



HIS Small Group Study Guide – Love Responds

“9-1-1, what’s your emergency?”

We’ve all heard those four words before, either while watching reruns of COPS or on the other end of the phone after you’ve dialed for help. I’ve never had to dial those three numbers, but I’ve known them by heart as long as I can remember, and I’ve made it a point to make sure my kids know them, too.

But the National Emergency Number Association hasn’t always existed. In fact, there were ninety-two long years between the first ever phone call made by Alexander Graham Bell and the first ever phone call made to 9-1-1. Prior to 1968, if you wanted to report an emergency, you had to dial your local precinct.

Everything changed after 28-year-old Kitty Genovese was murdered while she was on her way to her New York City apartment after a late-night bartending shift. A few weeks after Kitty’s tragic and senseless death, The New York Times reported that 38 witnesses heard Kitty’s screams for help, screams that went on for 30 minutes, **yet help never arrived**. The number of bystanders has since been disputed, but the fact that several people failed to respond remains.

Where was the breakdown? Why didn’t Kitty’s neighbors get out of bed and pick up the phone to call the police upon hearing her horrific screams? Some claim they did. Some reported they didn’t want to get involved. Some figured someone else would make the

call. Some took cues from the other neighbors they observed doing nothing and decided to do nothing as well.

Kitty's complacent neighbors showcased the need for a central response center, which brought about the 9-1-1 emergency call system we know today.

When I heard Kitty's story my heart was filled with conviction. I found myself recalling moments when I had acted like her New York City neighbors: **hearing cries for help, either through a friend's Facebook post or a barista's sad disposition, but ignoring the cries because I didn't have time to get involved, or I was counting on the fact that someone else would step in.** Thinking thoughts like, *"Well someday I can respond, but right now I don't have the programs or infrastructure in place, so it's just not the right time."*

I repented and asked the Lord to help me change my casual bystander mindset, and He led me to a very familiar passage of scripture and helped me read it with a fresh pair of eyes. Aren't you thankful for a gracious God who sent the Holy Spirit to guide us and for the Word that is always transforming us into a more accurate image of Christ?

In Luke 10, a religious scholar asks Jesus what to do to receive **eternal life**. He wasn't asking how to become immortal. Everyone is born an eternal being; after leaving the earth we either live forever in heaven or forever in hell. What this man is asking is how to receive life that comes from God, **an above-and-beyond kind of life that you can live in right now!**

Jesus answers the scholar with a question, *"How do you interpret the law?"* His response became one of the most well-known scriptures in the entire Bible.

Luke 10:27 *"That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself."*

What did Jesus think of this answer? Let's keep reading.

"Good answer!" said Jesus. "Do it and you'll live." Looking for a loophole, he [the scholar] asked, "And just how would you define 'neighbor'?"

Jesus then shared the story of the good Samaritan.

A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. He was attacked by robbers and left for dead. Luckily, witnesses would roll up on the scene: a priest and a Levite. These men would surely help, right? Nope.

It's so strikingly similar to the story of Kitty Genovese. Only this story has a happy ending.

Luke 10:33 *A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, "Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I'll pay you on my way back."*

The Samaritan felt compassion for the bloody and beaten man. The scripture says his heart went out to him. How many times do we encounter people on our paths and send our hearts out to them, but stop there? **We feel compassion, empathy, sadness, anger, disgust, pity, "all the feels," if you will, while forgetting that all the feels in the world, without a sacrificial response, don't amount to anything.**

We have to take care of the people God places in our lives in the same way we take care of ourselves. We sacrifice to make sure dinner is on the table for our families. We sacrifice to make sure our kids have incredible birthday parties. We sacrifice to make sure we have a roof over our heads and clothes on our back. **But what are we sacrificing for our neighbor?**

I know sometimes the world seems hopeless, and it's easier to keep your head down and just make sure that you and yours are happy and healthy, but Jesus says if we want to step into eternal living right now, we have to move from bystanders to first responders.

Let's not wait for someone else to make the call. Let's not roll over and hope someone else steps in. **Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and ears. Ask Him for a genuine concern for the ones in plain sight—a concern for both their social and spiritual needs—and then be ready to respond.** It could be a phone call, providing a warm coat to someone who is cold, an offer to babysit for a friend, bringing flowers to the gal who does your nails, a home-cooked meal for someone going through a hard time, asking someone if you can pray for them, a hand-written note, spending time at a nursing home or a homeless shelter, or buying lunch for the man carrying the card-board sign on the corner. **God's not asking you to start a global ministry; He's simply asking you to love Him and love people. Don't overcomplicate it; see a need and fill the need.**

Love wins, but only when we respond.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. The priest and the Levite probably had a list of good reasons why they could not respond to the injured man. What are some of the good reasons that might cause you to keep walking instead of responding to those hurting along your path?

2. In a world with so many needs, it can be hard to know where and how to start being a responder. The words "love your neighbor as well as you do yourself" are a great launch pad. Part of discovering how you can love others well is defining the ways you love yourself and your own family well.

Part 1. Write down some of the ways you love yourself, your family, and your dear friends well, e.g. making sure everyone is fed, clean and well rested, covering yourself in prayer, making holidays extra special, surrounding yourself with people who build you up, taking care of your body/soul/spirit, etc.

Part 2. How can you translate the ways you love you and yours well to loving your neighbor well?

3. Share about a time when you sacrificially responded to someone in need or about a time when someone responded sacrificially to meet a need in your life.



HIS HEART WORK

Study: Read the story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 in several translations. Read some different online commentaries, and share anything that stirs your heart with your HIS group.

Act: Be a doer of THIS word THIS month. February is synonymous with love. Be an alert servant of the master, and be ready to respond when opportunities present themselves.



PRAYER NEEDS

Write down the prayer requests of your group members, and pray fervently for them! Let your group members know when you are praying for them, if you have any scriptures or encouraging words for them, etc.