

# DEEP PREP GUIDE

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## BIAS | MARCH 8 | DO HARD THINGS

**SCRIPTURE** | Luke 10:25-37

**PROBLEM**

We have relational problems with people different than us.

**BOTTOM LINE**

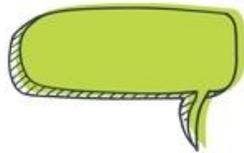
We are all created in the image of God.

**DO HARD THING**

Check your bias.

This is a shocking truth: people are different. Between race, ethnicity, class, beliefs, and even just opinions, we as human beings have a hard time connecting with people who are different than us. Since this is so challenging, we have seen people get hurt as a result of belonging to a certain group of people. What does God say about doing hard things when it comes to people who are different than us? How can we step out of what is known to us in order to step into what may be an unknown difference? How does that change how we see God? Lent calls us to journey through the old life of brokenness to find new life. Lent is the sure sign that God's story doesn't end in ashes, but that's where it starts.

Our journey through Lent this year will challenge us in Student Ministry to look at concrete topics in our lives and be asked to Do Hard Things when it comes to those topics each week. The goal is to challenge the old life, the life that ultimately died with Jesus, so that we can rise into new life, resurrection life, which we will celebrate on Easter. Lent is a 40 day wandering through those themes that can lead us to spiritual awakenings about ourselves and the world around us giving us hope and wholeness.



# TENSION

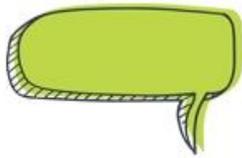
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One of the many things that I (Tim B.) love about Prince of Peace is the fact that we are a congregation of a lot of diverse opinions and ways of thinking. We come from different walks of life, classes, neighborhoods, schools, and denominational backgrounds to worship the God of the Universe together. While we are not perfect, I believe on the "inclusion" and "acceptance" scale, we do a decent job at creating a safe space for all differences of opinion while maintaining common unity centered on what matters we need to agree on.

Unfortunately, in a very public way, disagreement and differences between people have been characterized by violence, immaturity, uncivility, and poor communication. One does not have to go far into our culture to see that there is a real tension surrounding how we as individuals connect with people who are different. If we as adults cannot model good behavior and positive spirit that reflects God's image in all people, how can we expect kids to do hard things and learn about their own 'bias' when it comes to their differences?

It's important that we check our own bias first. How are we doing on relating to people who are different than us? Why is it important to be able to do that? How do we know when a disagreement or a difference has affected the relationship? These are all basic elements to how God's people connect with one another. If we can't grow relationships with people who are different, how are we expected to be challenged and changed in God's family made up of people from all walks of life?

It starts with seeing how we see people. Do we have anger against a certain type of person? Has a certain type of person hurt us in the past and we still carry that around with us? How do you talk about and talk to people who are different than you? How can our language shape how we see people?



## TEXT [CONTEXT]

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The parable of the Good Samaritan is quite familiar, even in secular culture. Most U.S. states have laws in its name, making it possible for bystanders to help people in need without being placed at legal risk when they do so. What is a preacher to do with a parable so familiar that "everybody" already knows what it means? One option is to recognize that our certainty places us squarely in the shoes of the lawyer whose questions prompted the parable in the first place. If Jesus' story challenged his preconceived notions, we might create space for it to challenge our own.

With the exception of a very brief addendum regarding Luke 10:38-45 (Mary and Martha), the following reflections offer entry points into a parable that readily lends itself (as parables tend to do) to multiple interpretations. What must I do?

"What must I do (Greek: poiein) to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25) The lawyer's question echoes the crowds that gather around John the Baptist (Luke 3:10) and it is repeated by the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18). Each of these questioners wants something from God. It is almost as if people are looking for a checklist: first do this, then that, everything will be all right, and you will have won God's mercy.

When Jesus answers with a question of his own, the lawyer demonstrates his knowledge of the Bible -- he quotes from the Shema and the explication of the Decalogue (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). Readers of Luke might recall that the devil can quote scripture, too (Luke 4:1-12). Knowledge of the right words need not imply that one has a clue about the ways of God.

"Do this, and you will live (poiein, Luke 10:28)," answers Jesus, affirming those greatest commandments to love God and love neighbor. Go and do likewise" (poiein, 10:37), he says, after telling a story that leaves his questioner asking more questions. Jesus offers a to-do list, but not one as simple or cut-and-dried as the lawyer (or we ourselves) might wish. Life is rarely subject to simple to-do lists. Nor is faithfulness.

The Hebrew scriptures command care for the most vulnerable, including the foreigner or immigrant: "You shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:34). Surely, the lawyer already knows this. Nonetheless, his second question ("And who is my neighbor?") appears to place limits on his circle of concern (and, perhaps, on Jesus' circle of concern). It is as if he were saying, "Yes, but of course you can't mean those people are neighbors, right?"

If Jesus had told a parable with a Foreigner-Samaritan as the injured and vulnerable person and a Jewish Jesus-follower in the role of the helper, nobody would have batted an eyelash. Such a story would follow culturally expected scripts and would confirm the lawyer's self-justification (see Luke 10:29).

But "culturally expected" is not how the parable plays out. Among those people (that is, folks-not-like-us) is one who turns out to be a hero. That reversal offers potential points of connection for preachers. If nothing else it suggests a significant difference between Jesus' and the scripture-quoting lawyer' views of these "others." The reversal also offers clues about God's mercy (Luke 10:37), which often manifests itself to us in ways we do not expect.

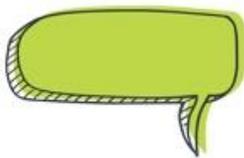
The traveler in Jesus' story is in no position to do anything. There is no cell phone to call his friends, no roadside assistance from the local highway patrol. He is beaten and naked, vulnerable and alone. Afraid. No safety net. He cannot save himself. His situation contrasts that of the 70 whom Jesus had sent out at the beginning of chapter 10. Their vulnerability was voluntary-- no purse, no bag, no sandals, no food except whatever is freely offered (Luke 10:1-7). The traveler has had all these things stripped from him against his will. In both cases, though, life hangs on the generosity of others and the graciousness of God.

Imagine hope crashing inside the battered traveler as the Priest and Levite pass by. Do we feel a sting of judgment in Jesus' portrayal of these "spiritual-and-also-religious" representatives? Imagine the injured one saying to himself as he watches the foreigner approach, "Please, God, not him. Please-oh-please, send somebody else."

Jews and Samaritans shared historical roots, but their respective cultures and religious convictions had diverged over time. Conflict was not uncommon. In Luke 9:52-55, when a Samaritan village refuses to offer hospitality to Jesus, James and John want to respond with a heavenly firebomb. The impulse to destroy the other is not new, particularly in times of fear.

Even without Facebook and Twitter, first-century folks would have known about protests against Roman governmental authorities and ethnic clashes between Gentiles and Jews. It is into this context of fearfulness that Jesus speaks a parable of vulnerability and compassion as elements of God's mercy.

(Excerpt taken from [www.workingpreacher.org](http://www.workingpreacher.org))



**TRUTH**

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In order for us to check our own bias, we need to live into the basic reality that everyone is made in God's image and can reflect God in their own way. No one single way of life can hold onto God's image and say "mine". We all grip it together and say "ours". What a difference this would make for our world today. Imagine all of us stepping into the hard thing of differences between people and affirming our created God-image in all of us, and seek to be interested, not angry, open, not suspicious, and welcoming, not closed-doors when it comes to people with differences. Regardless of what happens around us in our society and world, we as God's people can make a difference now in our relationships. We can choose to Do Hard Things and together take hold of God's image in all of us, and seek to understand how we are all wired different to reflect that image to the world.