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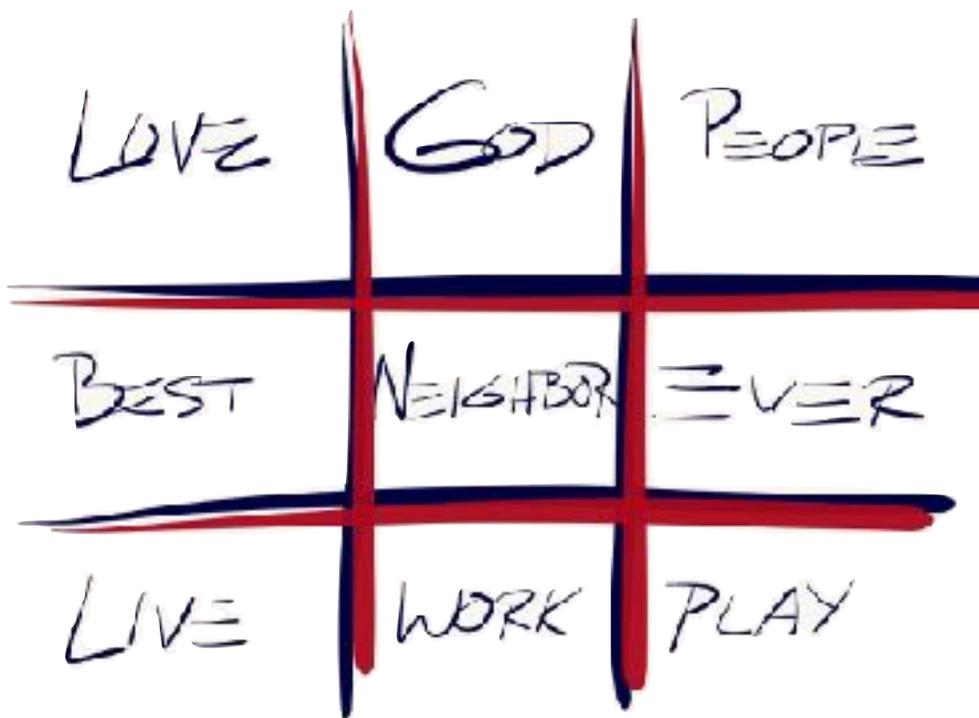
BEST NEIGHBOR EVER

LOVE	GOD	PEOPLE
BEST	NEIGHBOR	EVER
LIVE	WORK	PLAY

A SEVEN-DAY JOURNEY
ON
THE JERICHO ROAD

BY
DARIEN ROGER GABRIEL

Becoming the Best Neighbor Ever



A Seven-Day Journey on
the Jericho Road

Darien Roger Gabriel

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Becoming the Best Neighbor Ever: A Seven-Day Journey with the Good Samaritan

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“SOAP’ing” Through Scripture

INTRODUCTION

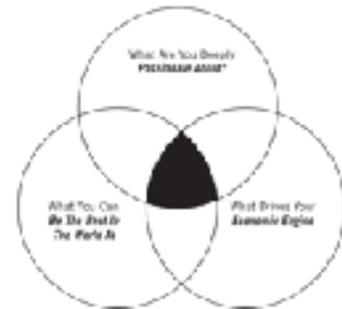
Best. Neighbor. Ever.

In my search at becoming a better church leader, I always felt funny about striving to be the best. It sounded arrogant to me. God is worthy of our best, of course. However, to set out to be the best seemed presumptuous and cocky.

At the same time, to settle for less than the best is not going to glorify my glorious God either. What to do! This is where I threw my hands up and gave up. That is until I read *The Hedgehog Concept*¹ by Jim Collins.

Jim Collins, inspired by the famous essay by Isaiah Berlin², solved my dilemma through his most excellent tool (see right).

This tool resolved my dilemma by helping me understand that I **COULD** be the best at something—I just needed to narrow my focus and be realistic about it.



Starting with the great commandment of Jesus³, I narrowed my application to the spheres where I actually had some control: “Where I live, work and play.”⁴

My conclusion is that I want to become the best neighbor ever where I personally live, work and play. In addition, I want to lead others to do the same thing.

This book takes us to Jesus’ best story of someone being the best neighbor ever where they live, work and play—on the road to Jericho. I write this to inspire, encourage and equip those who read this to do the same thing. May God’s grace carry you home.

—Darien Roger Gabriel

¹ The Hedgehog Concept, Jim Collins, <https://www.jimcollins.com/concepts/the-hedgehog-concept.html>

² The Hedgehog and the Fox, Isaiah Berlin, ????

³ Matthew 22:37-39, “...love your neighbor as yourself.”

⁴ I learned this phrase from Neal McGlohon at The Cypress Project, <http://cypressproject.org/>

The Parable of the Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37

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

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

27 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'**[c]**; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'**[d]**"

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

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. **31** A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. **32** So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. **34** He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35** The next day he took out two denarii**[e]** 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.'

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

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

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Day 1: What Must I Do?

Scripture

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Luke 10:25

Observations

An expert of the Old Testament Law wanted to see if he could discredit Jesus in front of the crowd. So he asked a question often debated: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus' response indicates this question deserves our attention. What can we learn from this profound question?

1. "What must I *do*..." shows a faith response is required. One must act believing to receive eternal life.
2. "What must I *do*..." reminds us that it is a personal response. No one can respond for anyone else. It is between him or her and God.
3. Eternal life is a gift. It is given for free—no stings attached.
4. "Inherit" indicates the recipients are family. An inheritance is freely received by the surviving

Prayer

Write or say a simple prayer. Pray interacting with the scripture and questions above.

children. This inheritance is for family.

5. Eternal life is the process of becoming part of God's family. When we receive eternal life, we become a son or daughter of our Father the King. Along with this beautiful and unmerited relationship are familial rights... and responsibilities.
6. Eternal life is life with Jesus that lasts forever. There is no end.

Applications

What now?

What is your answer to the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

If you have not, decide if that is what you want to do. If so, pray for it. Ask God for it right now. He is listening.

Share where you are on this journey with someone whom you trust, as you work through these questions.

What is God saying to you right now?

What are you going to do about it?

Day 2: Two Sides of the Same Coin

Scripture

"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.'"

Luke 10:27

Observations

Jesus is aware of being tested by this religious expert. He is an expert and a master teacher himself. In fact, he knows the Law better than anyone.

Jesus responded: "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" Jesus gave this expert a chance to share his interpretation and he did not disappoint. He answered Jesus by quoting the Law, like an expert. (Leviticus 19:18 & Deuteronomy 6:5)

In short, he said love God with all that you are and love people as you love yourself.

Applications

Love God. Love People. Two sides of the same coin. You really cannot do one well without doing the other.

We cannot love God with all that we are and yet not love the people around us.

This is the evidence that we actually love God.

We cannot love people well if we do not love God (who *is* love) with all that we are. (1 John 4:8) Our capacity to love is us inviting God to love people through us—our words and actions. We are channels of his love—not the source of it.

What now?

Receive his love. To love God and people, we must first receive his love (by faith). Then his love can flow through us into the lives of other people.

Show his love. To love God, we simply love people. How do we do that? We let his love flow through our words and actions to them. Even to our enemy. Because everyone is created in the image of God. (Genesis 1:26) We serve people to display God's love to them. They do not just see our actions—they feel his love.

Ultimately, we lead people to follow Jesus. That means they learn to receive and show his love as well.

Prayer

Write or say a simple prayer.

Day 3: Love Where you Live, Work and Play

Scripture

"Love your neighbor as yourself." Luke 10:27f

Observations

This expert rightly quotes the Old Testament Law by summarizing the verse that says to love God with all that you are and to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Instead of coming up with his own answer, he answers Jesus with God's word. A wise move.

Applications

"Love" is what we do, according to this ancient command. It is a selfless action—sacrificial and unconditional. God's love is not a feeling, though it moves people emotionally. God's love is speaking or doing something for someone that blesses them for God's glory and their good.

"Your neighbor" gives us the context for this love. We are to love people where we live, work and play. These are actual people with whom we live in close proximity. They are family, friends, acquaintances and strangers. And they are "your" neighbors—collectively unique to you. They are often nothing like you. No one has the exact same

neighbors you have where you live, work and play.

Finally, we love them "as (ourselves)." When we are hungry, we feed ourselves. When we are tired, we rest. When we are lonely, we find people to be with. We are good at taking care of ourselves.

We should love others with that kind of thoughtful intentionality and care.

What now?

We are physical beings in a physical world. It is hard to know what it looks like to love God until we realize that when we love people we are loving God as well. This is how the spiritual impacts the physical. The way we speak to and treat other people—especially those different than us—shows how much love (or lack of love) we have for others. This, in turn, shows our love (or lack of love) for God.

What is God saying to you right now?

What are you going to do about it?

Prayer

Write or say a simple prayer.

Day 4: Do This and You Will Live

Scripture

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.'" Luke 10:28

Observations

In response to Jesus' question, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?", the expert of the Law answered well by quoting God's command to love God with all that you are and to love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus applauded this answer publicly because it was how he himself answered this question many times. (Matthew 22:37-39; Mark 12:30-31) We receive eternal life when we follow God trusting him to love others through us.

What does it mean to "live"?

It refers to both the here and the hereafter; to an abundant life now and eternal life in eternity.

The key point Jesus made here was in his final comment: "Do this and you will live." That is, when you trust and follow God's command and let him love your neighbor through you, you will live forever proving your faith in him.

Applications

Start by walking with the Lord. Then invite others to follow you on this journey.

What now?

1. *Walk in love with God yourself.* Trust the Lord to love you—and others through you—as you learn to walk with him fully and faithfully.
2. *Lead others to love God and people.* Start at home and work your way outward toward those who are following you where you live, work and play.

What is God saying to you right now?

What are you going to do about it?

Prayer

Write out or say a simple prayer.

Day 5: Stop Fooling Yourself

Scripture

"But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" Luke 10:29

Observations

It is hard to know what this expert was thinking. Jesus affirmed him and his answer publicly. Apparently, however, he was not satisfied. (Dealing with guilt?) As a result, he asked the question that prompted Jesus to share this amazing parable of the Good Samaritan.

If he was dealing with guilt, what sin was he trying to justify?

Could that sin be *loving his neighbor as himself*?

It is certainly possible that he loved his neighbors. At least those who were like him. Those who were good Jews. Perhaps, however, he struggled to love those who were different than himself. Maybe they were not good Jews but Samaritans. Or Gentiles. Or unfaithful Jews. Maybe they were not knowledgeable of the word of God so he thought less of them.

If the expert was truly comprehending this command, "Love your neighbor as yourself," he likely would have humbly

asked, "How do I do this?" (Notice Jesus answers this question too)

We also do this, do we not? We can justify and rationalize our thoughts, words and actions quite well, thank you. Instead of looking at things from God's perspective, we look at them from our own selfish perspective. Perhaps we are fooling ourselves.

Applications

What now?

Being aware of my selfish, sinful tendencies is a great help in preventing me from giving into them. I am often tempted to rationalize my unloving thoughts, words and actions. Prayerfully and more intentionally being aware of this can help me repent while it is still fresh in my mind and this helps me get back on track with the Lord.

Are you fooling yourself?

What is God saying to you right now?

What are you going to do about it?

Prayer

Write or say a simple prayer.

Day 6: Compassion Just Loves

Scripture

"But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him." -Jesus, Luke 10:33

Observations

In Jesus' parable, two Jewish religious leaders saw, and then avoided, the half-dead man in the ditch on the road to Jericho. In contrast, Jesus tells of a Samaritan who practically and sacrificially showed this injured man compassion.

Note that Samaritans were half-Jewish and half-Gentile. This means they were shunned at best and hated at worst by Jews and Gentiles. They had racial and religious issues with everyone. They were enemies, in most cases. Yet, Jesus answered the expert's question, "Who is my neighbor?"

This "Good Samaritan" did not solve all of this man's problems. He did not try and convert him to the Samaritan way. He generously and sacrificially met this man's most immediate needs. He spent precious time and valuable money risking his life to help this needy man. It was a selfless act of love.

Applications

Your neighbor is the person in front of you in need right now, regardless of their race. No matter their religious beliefs. Despite the inconvenience. This is your neighbor whom you are to love, according to Jesus.

Jesus summed up the law as selfless love for others. Bottom line, it is the way to answer the question, "How do I live and love as a good neighbor should?"

What is God saying to you right now?

What are you going to do about it?

Prayer

Write out or say a simple prayer.

Day 7: Go and Do Likewise

Scripture

“(Jesus asked) ‘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 10:36-37

Observations

Answering the expert’s question, Jesus asks another question at the conclusion of his parable.

Which one was a good neighbor by obeying the law of the Lord?

This parable was scandalous to Jesus’ hearers. This love and grace went far beyond what priests or rabbis taught and practiced. Centuries of racism and religious bias were ingrained in the people of God. Jesus was dramatically challenging the status quo.

He continues to do so today.

Applications

Who is your neighbor?

Name 3 neighbors who live nearby.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Name 3 neighbors who work near you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Name 3 neighbors who play where you play.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What is God saying to you right now?

What are you going to do about it?

Prayer

Write out or say a simple prayer.

CONCLUSION

Jesus gives us an amazing story illustrating what it looks like for us to love our neighbor as ourself. Jesus calls us to love the person God has put in our path no matter who they are or where they have been. Just love them compassionately. It is a challenging way to live.

At the end of the day, however, Jesus knows that we cannot do this. Not really. Not alone. Not apart from Him. That is why he gave his followers the Holy Spirit of God. Through his Spirit, God empowers his followers to not only love like this—he empowers his followers to WANT to love like this. Even when it is costly, uncomfortable and unpopular.

My prayer is that you will never see your neighbors the same way again. My hope is that you will let Jesus—truly the best neighbor ever—to live in and through you so that you will be encouraged and empowered to become the best neighbor ever where you uniquely live, work and play. When we walk with him in this, our lives will never be the same.

I hope that my short SOAP Journal will not only encourage you to become the best neighbor ever where you live, work and play, but that it will also encourage you to begin SOAP'ing through scripture on your own.

I would love to hear what God is teaching you as a result of this book. Email me at Darien.Gabriel@GraceToday.net.

“SOAP'ing” Through Scripture

These 7 devotional thoughts were written using [the S.O.A.P method](#)⁵. Created by Wayne Cordeiro⁶, this process teaches us how to better hear from God as we read the Bible, and then applying what God’s “Divine Mentors” teach us. Practicing this discipline is life-changing.

S – Scripture

As I read through my Bible reading plan I “listen” to the Holy Spirit for a verse that jumps out at me, so to speak, and I mark it. Then I select one verse out of all I marked and write it down under “S.” Again, the goal is to *hear from God in the process*.

O – Observations

This is where most of my time is spent. I ask and answer questions of the verse. Questions like who? what? where? why? when? and how? I write all that I observe from that single verse and it’s immediate context. It can be a paragraph or a lot more.

A – Applications

When I do a good job with observations, the applications emerge more easily. I write down what the verse is telling me

to do. Sometimes it is obvious and explicit while at other times it is just implied.

P – Prayer

I write out a simple prayer to God asking him to help me do what I just wrote down. This is what I write at a minimum. Sometimes I write more.

Title

Then I give that day’s entry a simple and memorable title that will help me remember my application throughout the day.

Contents

Then I write the date, title and verse reference in the front of my journal creating a kind of table of contents for the journal.

Share

Finally, I text my “SOAP” for the day to a friend I am encouraging (and who is encouraging me) to stay faithful during the week. It looks like this:

“Teach and Proclaim the Good News”
Acts 5:42 #SOAP

⁵ <https://www.lifejournal.cc/> Online hub for S.O.A.P. journaling

⁶ By the book [Divine Mentors here](#)