

# Responding to Injustice during the Pandemic

By Christina Quintanilla

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## Three lessons from Jesus' response

Take a moment to read Luke 10:25-37 and pay attention to the core truth in the Parable of the Compassionate Samaritan and what it specifically teaches us about the character of Jesus and the definition of neighbor. Here are three key takeaways:

1. **Jesus redefines the concept of neighbor.** In response to the law expert, Jesus tells a parable that not only displays what it looks like to be a neighbor, but also expands the concept to even include enemies and people outside your own ethnicity, social class, or theological convictions.
2. **Jesus purposefully and subversively uplifts those on the margins.** First-century listeners would have known the historic tensions and violence between Jews and Samaritans. While the Levite and the Pharisee (both Jews) passed by on the side of the road, the Samaritan displayed *spagchnizomai*, a concern from the deepest place within that catalyzed love in action. Jesus subverts the narrative by making the Samaritan enemy an example of Christ's active love.
3. **Jesus flips the question of "who" is my neighbor to "what" is a neighbor.** The Levitical mandate of love is not limited to those who are in proximity geographically or theologically, but rather, it's a command to show neighborly love to everyone despite ethnic, religious, or social boundaries. Jesus shifts the law expert's focus from who his neighbor was, to what it looks like to exemplify neighborly love.

Through the example of a marginal Samaritan, Jesus displays a transformative love that sees and responds to the wounds of our neighbors with the covenantal love of God. The profound message is that Jesus urges his followers to extend sacrificial love to every neighbor, despite theological, political, or socio-ethnic differences. Jesus invites his followers to honor the Levitical mandate of love (Leviticus 19:18) by responding to the wounds of our neighbors with *spagchnizomai*, compassion from deep within that compels us into active love. Just as he does in the parable, Jesus calls us to "go and do likewise."

## Four ways to respond to injustice

In the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that communities of color are disproportionately more vulnerable to infection and acts of violence during the pandemic. How can we love like the compassionate Samaritan in this time?

You're invited to follow the example of sacrificial love by reading these case studies of our neighbors and responding. After reading them, choose **at least one** to investigate further and take a compassionate action step in response.

### Case Study 1: Victims of Racism and Xenophobia

In 2020 from mid-March to mid-May, Asian Americans have reported over 1,700 incidents of racism. Some of our nation's leaders are intentionally choosing nomenclature for the coronavirus (COVID-19), such as the "Chinese Flu," and this is endangering the lives of more than 20 million Americans.

- **Investigate further:** Prayerfully read [this statement](#) by the Asian American Christian Collaborative.
- **Take action:** Ask God to give you compassion that sacrificially responds and commit to one of the five responses listed in the statement.

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## Case Study 2: The Black Community in Chicago

Data showed that among the deaths where race or ethnicity were known, 72% were among Black city residents, despite Black Chicagoans being only 30% of the city's overall population. "While this data is extremely troubling, we are determined to lessen the impact of COVID-19 by engaging communities that have traditionally been overlooked and that have suffered disinvestment and neglect for generations" (NBC News). Essential workers are disproportionately communities of color, who must choose between feeding their families or risking their lives.

- **Investigate further:** Prayerfully read [this article](#) about COVID-19's disproportional impact on the Black community in Chicago.
- **Take action:** Ask God to give you compassion that sacrificially responds. Call or email your [Representative](#) to voice your concern for the protection of essential workers who are forced to choose between feeding their families and risking their lives. Ask for creative measures be taken to protect the lives of many low-income families.

## Case Study 3: Farmworkers in the Central Valley

"Farmworker housing conditions pose another concern and risk factor for potential transmission and spread of the COVID-19... Despite the fact that there are existing housing regulations that dictate the dwelling conditions for farmworkers, particularly migratory workers, farmworkers across the nation live in homes that are overcrowded, sometimes with multiple inhabitants sleeping and living in one room... Some farm workers even lack potable water, bathing facilities and soap in camp housing." – Rev. Dr. Alexia Salvatierra

- **Investigate further:** Prayerfully read the [full statement](#) on COVID-19 and the risks to farmworkers.
- **Take action:** Ask God to give you compassion that sacrificially responds. Call or email your [Representative](#) to advocate for the protection of the communities that feed our families. Ask for social distancing measures, for farms to adhere to safe housing regulations, and for farmworkers to have access to water, soap, and basic necessities. Ask for equitable pay for farm laborers.

## Case Study 4: Indigenous Communities in the US

"Although they were the first communities in what is now known as the United States, Indigenous communities in urban and rural areas are often the last remembered in public policy... There are many persistent disparities between Indigenous and white Americans... that increase both the likelihood that Indigenous people will contract the virus, and the likelihood that they will die if they become ill. Initial reports indicate that Indigenous communities lack access to basic resources, including food purchased in grocery stores, food boxes obtained from supplemental federal programs, and clean water—necessities that are vital to fighting the disease." – Marlysa D. Gamblin

- **Investigate further:** Prayerfully read the [full article](#) on the impact of race, hunger, and COVID-19 on indigenous communities.
- **Take action:** Ask God to give you compassion that sacrificially responds. Join Bread for the World's [letter-writing campaign](#) to Congress, and give generously to organizations like [The American Indian College Fund](#) or [Eloheh Indigenous Center for Earth Justice](#) that are invested in the thriving of indigenous communities.