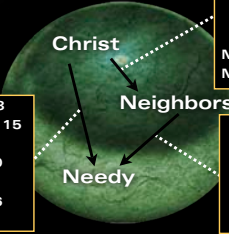
"And the second is like it: **'Love your neighbor as yourself.'** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

**Matthew 22:39-40**



54

**COMMUNITY**



Lev 19:18  
 Gal 5:13-14  
 Rom 13:8-10  
 James 2:8  
 Matt 25:33-36  
 Matt 22:37-40

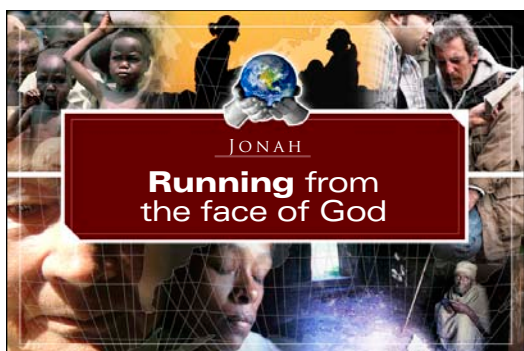
1 Sam 2:8  
 Job 5:11, 15  
 Psa 12:5  
 Psa 35:10  
 Psa 72:4  
 Psa 138:6  
 Isa 57:15

Prov 14:21  
 Hab 2:15  
 Matt 5:43-44  
 Prov 28:27  
 Dt 15:11  
 1 John 3:17

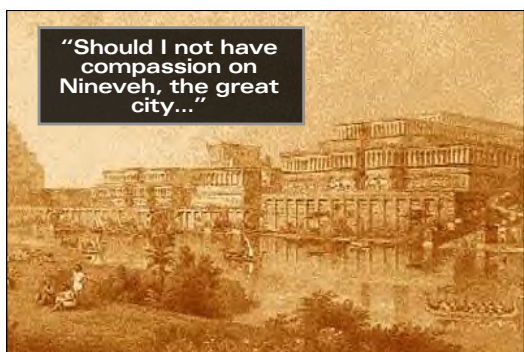
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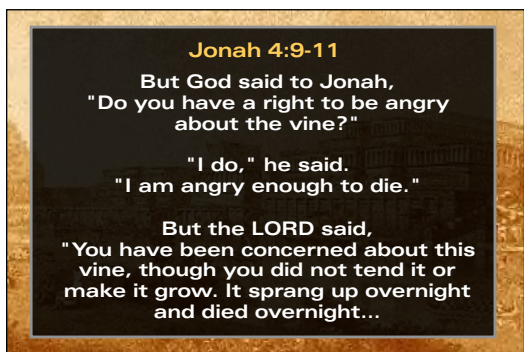
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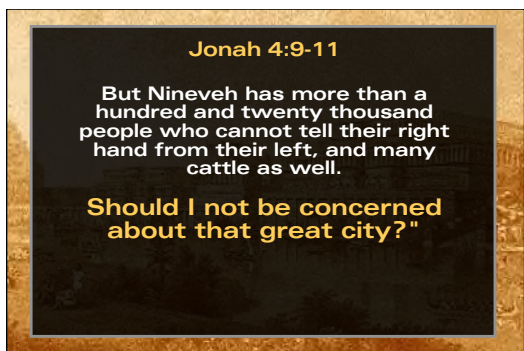
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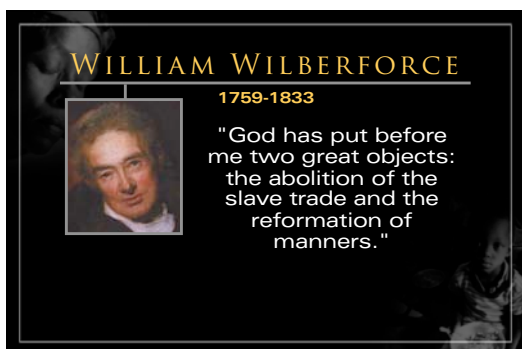




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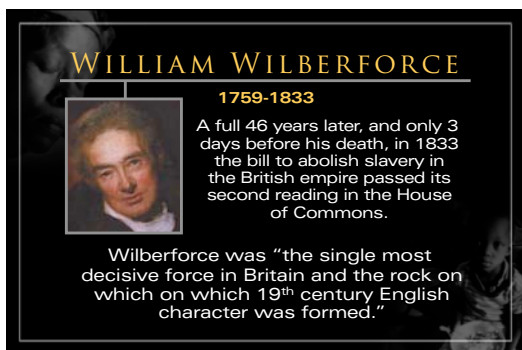


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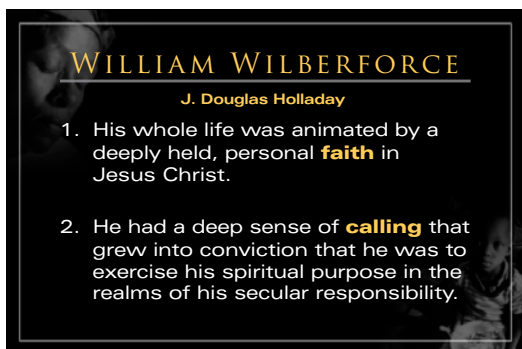
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Pollock, John. *A Man Who Changed his Times*. (McLean, Virginia: The Trinity Forum Reading, 1996), p. 5.



64

Pollock, John. *A Man Who Changed his Times*. (McLean, Virginia: The Trinity Forum Reading, 1996), p. 5.



65

Pollock, John. *A Man Who Changed his Times*. (McLean, Virginia: The Trinity Forum Reading, 1996), p. 6-8.

**WILLIAM WILBERFORCE**  
 J. Douglas Holladay


3. He was committed to the strategic importance of a band of like-minded **friends** devoted to working together in chosen ventures.
4. He believed deeply in the **power of ideas and moral beliefs to change culture** through sustained public persuasion.

66

Pollock, John. *A Man Who Changed his Times*. (McLean, Virginia: The Trinity Forum Reading, 1996), p. 6-8.

**WILLIAM WILBERFORCE**  
 J. Douglas Holladay

5. He was **willing to pay a steep cost** for his courageous public stands and was persistent in pursuing his life task.



67

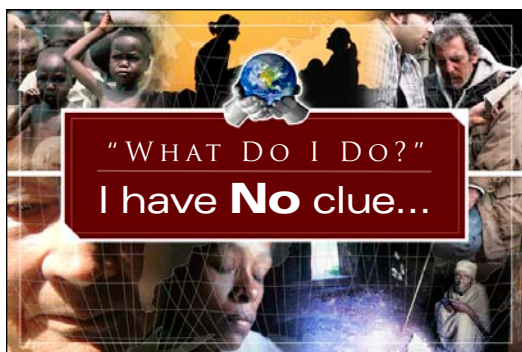
Pollock, John. *A Man Who Changed his Times*. (McLean, Virginia: The Trinity Forum Reading, 1996), p. 6-8.

**WE ARE IN GOOD COMPANY**  
 "Cloud of Witnesses"  
 (Hebrews 11)

Early Christians      Later Christians

**"...the world was not worthy of them."**

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**"WHAT DO I DO?"**  
 I have **No** clue...

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COMMUNITY & INVOLVEMENT

**God Cares,**  
 do I?

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## Outline

### Lesson 12 - Community & Involvement: God Cares, Do I?

- I. Introduction – The Greatest and Second Greatest Commandment
  - A. Matthew 22:34-40 – "And a second is like it...love your neighbor as yourself."
  - B. Luke 10:25-29 – "He wanted to justify himself, so he asked 'Who is my neighbor?'"
- II. Who is my neighbor? – Radical design of this sphere: Christ, a neighbor, the needy
  - A. Story of the good Neighbor – Jesus didn't answer the question "Who is my neighbor?" but instead told us what a good neighbor is
  - B. Who are the needy? – poor, orphans, widows, sick, prisoners, outcasts, unpopular, neglected, left out, homely, last – The needy are great in a sphere we neglect
- III. Seeking the Heart of God
  - A. God's heart for the needy and lowly – He saves the poor and lifts up the lowly – Who is this God?
  - B. Foundational Presuppositions - God is and He has revealed Himself to us
  - C. What is it about the nature of God that causes Him to reveal Himself to us?
    - 1. Isaiah 65:1-2 "To a nation that did not call on my name I said, "Here am I, Here I am. All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people..."
    - 2. Matthew 23:37 "...I have longed to gather your children together..."
- IV. "Tapeinos" – The humble heart of God
  - A. Matthew 11:28-29 "For I am gentle and humble in heart" - Jesus washes the feet of his disciples and in John 14:4-9 tells them "Anyone who has seen me, has seen the father." – Man of steel and velvet
  - B. Psalm 35:10 - My whole being will exclaim "Who is like you, O God!"
- V. Involvement – God's Involvement and Ours

- A. Seeing others as God sees them and recognizing that they have eternal significance
- B. Jonah and Nineveh - Jonah running from the face of God – "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city?"
- C. Transforming Culture - "How Christianity Changed the World"
  - 1. William Wilberforce –Abolished slavery through a deep sense of calling, band of like-minded brothers, and sustained public persuasion
  - 2. We are in good company - Hebrews 11- Cloud of Witnesses
- D. "What do I do?" – Get your calling from the One who made you, the One who gifted you. Continue to gaze upon the face of God, pursue Him and continually be transformed into the very image of Christ. May God's truth be a fire in your bones.



## Key Terms

### Lesson 12 – Community & Involvement: God Cares, Do I?

**Needy:** The poor, orphans, widows, sick, prisoners, outcasts, unpopular, neglected, left out, homely, last, etc. See the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

**Story of the Good Neighbor:** Often referred to as the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus reveals what a good neighbor is and how a good neighbor should act. See Luke 10:25-37.

**Tapeinos:** Greek for humble. The same word is used by Jesus to describe his heart as well as the many verses that call us to be humble. For example "for I am gentle and humble in heart." See Matthew 11:29, James 4:6 and Philippians 2:8.

**Triclinium:** A room in a Roman building used to entertain company. Hosts and guests would recline on pillows around three sides of a low square table; the fourth side of the table was left open to allow service to the table. Dining was the defining ritual in Roman domestic life, lasting from late afternoon through late at night. Typically, 9-20 guests were invited, arranged in a prescribed seating order to emphasize divisions in status.

**William Wilberforce** (1759-1833): An English parliamentarian and leader of the campaign against slavery.



## Scripture References

### Lesson 12 – Community & Involvement: God Cares, Do I?

Deut 6:4-9	Matt 19:16-17	Matt 22:33-40	Luke 10:25-29
Luke 10:29-37	1 Sam 2:1-10	Job 5:11,15	Psa 12:5
Psa 35:10	Psa 22:4	Psa 138:6	Isa 57:15
Lev 19:18	Gal 5:13-14	Rom 13:8-10	James 2:8
Matt 25:33-36	Matt 22:37-40	Prov 14:21	Matt 5:43-44
Prov 28:27	Deut 15:11	1 John 3:17	Deut 24:14
Job 5:15	John 17:6	Amos 4:13	Isa 65:1-2
Matt 23:37-38	Matt 11:28-29	2 Cor 3:18	Luke 1:51-52
James 4:6,10	Col 3:11	1 Pet 5:5-6	2 Cor 10:1
John 13	John 14:4-9	2 Tim 1:7	Col 4:5-6
Jonah 4:9-11	Heb 11	2 Tim 2:15	Jer 20:9
Heb 2:15			



## Recommended Reading

### Lesson 12 – Community & Involvement: God Cares, Do I?

Please note that not everything in these suggested resources should be considered endorsed by Focus on the Family. Nevertheless, Dr. Tackett has found this material helpful. Scripture should be your first and primary resource.

- Briner, B. 1993. *Roaring Lambs: A Gentle Plan to Radically Change your World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Minnery, Tom. (2001). *Why You Can't Stay Silent: A Biblical Mandate to Shape our Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Pollock, J. 1996. *William Wilberforce: A Man who Changed His Times*. McLean, VA: Trinity Forum.
- Schaeffer, Francis A. 1981. *A Christian Manifesto*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books.
- Schmidt, Alvin. J. 2001. *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Scott, Otto. 1994. *The Great Christian Revolution: How Christianity Transformed the World*. Windsor, NY: The Reformer Library.



## Historical Figure: William Wilberforce

Do ideas, beliefs, and conceptions of truth have a measurable impact upon the shape of culture and society? Can an individual – with the help of co-laborers and friends – actually change the times in which he or she lives? If you doubt it, consider the example of William Wilberforce.

It's arguable that Wilberforce was one of the three or four *most* influential figures of the past two centuries. As a result of his labors, one of the most heinous evils of all human history – the "execrable villainy" of institutionalized slavery – was eradicated from the British Empire at a time when her political power and prestige were at their height, an achievement that was directly attributable to his belief in the absolute truth of the Gospel. For Wilberforce was a convinced Christian who held that the biblical principles of selflessness, sacrifice, and love *must* be actively applied to the needs and concerns of the human community at large.

Wilberforce was born at Hull, Yorkshire, on August 4, 1759. His father, a well-to-do merchant, died when William was nine years old, and the boy was sent to live with his aunt and uncle, strong evangelical Christians and firm friends of the preachers George Whitefield and John Newton. Under their care, William quickly came to possess "a rare and pleasing character of piety." Of Newton, Wilberforce later wrote, "I revered him as a parent when I was a child."<sup>1</sup>

His fashionable mother, alarmed to think that her son was becoming a religious "enthusiast," soon brought him back to Yorkshire, where he was quickly introduced to the social "gaities of Hull." By the time he went off to St. John's College, Cambridge at the age of seventeen, Wilberforce had all but abandoned his earlier Christian beliefs.

While at the University, having inherited a large fortune from his uncle, Wilberforce was compelled to choose a career from among the three options most commonly allotted to young gentlemen of wealth and station: pleasure, business, or public service. He selected the last, and upon leaving Cambridge at the age of twenty stood for and won election to the House of Commons as representative for Hull in 1780. In 1784 he was reelected for Hull, and on April 6 of the same year he was elected for Yorkshire County.

Wilberforce was well suited to the life of a politician. Naturally vivacious and gregarious, he was widely regarded as one of the wittiest and most charming men in England. A regular at all the fashionable London clubs, he rapidly became an important fixture in William Pitt's Tory government. He might even have succeeded Pitt as Prime Minister had events turned out differently. But a "great change" was in the offing.

In 1784 Wilberforce took a pleasure trip to France with his mother, his sister, a female cousin, and his friend and former teacher Isaac Milner. He had no idea what he was letting himself in for



by inviting Milner, a Cambridge professor and an evangelical Christian, to join the party. During the course of their travels, Wilberforce and Milner read and discussed the Greek New Testament and Philip Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. By the time they arrived back in London on February 22, 1785, Wilberforce was intellectually convinced of the truth of biblical Christianity.

Inwardly conflicted as to the practical implications of his newfound faith, he told Pitt that he intended to "withdraw from public life for a time." But the Prime Minister forcefully opposed this plan. "Surely the principles as well as the practice of Christianity are simple," he said, "and lead not to meditation only, but to action."<sup>2</sup>

Wilberforce received the same counsel from his childhood mentor, the Reverend John Newton, now vicar of St. Mary Woolnoth's church in London. "It is hoped and believed," said Newton, "that the Lord has raised you up for the good of His church and for the good of the nation."<sup>3</sup>

So Wilberforce decided to remain in politics. In time, he became convinced that God had placed before him "two great objects: the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners [morals]."<sup>4</sup> It is important to understand that these two aims were intimately interrelated. For Wilberforce's accomplishments in the public square were predicated on the principle that social reform must flow from genuine spiritual fervor. He was not primarily a moralizer or a "do-gooder," but a *Christian* who believed that the well-being of a nation is directly dependent upon the sincerity with which its citizens adhere to basic biblical truths. This was the theme of his best-selling book, *A Practical View of Christianity* (1797),<sup>5</sup> in which he spoke powerfully against "the fatal habit of considering Christian morals as distinct from Christian doctrines." "If ... a principle of true Religion should ... gain ground," he wrote, "there is no estimating the effects on public morals, and the consequent influence on our political welfare."<sup>6</sup>

It was in the strength of this conviction that Wilberforce, together with a group of like-minded Christian political associates – the so-called "Clapham Community" – set out to tackle the evil of slavery. At the request of nobleman Sir Charles Middleton and with the encouragement of Pitt and Grenville, he took upon himself the charge of "giving notice of a motion on the slave trade" in the House of Commons, noting his resolve to do so in a journal entry of October 28, 1787. He made his first parliamentary speech on the subject on May 12, 1789 and introduced a bill to abolish the trade in 1791. That bill went down to defeat by a vote of 163 to 88.

But Wilberforce was not to be so easily discouraged. He re-introduced his slave trade measure in Parliament the following year – and the next year, and the next. He persisted in the battle for almost twenty years, enduring storms of criticism, slander, and malicious opposition along the way. At last, after nearly two decades of unremitting toil, the Abolition of the Slave Trade bill passed the House of Lords by a vote of 41 to 20. In Commons, where the victory was won by the stunning margin of 114 to 15, Wilberforce was accorded a standing ovation for his dedicated efforts. The bill became law on March 25, 1807.

It was an incredible achievement; and yet, for Wilberforce and his associates, it was only the first step. From the beginning of the Anti-Slavery Movement they had proceeded on the assumption that their goal would not be achieved until *abolition*, the end of the slave trade, was followed by

the *emancipation* of all slaves within the confines of the British Empire. The fight for this second part of their objective, which continued beyond Wilberforce's retirement from Parliament in 1825, did not reach its conclusion until July 26, 1833, when the Abolition of Slavery bill passed the House of Commons on its third reading. Three days later Wilberforce was dead.

Wilberforce would have disclaimed credit for these earthshaking accomplishments; and yet, as biographer John Pollock assures us, "the essentials of his beliefs and of his conscience formed the foundation of the British character for the next two generations at least."<sup>7</sup> He was convinced that "Christianity's supreme political value is its direct hostility to selfishness."<sup>8</sup> In this, he merits the emulation of those of us today who are involved in the entire scope of pro-life issues – issues which, as Senator Mark Hatfield has observed, "flow from our present-day manifestation of the 'grand malady of selfishness.'"<sup>9</sup>

In death, Wilberforce was survived by his wife Barbara and six children – two daughters and four sons. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, where a statue now stands to commemorate his legacy of faith and freedom.

<sup>1</sup> Garth Lean, *God's Politician* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard Publishing, 1988), 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>3</sup> David J. Vaughan, *Statesman and Saint: The Principled Politics of William Wilberforce* (Nashville: Highland Books, 2002), 56.

<sup>4</sup> From Wilberforce's Diary, 1787; cited in Vaughan, 61.

<sup>5</sup> In full, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in This Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity*.

<sup>6</sup> William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of Christianity*, ed. Kevin Charles Belmonte (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 51.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Lean, 177.

<sup>8</sup> Lean, Ch. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Hatfield, Introduction to *Real Christianity* (Regent College Publishing, 2003).