

SESSION 9

Purpose: By the end of this session, participants will be able (1) to discuss the implications of the parable of the good Samaritan for the relations Christians are to have with all peoples in East-West and North-South directions and (2) to discuss the bishops' vision and proposals for striving toward a just and peaceable world community.

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Materials Needed: copies of the *Foundation Document*, Bibles, and newsprint and marker.

1 Begin by asking someone to read aloud the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Then read to the group the following background information and discussion questions.

"When the lawyer pressed Jesus to define the limits of *neighbor*, his interest was more than academic. The question was quite real. Israel was a captive nation, filled with Romans, Greeks, Syrians, and others.

"Devout Jews were careful to keep the law, but debated how inclusive the law was supposed to be. . . . many Jews narrowed the inclusiveness of the law to mean only other Jews. Some held that a Jew was not to help a Gentile woman in labor, for such a loving act would serve no greater purpose than to add numbers to the Gentile world. Others went so far as to exclude personal enemies from the ranks of *neighbor*.

"The lawyer questioned the identity of his neighbor, but the identity of his enemy was far clearer in his mind. Jews and Samaritans were deeply divided. The Samaritans were Jews who, in times past, had [intermarried with the non-Jewish population]. They did not strictly practice Judaism and worshiped in a separate temple on Mount Gerizim.

"Hatred was not one-sided. . . . between 9 and 6 B.C. Samaritans defiled the Jerusalem Temple by spreading bones of the dead throughout it. Since this act made the Temple ritually unclean, it could not be used to observe the Passover celebration.

"Historians tell us that between A.D. 48 and 52, bands of robbers from both sides raided each other's villages. Peace was restored when Rome intervened. The trouble began when a Galilean traveler was murdered while passing through a Samaritan village en route to Jerusalem.

"Jesus likewise experienced the force of the enmity between the two races. Luke 9:52-53 says that Jesus could find no overnight housing in a Samaritan town because he was en route to the Jerusalem Temple. John 4:9 tells us a Samaritan woman was astonished that Jesus asked her for a drink of water, 'for Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.'

"Yet, Jesus took the figure of his racial enemy—a Samaritan, who was least likely of all people to be a neighbor to a Jew—and made him a model for the Kingdom. The parable of the good Samaritan demonstrates the radical direction that our love for other persons must take. . . .

"What objections might Jesus' audience have raised as he was telling the parable of the good Samaritan? (We should remember that many Jews of that time held a stereotype of Samaritans as bad, immoral, blasphemous persons.) What might his response have been to them? (Jesus' response is found in his characterization of the Samaritan in the parable.)

"What does the story tell you about the extent of the term *neighbor*? (There is no limit circumscribing who may be defined by the term *neighbor*. Even those whom we least expect are our neighbors.)"

2 Divide the group into two teams. Have one team construct a retelling of Luke 10:25-37 as a parable of the good Soviet. Have the other team prepare a retelling of the scriptural story as a parable of the good Third World citizen. Invite each team to share the story it has prepared. How do members of the group feel about persons in the Soviet Union and the Third World after hearing these modern parables? How do the parables challenge our typical attitudes? Do you agree with the bishops' statement that "the American and Soviet peoples . . . share a common humanity, a common aversion to war, a common horror of nuclear weapons, and a common hope for their economic and social well-being" (*Foundation Document*, page 62)? What dreams and desires of peoples in the Third World can you think of that are common to people everywhere? (for instance, adequate food, housing, health care, education, freedom from fear, a better life for their children) Does a Christian view of the neighbor allow us to see people of the USSR or the Third World primarily as enemies or aliens? Do you agree with the bishops' contention that "the nuclear crisis is not primarily a matter of missiles; it is a crisis of human community" (page 62)?

3 Post a large sheet of newsprint for each of the four policy proposals mentioned on pages 75-77 of the *Foundation Document* (Comprehensive Test Ban to Inaugurate a Nuclear Freeze; Consolidation of Existing Treaties and Phased Reductions; Bans on Space Weapons; No-First-Use Agreement). Divide each sheet into two columns: one labeled *pro* and the other *con*. In the *pro* column, write in a shorthand fashion the advantages cited in the *Foundation Document*. Invite the group to add any objections they can think of under the *con* column. Allow group members to question and defend items in either column.

4 On page 77 of the *Foundation Document* the bishops list several trends they see as dangerous and which they oppose. Then, the bishops suggest four particular initiatives the US or Soviet Union could take to build a political climate more conducive to negotiations. Such initiatives would serve as invitations for reciprocal action. Allow the group to discuss these initiatives. Is there any other way to break the vicious cycle of the arms race?

5 One way that Christians can help promote a political climate of support for such initiatives within

the US is to provide “nurture in the ways of peacemaking itself” (page 79). The bishops “encourage the churches to mobilize support for specialized local, national, and international institutes for peace research and training. . .” (page 80). The bishops cite eight general areas of inquiry. Spend some time (as a group or in smaller teams) brainstorming what *might* be done *locally* in the several areas. Record the ideas on newsprint.

6 Close with your own prayer or the following: “Teach us, O Lord, to see other lands and people by the light of the faith we profess; that we may check in ourselves all ungenerous judgments, all presumptuous claims; that being ever ready to recognize the needs and rightful claims of other nations we may do whatever in us lies to remove old hatreds and rivalries, and to hasten new understandings, that each may bring his [or her] tribute of excellence to the treasury of our common humanity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”²

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