

I want you to open your Bible with me back to Luke 10 and plop it on your lap and get it comfortable there, because we are going to camp here a little while. In our study of Luke we've come to one of the most familiar stories in the Bible – the story of the Good Samaritan. But, news flash, this passage is not about the Good Samaritan. In fact, there was no Good Samaritan, this is a story, this is a parable that Jesus made up on the fly to illustrate what it means to love your neighbor. So we're not going to talk about the Good Samaritan per se; we're not going to talk about how to be a good neighbor; primarily we're not here to analyze why the priest and the Levite walked by on the other side of the road. This isn't about them. Fictional characters all.

You say, "well, what's this about?" The leading question is the key. **Vs.25** – "*And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*" That's what this is about. The whole exchange is Jesus' answer to the most important question anyone could ever ask or answer. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" That is the issue and there is no issue more profound more important than that. And so what we have in this text is an example of personal evangelism. Jesus, one on one with this lawyer, this expert in the Mosaic law, at point blank range asking a very basic, very important direct question, "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" and Jesus' answer to that question.

Does that interest you? Would you like to hear how Jesus would answer that question? I would. And I think we need to hear how He answers it. And that is why I plan on us camping here for a while. Because not only is this probably the most important dialogue that we could ever listen in on, but the answer Jesus gives is so different than what we probably expect. I mean think about it....A man walks up and asks, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" That's a slow pitch right over the plate, is it not? Any one of us could hammer that right out of the park, right? And Jesus responds, "What is written in the law...how does it read to you?" What? So I think the whole discourse becomes very, very instructive for us, even corrective for us. And we need to take our time and work our way through this and learn everything we can.

Many of you have known maybe someone who sticks out in your mind as a really good evangelist, someone who is very adept at personal evangelism. I know that I've heard a number of you say that Dr. Wheat was such a person. That he could turn almost any conversation into a conversation about Christ and the gospel. That's an admirable thing and we all admire people who are good at that. That is a gift. We don't all have that. But on the other hand, most of us don't work all that hard at it, either. So there's a lot we can learn, there's a lot we can do to get better in this area of personal evangelism. And, I'm suggesting that here we have an opportunity to learn from the very best; Jesus, who is the greatest soul-winner of all time.

So here's what I want to do with this passage. I want to study it as a *model for personal evangelism*. We could call this Evangelism 101, but more precisely it's evangelism *1 on 1*. And that's how I want to look at it; what principles can we apply to our own 1 on 1 evangelism opportunities.

You'll notice there are four parts to this passage: the question, the answer, the illustration, and the conclusion. And that's how I want us to approach this series, in four parts.

1. Man's situation (v.25).
2. God's standard (v.26-28).
3. Man's sin (v.29-35).
4. God's solution (v.36-37).

In other words, the structure in the text corresponds to four components that we need to cover in our evangelism. The question exposes us to man's situation. The answer exposes us to God's standard. The illustration exposes us to man's sinfulness. The conclusion exposes us to God's solution. And so with that as sort of our working outline. I want us to work our way through and probably only cover one of those points per week because I really feel that these four basic points form the content of what we're responsible to proclaim as we proclaim the gospel.

Now, just to warn you....what you're going to be confronted by right away is that *evangelism is hard work*. It's time consuming, it's messy, it's labor-intensive. And frankly, I think, most of us shy away from it for that reason. It's not that we don't know any unbelievers, it's not that we don't have opportunities, it's not that we don't know what to say; it's just that in the real world with real people, it's never as simple as just giving our 3 minute canned presentation. It always requires getting involved in people's lives on a personal level where we can actually have conversations like this. So....All that to say, what I want to do right up front is to challenge you just to start praying. Just begin praying. Pray for one person. Pray for one opportunity to have one conversation with one person. And then be here each week so you can learn what truths you need to talk about with them.

Now as I say, this all begins with a question. The Good Samaritan is not the main point of this passage, the *question* is. "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" That is the most important question in the world, the most important question anyone could ever ask or answer. Every man, woman, and child on earth should be preoccupied with that question and perplexed by that question...continually, and have no rest until they get it answered. And, we should have no rest until we give the answer to every one we can. But let me ask you this: how many of you have ever had anybody ask you that question? Anybody ever come up to you and say, "*pardon me there sir, excuse me, uh, just wondering, would you happen to know what I must do to inherit eternal life?*" Anybody have any person ask you that question directly? That's what I thought....me neither. No one has ever asked me that, even as a pastor, no one's ever asked me that. And, I thought about that...I mean...why isn't anyone asking that? It's a good question, isn't it? It's an important question. Does everyone already know the answer? Why isn't anyone asking the question? In fact, why aren't unbelievers coming to us in droves, storming into our churches, pounding on the door, begging us for the answer to that question?

It just doesn't happen. So I think maybe that's the first thing we need to talk about: *this question and the implications of this question*. How do we get people to this point? I mean something in Jesus' life, something in Jesus' ministry, something in Jesus' teaching, sparked a curiosity, aroused the interest of this man to ask Him this question. What would we have to do, what would we have to say, how would we need to live to provoke unbelievers to ask us this question? That's what I want us to be thinking about this morning.

So for starters let's just focus on the question. And just from the *question* in **vs.25**, I think we uncover two basic principles. And remember, all this relates to the broad category of "man's situation." The first concept that we have to get across, the first category of truth we have to communicate relates to *man's situation*; what is man's situation? We have to unpack that for people a little bit. But as we work to unpack that, we have two basic principles to think about, or two basic objectives that we're wanting to accomplish. And both of these ideas come from vs.25.

1. We have to understand what our audience knows.

Okay, this is the first principle. I'm just pulling out of verse 25. We have to understand what our audience knows. In this case "*a lawyer stood up and put Jesus to the test, saying..what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" So that identifies our audience in this case: a lawyer. But not the kind of lawyer you're thinking about. I said I wasn't going to tell any lawyer jokes, but let me tell a minister joke.

A minister called a lawyer and asked, "How much do you charge?" Ten thousand dollars for three questions. "Are you kidding me?" No, what's your third question? [Travis Altemeier gets the credit for that one, thanks Trav.] Anyway, not that kind of lawyer. Here "lawyer" (*nomikos*, from *nomos*, law) refers to a student of obviously the *Mosaic law*; an expert in all the commandments of the Torah, the first 5 books of the OT. That kind of lawyer. Elsewhere they're called *scribes* (in the New Testament). So this is a religious man; this is an educated man; this is a man who knows the Bible, who studies the Old Testament scriptures, probably has spent his whole life doing that; a Biblical scholar, professional, an expert. And here he is in the crowd listening to Jesus teach. And when the appropriate occasion presented itself, he stood up in the midst of the crowd to ask a question. And on the surface, the language sounds negative. It says that he... "*put him to the test*"; it makes it sound like he had evil intentions. So many times we see in the New Testament, the scribes together with the Pharisees and they normally do have evil intentions they're trying to trip Jesus up or trick Him or trap Him. But actually, in this case, if we just take it at face value, it simply means he wanted, he honestly wanted to hear how Jesus would answer. It was a sincere question. Just testing to see if Jesus knew the answer, or how He would respond....so testing His knowledge and His understanding of the Scriptures in other words. But it was a fair question, and it was a good question. It was the right question! It was the question all men should ask, and it's certainly the question every true preacher and teacher of the gospel should be able to ask. So we shouldn't assume the man had ulterior motives; he just wanted to hear how Jesus would respond. And so, very respectfully, addressing Jesus as "Teacher," he stands up and asks, "*what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*"

Now, listen, here's the point that I want you to understand from that. First of all, the reason that this sort of thing doesn't happen to any of us is because we *aren't dealing with these kinds of people*. Okay, is that fair? The people in your neighborhood; the people that you work with; the people that you go to school with; the members of your extended family; with rare exception, have not been studying the Bible their whole life, true? They aren't experts in the Mosaic Law. The kind of lawyers we interact with charge \$10,000 for 3 questions. And so, the point is, we have to take that into consideration. The average Joe doesn't know what this man knew. I mean just think about some of the things, the basic foundational, biblical concepts this man already knew, already embraced. Because, this is the background you have to fill in for people.

- a. This man already knew the OT Scriptures and the story of the Bible.* Right, he already knew the Old Testament. Most people today do not. They don't know the first thing about the creation account, the fall, the flood, the exodus, the giving of the Law, or God's plan of redemption through the promised Messiah. They don't know all that. The Bible is a mystery book to them. It's just a big, black book that sits on the coffee table at Grandma's house that collects dust. It's got some dates and some marriages and some anniversary things and some birthdays in there, if they have one in the home at all. But they don't read it; they don't study it; they don't know it. You can't assume people know the Bible. You can't assume people have gone to Sunday School all their life and heard all the Bible stories you've heard, they haven't.
- b. This man already knew about God.* He believed in God, he was monotheistic. There is one God. He understood that. No question about that. God is holy. He knew that. God is the Creator. We are accountable to Him. Most people don't think that way, they don't know that today. They don't know the first things about God. This man knew about God's sovereignty, God's providence, God's righteousness, God's holiness, God's wrath toward sin, God's justice, God's mercy and forgiveness. Most of the people we interact with don't have a clue about any of that. Their world-view is not a God-centered world view. For this man, that was already established.
- c. Thirdly, Furthermore, this man already knew that he was created in the image of God and that he had an eternal soul that will live forever.* He already believed that. Created in the image of God, I have an immortal, eternal soul that will live forever. Death is not the end, it's only the end of this physical body. Most people don't know that already. They believe in evolution. They believe we die that's it. They believe in reincarnation...whatever. They believe in annihilation. Think about that....this man already knew that every human soul is immortal; our bodies may die, but our souls go on forever. Jesus didn't have to teach him that, or convince him of that. We don't have that luxury, we have to do that part. We have to fill that in for most people.
- d. Fourthly, This man already knew that in the next life he would either be in the presence of God or away from the presence of God....forever.* He understood that. When he died he would be forever in the presence of God or he would be forever away from the presence of God. That's why he asks the question. "I know what the options are, I want to know what must I do to secure my eternal life in the presence of God forever. I want to secure that destiny now..before I die. And by the way that was a sort of a common question. People were asking that question in Jesus' day. The common people were asking that of the Rabbi's. "*Rabbi, tell me what must I do....?*"

Now, when you think about that you see the problem right away, that we're dealing with, right? Most people that we interact with today don't know all this stuff. We take all these things for granted, but most people are completely clueless and completely ignorant about these most basic truths of the Bible. So, what does that mean for us? What it means is we can't just drop the gospel bomb on people. We can't just "fling the truth" at 'em. That's like painting over a rusty surface, or painting over old boards that are rotten or unprimed or have peeling paint on them; if you don't do the prep work, what's going to happen? The paint won't stick.

In his book, *Tell the Truth*, Will Metzger makes this point. "Far too many Christians today are making this wrong assumption about their hearers – thinking that they understand some basic concepts in the Bible. They don't. Although most Western countries have a Christian historical background, the dominant worldviews of people are not Christian at all. This is true for

non-Western countries as well." That's right. So it's irresponsible for us to just fling the truth at them as some kind of magical cure all for a disease they don't even know they have and expect them to "respond" appropriately or "make a decision for Christ." They don't even understand what that means. So, it's no wonder people think of Christianity as a leap of faith or a leap in the dark; because that's how we present it to them.

"Trust me, you need Jesus that's all you need to know." "You need Jesus." "Really, Why?" So it's like we just pull the pin out of the grenade and launch it. "*Jesus died for your sins, wouldn't you like to receive him as your personal Savior?*" Huh? So the news about Christ doesn't make any sense to the average person today because they have no context to put it in. And that's our fault. We are being lazy. We have reduced the gospel to *the bare essentials a person must believe in order to be saved*, instead of doing the hard work to lay the foundation they need to truly repent and believe.

So as we look at this exchange then between Jesus and this lawyer, that's the first thing we have to recognize that a lot of work has already been done long before he comes to Jesus asking this question. And the people we're dealing with don't have that...don't have that background, don't have that history, don't have that foundation; so we have to lay it for them. We have to break ground, we have to prepare soil, otherwise we're casting seed on the road where it will never germinate. Then the second principle comes from the question itself.

First, we have to understand what our audience knows (and doesn't know).

Secondly, we have to explain the three realities implied in this question. What are the three realities implied in this question? Well you better know because, we have to awaken people to these three realities. What are they?

a. *There is such a thing as eternal life.* There is such a thing as eternal life..

"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" implies the recognition that there is such a thing. So that's the first thing we have to convey to people. Eternal life exists. There is more to life than this life. This life is temporal, "your life is like a vapor" James says, a vapor that rises and then vanishes. The point is your whole lifetime on this earth, whether it's 6 months or 60 years or 100 years...your whole life on this earth is like steam from a boiling pot, here for an instant and then gone. That's what your lifetime is like compared to eternity. Infinitesimally small. People need to hear that. All the stuff you worry about and fret over, all the stuff you live for, everything in this world that you're obsessed about, all the fuss is for a pencil dot on that wall over there. You understand....a pencil dot in comparison to eternity is what your life is. Or, your life is like a pebble, not in terms of its value, but in terms of its duration, one pebble in the pavement on I-90 (right...you know that highway that stretches from Seattle all the way to Boston all the way through the United States, 3100 miles. Your lifetime compared to that span is like one little piece of gravel imbedded in that road. So compared to eternity, isn't it kind of silly to focus just on that one rock that one pebble.

We aren't prompting people to think about eternal life because we don't talk about it. Churches don't talk about it. Preachers don't. We aren't creating a thirst for the gospel when all we ever talk about is 5 steps to a better marriage; 7 principles for financial security; 3 ways to have a more fulfilling career. Is that all we've got to tell people to offer people: tips to make *this* life better? Your best life now? Is that what Christianity is about? Is that why Jesus came and died on a cross?

So this man...my point is...understood eternal life. The quantity of it, eternal, it lasts forever; the quality of it, zoe, it's real life, true life, life indeed. He knew about that. Well, how did he know that? He knew the OT.

Ps.16:8, listen to what David said? "*I have set the Lord continually before me, because He's at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices. My flesh also will dwell securely [why?] for Thou will not abandon my soul to Sheol for the grave], neither wilt Thou allow Thy holy One to undergo decay. Thou wilt make known to me the path of life. In Thy presence is fullness of joy. In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever."*

That was David's theology...his understanding of eternity. No matter what he faced in this life, he had joy because he knew he was going to live forever in the Lord's presence. He wouldn't rot in the ground, he would rise to life eternal and fullness of joy and pleasures forever. Job, too, had the same understanding, that if he died, yet in his flesh he would see God. He would awake to eternal life. Daniel also, Dan.2:44; Dan.7:18; speaks of a kingdom that will last forever and the promise of life in that kingdom with all its blessings and pleasures and joys in God's glorious presence eternally. That's the hope of all the saints of all the ages. Not having a *better* life now, having *eternal* life then.

And Dan.12:2 is maybe a key. Certainly would have been a verse that this lawyer knew about...probably all the Jews knew about. Daniel 12:2 speaks of the time at the end of the age, "*Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, some to everlasting life, and the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.*" They understood that divide. Looking ahead to the future resurrection all the dead will ultimately be raised, but the question is to *what*: to eternal life or to eternal disgrace and contempt?

So the principle is this: all of us live forever, the only question is *where* and the only question is *how*? And there are only two possibilities: away from the presence of God, or in the presence of God; in everlasting joy, with pleasures forever, or in everlasting torment, with punishment forever. This lawyer understood that. He understood his immortality; and he understood those two options. And he knew he knew, he was motivated, he wanted to live forever in the presence of God enjoying eternal life not away from the presence of God enduring eternal torment....and that's why he's asking the question.

So we have to be faithful to teach this; to warn people about this reality. Your vapor is about to vanish; *then what*...then what will you do when you have to stand before your Creator and Judge who sent His Son to be the propitiation for your sins and you rejected Him? There is such a thing as eternal life.

Jesus taught on this...constantly. Just listen to how many times he refers to it in the gospel of John alone.

John 3:16 – whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life.

John 4:36 – “already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal.”

John 5:39 – you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is these that bear witness of Me.

John 6:54 – He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood [in other words, partakes of me] has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.

John 6:58 – crowds were peeling off, deserting Jesus; He turned to the disciples, “will you also go away? “Lord, to whom shall we go; You have the words of eternal life.”

John 10:27 – My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”

John 12:25 – “Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to eternal life.”

And John 17:2 – Glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

So people, listen to me, this is where evangelism begins. It is not about *this* life. It is not about happiness in this life, it is not about success in this life, it is not about health in this life, it is not about prosperity in this life, it is not about fulfillment in this life, or healing in this life, or help in this life. It is not about escaping your troubles in this life. All of that is a false gospel. And so if you're going to do evangelism, you've got to move people off of this idea that "Jesus is going to fix my life here" that's not the issue and that's not what you need. There's bigger problems than that. What you need is "Jesus is going to deliver you in the life to come." That's the issue, that's the greater need: not a better life, eternal life! Until a sinner recognizes that, the gospel can't do him any good.

So we have to stop neutering the gospel with our felt-needs approach to evangelism. Who cares if you get a better life now but spend eternity in hell? What good is a better marriage but your soul perishes? We're just rearranging the deck furniture on the Titanic, that's all. That's pointless...the wrong focus. Jesus didn't come to fix your problems in this life; He came to rescue you from the wrath to come. And if you escape the wrath to come, who cares what you have to endure in this life? If you're in a plane crash, and you happen to survive...that's the big deal, right? Not... "have you seen my carry on?"

So, this is the basic reality that ever person must come to grips with. This life is not all there is. There is eternal life. 2nd reality we have to awaken people to:

b. *Eternal life is something you must receive.*

It must be given to you. You don't have it just by being born, or just by being born in America...or just by being good or just by being religious, or by being a moral person. Eternal life must be given to you. "What shall I do to *inherit* eternal life?"

"Inherit" means something you receive; something that's coming in the future.

1Cor.6:9 uses that terminology – "or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God."

Gal.5:21 similar thought – "those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

So the kingdom of God, salvation, eternal life, is something you inherit. It must be given to you. Not everyone has it; *no one* has it until they receive it. People need...need...need to hear that, people need to understand that; they need to hear it say that to them, where else are they going to hear it?

All this builds, do you see that. You start with the recognition that there is such a thing as eternal life, you know; this life is not all there is; you are going to spend eternity somewhere. That leads to the possibility that you could receive eternal life if you know how to get it. And that would lead people to ask the question, "what shall I do?" And that's the third reality we need to reinforce.

c. *There's something you must do to inherit eternal life.*

There's something you must do, "What shall I do?" You, personally...you don't automatically have it, there's something you must do to get it. (What you must do is of course the subject of the rest of this conversation, and we'll see the answer as we go in the next few weeks.) But this is where we want people. This is where we want them...asking the question, "what shall I do?" "There is such a thing as eternal life, really? I have to receive it, Oh? Well then tell me, what shall I do?" And notice the personal nature of the question: what shall I do? I want eternal life; I need eternal life; I don't want to perish; I don't want to face the wrath of God; what shall I do? And listen, a person isn't ready to hear the gospel, to hear the Good News until they're in that state of emergency, in that state of panic, in that state of desperation and fear and urgency. "I'm perishing, what must I do?"

That's what they said in Acts 2:37 when they heard Peter preach the gospel, preach that God's judgment was upon them for crucifying the Messiah: "Brethren, what shall we do?" That's what the jailor said in Acts 16:30 when he realized his life was in jeopardy if his prisoners escaped, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" That's the state of mind we're after. That's the state of mind that opens people's hearts. So this is...this is our assignment people. This is...this is the first step in evangelism, and that is...*explaining man's situation*. We were created by God in His image with an immortal soul. This life is not the end of our existence. We will live forever somewhere. That's the life we need to be worrying about, not this life. Are you personally ready to face eternity?

So the question we need to ask ourselves is....are we getting that out...what truth are we telling people?

This is what we need to be telling people.

1. There is such a thing as eternal life.

2. You don't have it.

3. You must receive it.

4. There's something you must do to get it.

Until we lay that foundation, there's no motivation to ask the question "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Practically, then, here's what we need to do.

And I'll close with this. Just summarizing, but a couple thoughts...

1. *We have to stop billing Christianity as the quick fix to all your problems in this life.*

We have to stop doing that. Stop billing Christianity as the quick fix to all your problems in this life. It's not about this life! Jesus *may* make your marriage better, He may make a lot of things in your life better, certainly there are principles in Scripture that apply to all the areas of our life, and being saved, obviously and Spirit-filled will introduce profound change and radical

newness in your life now. But there's no promise of a better life here. The promise is *"he who loves his life loses it, he who hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life."*

The gospel is not about this life.

The gospel is about eternal life.

Jesus did not come to make your life better.

Jesus came to deliver you from the wrath to come.

2. *We have to stop living Christianity as if this life is all that we live for.*

We have to stop living Christianity as if this life is all there is. And my point there is perhaps no one is asking us this question because they do not see in us any reason to ask the question, or any evidence that we would know the answer. Or any indication that eternal life is what matters to us...not this life.

1 Cor.15:19 *"If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied."* His whole point there is to say the Christian life is so costly, and so counter-cultural, and so contrary to the ways of this world, it only makes sense if there's eternal life. If there isn't and this life is all there is, we are pitiful fools. And so the implication is, our lives should be so bizarre and so different, the way we live can only be explained by our confident expectation that we will be raised to eternal life in Christ. That's our hope, and that's what sustains us in this life. Is that not what Peter said, 1 Pet.3:15? *"Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who ask you to give an account for the hope that is in you."*

That should be our aim. To so live that people are provoked to ask, "what's the source of your hope?" Eternal life. "What shall I do to receive eternal life?"

Let's pray. Father we just need your help with this. We need your word to guide us, we need the example of Christ to instruct us and so we pray in these days that you would indeed use this to renew our minds, our focus and make us, Father...more effective, more faithful in our responsibility to tell the good news. We pray that you would make each of us more engaged in that ministry. And that each of us, this week, would be praying diligently maybe for at least one person, one opportunity and that we would begin to see you begin to open doors of opportunity for us and open our mouths with boldness to speak these truths to be useful to you in this way...we pray in Christ's name and for His sake. Amen.