



# LOVING GOD & OUR NEIGHBOURS

## WHY SAFEGUARDING IS IMPORTANT FOR CHRISTIANS

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DIOCESE OF TRURO  
DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM  
GROWING THE CHURCH

A woman lies on cold grey concrete paving slabs, bleeding. She is dirty from her fall and moans from pain as she curls up against the world.

Imagine you are that woman. Discuss the following questions.

What does it feel like as busy shoppers bustle by and businessmen hurry to their next appointments?

How do you feel as people look the other way?



Lying in the street, you are at the level of people's ankles, vulnerable and exposed. You are unnoticed or avoided, someone who doesn't count. On the ground, the living things at your level are children, dogs and people who are homeless.

## WE ALL LIKE A GOOD STORY

We all like a good story. On television and in books and magazines, stories grip our imagination and involve us in their drama.

The Good Samaritan is one of Jesus' most pointed stories. He told it to a Jewish lawyer who asked Jesus what he needed to do to gain eternal life. Jesus' answer: 'Love God and love your neighbour,' seemed too difficult. So the lawyer tried to limit the type of person for whom he should care by asking Jesus the question: 'Who is my neighbour?' Rather than telling him to look after everybody, Jesus tells a story.

Like modern stories, Jesus' parable involves the listener. He expects the lawyer to identify with the man who was lying in the road after being attacked by robbers. In fact, the emotional connection that the lawyer makes with the injured man is why the story works.

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

<sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

<sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

<sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.

<sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

<sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'

<sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

Rather than simply saying: 'Look after other people,' Jesus gets the lawyer to imagine what it would be like to need help. Naturally, an injured person just wants to be rescued. It doesn't matter who does it!

In Jesus' time, Jews and Samaritans detested each other. A Jewish lawyer lying in the road could have expected a Samaritan either to ignore him or finish what the robbers had started. Jesus' audience would have been surprised that the Samaritan came to the injured man's aid. And this was Jesus' point: loving God involves looking after everyone, not just those like us or people who we think deserve our care.

## LOVING GOD & OUR NEIGHBOUR - WHY SAFEGUARDING IS IMPORTANT FOR CHRISTIANS

Jesus' story connects with the church's safeguarding work today. Discuss the following questions.

Who are our neighbours in our churches and communities, the equivalent of the vulnerable man in the road of Jesus' parable?

Have you identified those whose hurt is unseen?

If you were in their position, what would you want others to do?

How would a good response by the church in the area of safeguarding witness to God's care for everyone?

Does your church need to change what it does regarding safeguarding?



Jesus invites us to experience the joy of eternal life by caring for one another without conditions. He encourages us to care for everyone and treat those who are different from us with basic human kindness.

Safeguarding is one way in which we can do this. At its root it isn't complicated: safeguarding is simply a way of loving our neighbour. That's something worth celebrating and putting into practice.

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## GET IN CONTACT

T 01872 274351

E [info@truro.anglican.org](mailto:info@truro.anglican.org)

[www.trurodiocese.org](http://www.trurodiocese.org)

Church House, Woodlands Court,  
Truro Business Park,  
Threemilestone, Truro, TR4 9NH



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