


Addressing violence and powerlessness associated with homelessness in Tshwane: An empirical missiological study based on Luke 10:25–37

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Homeless people living on the pavements of the streets of major South African cities, such as Pretoria, are victims of the city's systemic power abuse and inequality, and are vulnerable. In such a context, Christian mission has an inescapable responsibility to be mindful of the wounds of the City of Pretoria and its communities, specifically those that the homeless people face. In addition, it must respond by facilitating the finding of solutions to address these issues of power abuse, inequality and vulnerability as related to homelessness in Pretoria. Ultimately, the Christian mission must collaborate with homeless individuals in the pursuit of these solutions.

Contribution: Mindful of the wounds that homeless people are subjected to in this city, this article aims to contribute a missiological perspective towards a solution for addressing homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness in Pretoria, South Africa. Twenty (i.e. 8 men and 12 women) homeless people were engaged through contextual Bible study to gain insights into appropriate actions for a transformative missiology in this context. Based on their encounterological reflection of Luke 10:25–35 and for the vision of building an inclusive city where peace, human dignity, freedom and collective well-being are realised in this city, this local homeless community suggests a number of 'hopeful actions', which are discussed in this article.

Keywords: homelessness; violence; powerlessness; missiological; encounterology; Tshwane.

Introduction

Homelessness is a problem experienced throughout South Africa but is (unfortunately) on the increase in Tshwane (i.e., Pretoria) due to migration and the incorporation of Kungwini (Bronkhorstspuit) and Nokeng tsa Taemane (Cullinan) into the city. (De Beer 2015; De Beer et al. 2015:3; Pretoria News 02 August 2012; Roets et al. 2016:624)

Statistics South Africa (2022) census report confirms the number of people experiencing homelessness in the city surged from 6244 in 2010 to 10029 people in 2022. In response to this crisis, a new policy, which seeks to address homelessness in Pretoria, was adopted in 2013. This policy, with the assistance of researchers from the University of Pretoria and the University of South Africa, in collaboration with Tshwane Homelessness Forum and the City of Tshwane, was revised in 2019. The implementation of this policy should assist in 'decreasing the vulnerability of targeted groups at risk through mainstreamed programmes for children, the youth, the women, the disabled and the elderly' (City of Tshwane 2012:1).

Nonetheless, homeless people remain powerless and are victims of violence such as theft and beating, resulting in injuries in Pretoria. Hence, this article explores homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness in Pretoria from a missiological perspective, exploring possibilities for imagining transformative praxes that facilitate inclusion and collective well-being. We, the researcher and team from the University of South Africa, together with the homeless people, have been working since 2010 to find ways out of homelessness.

With reference to this article, we worked with a group of 20 homeless people to seek answers for the main question of this study, that is, 'What insights could be learnt from the homeless people on how to address homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness in Pretoria?' These people, migrant South Africans and foreigners, become homeless because of poverty, unemployment and lack of social security.

We used Luke 10:25–35 as a hermeneutic key to make sense of homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness. The process for engaging this text was inspired and grounded in the Contextual Bible Study method. Insights gained for transformative missiological praxes are shared in this research.

Text: Luke 10:25–35

This text is referred to as the Parable of the Good Samaritan in the Bible (New International Version). It reads as follows:

25 On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher', he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 26 'What is written in the Law?' he replied. 'How do you read it?' 27 He answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. 28 'You have answered correctly', Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live'. 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' 30 In reply Jesus said: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him', he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have'.

Homelessness, violence and powerlessness

Homelessness and violence

Ntakirutimana (2015:81–104) identified five main factors that drive homelessness in South Africa, namely, political, economic, health, social and cultural. These factors corroborate the findings of research on homelessness in Timmins, Canada (Kauppi et al. 2012). In South Africa, black people make up a large percentage of the street homeless (De Beer 2015:2; Roets et al. 2016:620), and socio-economic factors are most likely the drivers of this phenomenon. Regarding women, domestic violence and insecurity are some of the reasons some women who are living at Potters House¹ fled their homes and ended up on the streets, homeless and powerless. Findings of research conducted by Van Schalkwyk, Boonzaier and Gobodo-Madikizela (2014) affirm that domestic violence in heterosexual relations is one factor that exacerbates women's desire to leave their homes.

Further, Mangoedi and Mogashoa (2014) contend that women find themselves homeless also because of trafficking linked to economic factors. Once trafficked, violence is used to subdue them. 'Women and children are the most vulnerable of the

1. Potters House is a residential care programme for women in crisis and their children and a drop-in centre that supports women on the street through holistic interventions. Contact: +27(0) 12 320 2123.

street homeless' (Tenai & Mbewu 2020:2). This vulnerability makes them susceptible to violence and abuse.

Furthermore, those who live on the South African city streets include South African citizens and foreign immigrants who have fled from violence associated with various socio-political and economic challenges in their home countries (Tenai & Mbewu 2020:2). Powerlessness is one of the factors that adds to the frustration experienced by homeless migrants in South Africa, as they have limited rights and social protection.

Homelessness and powerlessness

Homelessness and powerlessness are like two sides of a coin. The moment a person has no shelter, he or she becomes powerless and vulnerable. This is compounded by the loss of security associated with having a stable place to live as a home. Gilili (2022) of GroundUp News expands about economic marginalisation when he writes:

With South Africa's economy staggering, and two in every five adults unemployed, 'villages' of homeless people are springing up in South Africa's cities as increasing numbers of people find themselves on the streets. (p. 1)

This predicament is worsened by social exclusion and marginalisation (Mangayi 2014). Further, their human dignity and personhood are disregarded (Ngcobo 2014) because access to services is denied. Worse, they cannot defend themselves or protect their rights. Homelessness has thus engendered powerlessness, which, most of the time, is accompanied by voicelessness.

Addressing homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness

The process of addressing homelessness must begin by affirming that we belong together – one human race. Although many of the people around us are not our next of kin, they are our neighbours. Affirming this is the starting point – all of our neighbours are created in the image of God [*imago Dei*] (Gn 1:26). Loving neighbours as we love ourselves is therefore an imperative. Working with them to seek pathways out of homelessness should include a holistic multidisciplinary approach aimed at first unmasking and then mitigating against physical and systemic violence and powerlessness, which affect vulnerable people such as the homeless who are our neighbours. As Jesus demonstrated during his active ministry on earth (Act 10:37–38).

One of the critical steps should be reaffirming the assets and capabilities that homeless people have, which could be stepping stones for their own empowerment (Mangayi 2017). This will be crucial in regaining their self-image and personhood (Ngcobo 2014). In 2015, another group of homeless people (ordinary readers), about shalom in the City of Tshwane, advocated for an extended application of Isaiah 65 to include 'a broader vision of peace that is not limited only to Israel or believers of YHWH, as often happens when the text is read through trained readers' lenses':

[They] emphasised that various institutions of Tshwane should collaborate towards the realisation of peace in Tshwane. They specifically referred to the following sources, as they could contribute greatly to the realisation of peace in the city: institutions of education (especially universities); business institutions (both public and private); government institutions (particularly the police); and churches, as well as other community figures. (Mangayi & Ngcobo 2015:8)

These very same institutions remain assets to be mobilised to address homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness.

Thus, for ordinary readers of the Bible, the vision of peace presented in Isaiah 65:17–25 must be realised in concrete terms as something to work towards in the here and now (Mangayi & Ngcobo 2015:9). A glimpse of this vision led to the signing of a social contract between the University of Pretoria (UP), the University of South Africa (UNISA), the City of Tshwane and the Tshwane Homelessness Forum. The latter is a registered non-profit organisation that advocates and facilitates the implementation of the social contract and the new homelessness policy. Insights from empirical research on pathways out of homelessness done by researchers from both UP and Unisa contribute towards building an inclusive city. Research participants are currently homeless in the city.

Hence, concerning this article, insights shared by this group were useful for putting in place interventions to address homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness.

Research methodology: Contextual Bible Study

This study was part of a community-engaged action research project aimed at 'doing justice in the context of homelessness' in the inner City of Pretoria. With specific reference to this Bible study, 20 adult homeless people (8 men and 12 women) who agreed to participate in this research were divided into three small groups. Each small group had four women. Two small groups (Group 1 & Group 2) had three men and one group (Group 3) had two men. They were involved in a Scripture-based focus group discussion known as Contextual Bible Study (CBS), developed by Gerald West and the Ujaama staff (2011). The discussion took place on 21 February 2022 from 08:45 until 13:30. It was facilitated by the researcher, assisted by one colleague. The process started with a short praise and worship item, then a short prayer led by the researcher. It was followed by a self-introduction of both the group and facilitators.

Contextual Bible Study is concerned with proactive biblical interpretation, where recognition of the ordinary reader is given centre stage in the African context as subjects of biblical interpretation. It befits liberation and inculturation methodologies.

For this study, firstly, the text (Lk 10:25–35) was read to obtain a general impression of what the text was about relating to homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness. Through this interaction, the group tried to understand the issues associated with this topic. All the inputs were captured on newsprint, but not much discussion was allowed at this stage.

Secondly, Luke 10:25–35 was discussed in small groups, with the interaction being guided by the following set of questions: (1) *The lawyer tests Jesus about various issues: verse 25 and verse 29. What characterises each of these questions? What do these questions say about the lawyer?*; (2) *Jesus questions the lawyer in several ways: verse 26 and verse 36. What characterises each of these questions? What do these questions say about Jesus?*; (3) *Let us take a serious look at the answers of Jesus to the questions of the lawyer: verse 26, verses 30–36 (answers in parable). Why is this parable so significant? Did Jesus answer his questions? How is love related to salvation?*; and (4) *Let us look at the lawyer's answers. What changes in understanding about eternal life occur in the lawyer?*

Inputs generated by each small group were tabled and discussed. Participants could comment on inputs from other small groups to add or seek clarification.

Thirdly, the same text was read in such a way that the issue of homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness in Tshwane was interrogated in relation to our contemporary context. The participants were expected to use the text in a 'prayerful and intelligent way in order to hear the voice of God for our particular context' (Kritzinger 1998:17) about homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness in Pretoria. The interaction was guided by these questions: *Who are the victims and survivors of violence in our cities today? What kind of love and healing do these people in your city/community need?*

Inputs from various small groups were once again tabled, and comments were invited from participants. Finally, the text was read in such a way that clues for transformation were singled out as a plan of action to address the issue of homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness in Tshwane. Simply put, this text was read with the expectation that it would give direction on how to change the situation in which homeless people find themselves. The question for this step was: *How can we respond to their needs in concrete ways?* Inputs from the group were listed on the newsprint. Then a vote of thanks was expressed to the group for their active participation, and a prayer was said to close the process. Lunch was served at the end of the process at 13:30.

Now that the methodology has been described, we will investigate this text from the trained reader's perspective.

Theological reflection of Luke 10:25–37 on homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness in Tshwane

This section discusses Luke 10:25–37 from the perspective of the trained readers of the Bible. It is one of the 13 parables told by Jesus that can only be found in this gospel. It is known as the Parable of the Good Samaritan. A brief contextual overview is necessary.

According to Barrette (1996:14), this parable is one among those where 'Luke stresses that Samaritans and Gentiles have a place in God's kingdom'. The Good Samaritan is praised for what he did (Lk 10:29–37, see also Lk 17:11–19). Thus, contend Barrette (1996:14), 'Luke stresses that the Jewish prejudice towards the Samaritans, who were Jews of mixed blood, is overcome in the universal love of Jesus'. This universal love embodies in essence a strong sense of social justice (see Lk 3:13). Thus, it embraces the outcast and the sinner (see Lk 19:2–10; 7:36–50) but also Jesus' rich well-to-do friends and acquaintances such as the Pharisee (see Lk 7:36; 11:37; 14:1) and Joseph of Arimathea (see Lk 23:50–53). Further, according to Keller (2010:62–63), this text 'most informs Christians' relationships with their neighbours'. However, this relationship with our neighbours is the one most of us, even religious people, neglect or deem not important, as depicted in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

At 10:25, the 'lawyer', according to Barnes (1962), 'refers to scribes (cf. Mk 12:28) and from Matthew 22:34, a Pharisee'. Barnes (1962) continues that they could be, 'Sadducees or Pharisees. Most in Jesus' day were Pharisees'. Today, these will be the rabbis and clergymen/clergywomen of our day. This lawyer stood up during an official teaching session of Jesus to ask him a question. Luke tells us that the law expert wanted to put Jesus to the test, to trap him. Further, Barnes (1962) explicates, 'test' in this case 'implies evil motives on the scribe's part; verse 29 seems to substantiate this'. This term is used in the New Testament in the connotation of 'to test with a view toward destruction' (Roberston 1950:150, see also Utley 2012).

The test is encapsulated in the question, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Barnes (1962) elucidates, 'Eternal life' is a characterisation used often by John to describe the life of the new age, God's kind of life. The question reflects the prevailing belief among most 1st-century Jews that salvation was attained through human actions and merits grounded in adherence to the Mosaic Law (cf. Lv 18:5; Dt 27:26; Gl 3:1–14) (Utley 2012). It can be understood as salvation by works. This doctrine goes against salvation by grace. Simply because all humans are sinful (cf. Rm 3:9–18, 23), they cannot be saved by their actions. Regardless of the Jews' holding on to 'two main principles: confidence in the election and the accompanying requirement that Jews obey

the law' (Sanders 2009:24), they remain fallible. This is where the gift of God in Christ's death and resurrection is crucial (cf. Rm 5:6–11; 6:23; Eph 2:8–9). However, in this case, it seems this lawyer was interpreting this phrase considering his own background, so eternal life was a continuation of the present order.

Notably, this man portrays himself as a trained Bible interpreter to the point where Jesus seems to affirm his interpretation. Yet, he answered him with a question: 'What do you read there?' (10:26 NRSV). This, Jesus did this to make him think about who their neighbour is, highlighting two concerns. Firstly, Scripture is a guidepost in that all believers need to be able to document what they believe from Scripture, not from culture, traditions or denominational indoctrination. On this point, this man knew his Scripture! Secondly, although this man was right from a theological standpoint, we contend he missed the most important truth of all regarding who the neighbour is. He was deficient in his understanding of this teaching.

Although this lawyer, like every Jew in 1st-century Palestine, had attended synagogue as a child to hear the Torah read, he still misunderstood who his neighbour was. Further, it is evident that this man had further training in the Torah and the commandment (cf. Ex 24:12). It is apparent that he knew the Old Testament well, especially the writings of Moses. In this instance, Jesus reciprocated by testing his knowledge just as he was trying to test Jesus. Hence, the question by Jesus in Luke 10:27: 'What is written in the Law?' This refers to the Mosaic Law (Gn–Dt). To that question, the man answered and said, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. According to Utley (2012), 'this man possibly pointed to his phylactery, which contained this verse' (Dt 6:4–5, called the *Shema* [to hear so as to do]) (see also Barnes 1962). The answer shows that the primary focus is on our attitude of commitment towards God, which includes everything we are. It is worth noting in passing that the parallels in Mark and Matthew are slightly different (see Mt 22:37–38 and Mk 12:29). We will, unfortunately, not discuss these parallels in this article.

There is obviously more to the lawyer's answer. Barnes (1962) and Roberston (1950) point out:

[T]he lawyer's answer is from the *Shema* (Dt 6:3, 11:13), which was written on the phylacteries. The second part is from Leviticus 19:18 and shows that the lawyer knew the law. (p. 151)

These two considerations substantiate, on the one hand, the Jewish affirmation of monotheism and, on the other, the oneness and uniqueness of God in the writings of Moses (i.e. Gn–Dt), which is 'therefore binding on all of Jesus' listeners (i.e., Sadducees and Pharisees)', writes Barnes (1962). Thus, God is to be loved with all of man's four powers (heart, soul, strength and mind) in this Scripture as in Mark 12:30 (Roberston 1950:151).

Further, the Levitical (Lv 19:18) part of the answer, speaking about 'and [love] your neighbour as yourself', places an obligation on Jews in the Old Testament and on Christians in the New Testament to link theological truth to practical, ethical demands. Because it is impossible to love God and hate those made in his image, this imitates 1 John 2:9–11; 3:15; 4:20 (Barnes 1962; Keller 2010:64). Furthermore, it teaches that to love God must be seen as loving those others made in His image because:

It is impossible to love your neighbour (i.e., covenant brother or sister) as yourself if you do not love yourself. There is an appropriate self-love, which is based on God's priority love for humankind. We are His creation, fashioned in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26,27). We must rejoice in our giftedness and accept our physical, mental, and psychological makeup (cf. Ps. 139). To criticize ourselves is to criticize our Maker! He can transform our fallenness into a reflection of His glory (i.e., Christlikeness). (Barnes 1962:57)

Therefore, Christianity involves a personal faith commitment to God through Christ. It starts as an individual volitional decision of repentance and faith. However, it is an issue in a family experience. We are gifted for the common good (cf. 1 Cor 12:7). We are part of the body of Christ. How we treat others reveals our true devotion to Christ. The oneness of God and humankind made in the image and likeness of God demands an appropriate response towards God and other humans (i.e. especially those of the household of faith).

Further, Jesus points out that what is required is acting on our understanding of God's truth and will (see 10:28), meaning that it is not enough to know about the command to love your neighbour. But, acting in love for the benefit of your neighbour is imperative – this scribe was supposed to know that. Those who claim to love God have an inescapable obligation to love their neighbours. Doing this, 'you will live', Jesus emphasised. This is what Jesus pointed out to this scribe. Simply put, 'Do them, and you will live'. Just obey those two commands fully, Jesus said, and you will have eternal life (Keller 2010:64).

However, cautioned Barnes (1962), 'this is not Jesus' affirmation of potential works-righteousness, but a response geared to the man's OT understanding' (cf. Ezk 20:11). Meaning, it is not a performance-based covenant; it is not salvation by works. Keller (2010) adds Jesus 'was seeking to humble the man' by pointing out to him that:

[I]t is only if we truly see the love God requires in his law that we will be willing and able to receive the love God offers in his gospel of free salvation through Jesus. (p. 65)

It is obvious that this lawyer failed to take heed of Jesus' answer, as he proceeded to ask another question, which is 'who is my neighbour' (Lk 10:29). The motif we found in the text for this question is 'he wanted to justify himself' (Lk 10:29) as if he implied, 'you don't mean I have to love and meet the needs of everyone' (Keller 2010:66) because 'the Jews made racial' exceptions, highlighted Roberston (1950:152), as many people still do today. Jews, for

instance, considered Samaritans as racial half-breeds and religious heretics, and there was a great animosity between them.

In response, Jesus, who is fully aware of the prejudice of the Jews vis-à-vis Samaritans, tells the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30–35). The story is about a certain man who suffered violence at the hands of robbers as he travelled from Jerusalem to Jericho on the highway, called 'the bloody way' (Jerome 1968). This story is not only a 'radical answer to the question, what does it mean to love your neighbour?' (Keller 2010:67) but also a graphic depiction of what loving your neighbour amounts to.

The 'man' (Lk 10:30) who suffered violence in this 'bloody way' could be, by implication, a fellow Jew. He was metaphorically a neighbour in need. A 'priest ... Levite' found this man in desperate need of care, yet these 'religious leaders were afraid of: (1) thieves; (2) defilement (cf. Lv 21 or Nm 19:11); (3) involvement; and (4) time constraints' (Barnes 1962). To the contrary, Ryan (2021:5) contends, 'Any concern about limiting participation in Temple worship due to ritual impurity does not apply in this story since neither man is going to the Temple'.

Nevertheless, they stepped over to the opposite side of the road just as most believers still behave today, keeping a social distance from communities that desperately need their assistance. Their attitude, Roberston (1950:153) contends, gives us 'a vivid and powerful picture of the vice of the Jewish ceremonial cleanliness at the cost of moral principle and duty'. The attitude and behaviours of these religious leaders seem to suggest that one must limit how they love and who they love. Today, this attitude and these behaviours could be traced back to the thought that our neighbours should be people of the same social class and means (cf. Lk 14:12) as us.

In opposition to this tendency and thought, Jesus depicted a Samaritan who embodied love which went beyond man-made limits and went on 'meeting material, physical, economic needs through deeds' (Keller 2010:67). What is clear from the text, adds Ryan (2021:8) is that the 'Samaritan represents a cultural group that shares a commitment to Torah ... Jews and Samaritans worshipped the same God, even if their religious expressions exhibited discernible differences'. In relation to Luke 10:33, Barnes (1962) adds:

Jesus really shocked these Jews by using a hated Samaritan as the hero of the parable. Samaritans were half Jew and half pagan, resulting from the resettlement policies of the Assyrian exile of the northern 10 tribes in 722 B.C. (i.e., the fall of Samaria). They had developed a rival temple (Mt. Gerizim) and a rival text (the Samaritan Pentateuch) (p. 58)

By doing this, Jesus highlighted a number of things relative to love, such as: (1) caring for people's material and economic needs is an imperative and not an option for Jesus; (2) he refused the scribe to limit the implications of this command

to love; (3) love meant being sacrificially involved with the vulnerable, just as the Samaritan risked his life by stopping on the road (Keller 2010:67). We see that 'religious commitments did not compel two Jewish officials on that day who were fully aware of their lawful responsibilities to aid a neighbour in need' (Ryan 2021:14).

In terms of meeting the material, physical and economic needs of the man who suffered violence, the Samaritan used as recorded in Luke 10:34 'oil ... wine', which were medicines of the day, oil for softening the skin, and wine, with its natural alcohol, for killing infections. Further, he 'brought him to an inn' to provide shelter and paid 'two denarii' (Lk 10:35) which would pay for about 14 days' room and board. Furthermore, the care and concern that the Samaritan had for this man remained consistent and persistent. This is seen in his saying, 'when I return, I will repay you'.

To sum up, the key point of the parable and Jesus' answer to this man's question in verse 29 is that 'all in need – regardless of race, politics, class, and religion – is your neighbour' (Keller 2010:67). Thus, the one who showed mercy toward (this man) is the good neighbour. Keller (2010:68) elucidates: 'Not everyone is your brother or sister in the faith, but everyone is your neighbour, and you must love your neighbour'. Thus, the imperative: Go and do the same.

Barnes (1962) captures the implications of this command:

This extension of 'neighbor' from OT 'covenant partner' (i.e., fellow Jew) to the hated Samaritan would have shocked this lawyer/scribe. Yet, it is this very extension that characterized Jesus' teaching (and Luke's emphasis). The OT categories of national and racial emphasis are expanded into global spheres. Jerusalem is no longer a city in Palestine, but the 'New Jerusalem' coming down out of heaven to a recreated earth (cf. Rev. 21:2). The new age is not Jewish! (p. 61)

Thus, we concur with Ryan (2021:14) that 'only the rare ones among us can do this on every occasion; we see, but we do not see'.

Having tabled and discussed insights from the trained readers of the Bible, now I will present discussions and insights from this text that emerged during our encounter with ordinary readers of the Bible, in this case, homeless people.

Encounterological reflection of Luke 10:25–37 in relation to homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness in Tshwane

The CBS (Table 1) on Luke 10:25–37 took place on 22 February 2022 as one of the sessions under the theme, 'Standing in solidarity with victims and survivors of violence in our cities'.

TABLE 1: Participants ($N = 20$)

Small group	Gender	
	Female	Male
Group 1	4	3
Group 2	4	3
Group 3	4	2
Total	12	8

Let us start with the first impressions of the text as highlighted by the group (plenary). For the 20 participants of the CBS, plenary group session, this highlights that it is about a non-believer who is willing to help. It is about somebody who is selfish and proud. It talks about caring and unconditional love. It shows that your help does not necessarily come from expected persons. It is the manifestation of good over evil in human beings. It is about somebody who is an embodiment of what it means to carry the pains of others. It speaks of violence which is a reality even today. It is about God's commands. It depicts God's love through this Samaritan person. It is about giving and it is about showing mercy – underserved.

About verses 25 and 29 regarding the character of the lawyer, participants from Group 1 highlighted that the lawyer acknowledged that he may be wrong (v. 29). The lawyer is confident of his knowledge (v. 25). The lawyer knows about the word of God but wants to test the knowledge of Jesus. The lawyer is ignorant of the truth – Jesus is the Truth. The lawyer is presenting himself as someone who knows better than Jesus. The lawyer still hopes to inherit eternal life despite his pride (learning from another). The lawyer does not trust Jesus. The lawyer is self-centred – he might want to go to heaven alone. He is full of pride.

While Group 2 highlighted that it displays the motive of the person who wants to test Jesus Christ and who also wants to test his knowledge of Jesus Christ about the Law. It also shows his arrogance by assuming that he knows better than Jesus because he is a lawyer. The lawyer wanted to justify himself. He was also testing the knowledge of Jesus Christ concerning the depth of his faith. The lawyer thought Jesus would tell him to help certain people only and not everybody who needs help.

Group 3 added that the lawyer characterises a person seeking full wisdom, understanding and knowledge of the Law or commandments. The lawyer's rhetoric focuses on challenging Jesus Christ for who he was or is and wanted to be clear (beforehand) about the outcome of following the Will of God

Further, it is apparent from the text (v. 26 and v. 36) that Jesus questioned the lawyer in many ways. Group participants were then asked to discuss: 'What characterises each of these questions? What do these questions say about Jesus?' In response to these questions, Group 1 said that Jesus wants to find out how the lawyer applies the Law in real life (v. 36). Jesus wants to know his level of judgment. Jesus is patient – allows the lawyer to apply his mind. Jesus is wise – conveys profound knowledge through a parable. Jesus is loving and

caring – he aims at rescuing the lawyer’s soul. Jesus is fair – he is giving the lawyer the opportunity to rectify his mistakes.

On the other hand, another group highlighted the fact that Jesus answered the lawyer with a question by asking him what was written in the Law (by telling a parable). The parable highlighted the essence of the Law in that it teaches us the power of love and mercy, including encouragement and compassion. Jesus answered his questions in a ‘heavenly way’ by using earthly means. The parable depicts Jesus, who loved us unconditionally and unto salvation by dying for us.

On their side, Group 3 pointed out that Jesus is questioning the understanding of the lawyer’s question about God and the Law. The question explains that Jesus is the eternal life.

At this point, the small groups were called to take a serious look at the answers of Jesus to the questions of the lawyer: verse 26, verses 30–36 (answers in parable). Then discuss: (1) *Why is this parable so significant?* (2) *Did Jesus answer his questions?* (3) *How is love related to salvation and eternal life?*

With reference to the significance of the parable, Group 1 stated that this parable teaches about how to love one’s neighbour as well as about how to love God – that is, by loving your neighbour, you love God. It also teaches that help can come from anyone and anywhere, to put someone first – the Samaritan was on his journey, but he put the interests of this person first. It is also teaching compassion and selflessness.

Group 2 said that the the parable is about Jesus, who knew the mind of the person and the answer to the question he was asking. He also knew that this guy was testing him.

Where Group 3 stated that it signifies the wisdom of God. Jesus is life and light, and through him we are victorious. He works in a mysterious way.

Regarding whether Jesus answered his (lawyer) questions, Group 1 thought that ‘He made him answer his own questions himself (v. 26, v. 36). Jesus asks questions, and in verse 37, the lawyer answers himself’. Group 2 contended that the lawyer was knowledgeable about what is written in the book, but he lacks belief and faith in Jesus Christ by asking him questions he already knows the answers to. With Group 3 stating that Jesus aimed at showing love. Because God is love, and for love, he brings peace and eternal life.

With reference to the correlation between love and salvation or eternal life, Group 1’s premise was that God is love; therefore, when you love your neighbours, you are able to save them. Those who love are able to show compassion. Those who love are able to win lost souls for Christ. Maybe the wounded man was a sinner who did not know God, but after this experience, he may change to believe in Jesus Christ – the Truth.

Another simply stated that ‘the Letter kills but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6)’. Group 3 explicated that because God is love and for love, he brings peace and eternal life. Love is the bond of perfection. Love is something that unifies and stands forever. Love is the key to prosperity.

Further, the groups were asked to examine the answers of the lawyer as he was engaging Jesus by answering the question: *What changes in understanding about eternal life occur in him?* Group 1 answers to this question included that to inherit eternal life is not as easy as the Law stipulates; there is a ‘grey area’ which forces one to apply their minds in relation to choosing the ‘narrow or broad way’. To inherit eternal life, one has to act in doing good (vv. 33–35).

According to Group 2, the lawyer began to change his mindset when Jesus asked him what is written in the Law and how does it read to him.

Especially the fact that eternal life in the parable is associated with love and head knowledge and understanding (the situation of) even strangers.

While Group 3 reckoned that the process starts with changes in understanding, which should lead to loving and helping one another. The Law and its understanding and application are rooted in love, which is the first principle of life.

Using this parable as a mirror to reflect upon the contemporary City of Tshwane, the group (plenary) was asked to identify and name the victims and survivors of violence in our cities today. All participants in the plenary session, identified categories of people, as follows: woman and children, foreigners, the disabled, poor and homeless people, old people, gays and lesbians, albinos, underprivileged people from rural areas, unemployed people, fathers, orphans, sick people, people living without basic infrastructure, and people affected by abuse and bullying.

Now that categories of people who are victims or survivors of violence have been identified in the City of Tshwane, the group (plenary) had to brainstorm answering the question: *What kind of love and healing do these people in your city and community need?* The following pointers emerged from this discussion:

- Set up (interventionist) organisations to meet their needs;
- Rehabilitation centres;
- Give them consideration;
- Give them heart and love;
- Provide counselling;
- Job creation;
- Respect them;
- Stop crime and drugs;
- Be compassionate;
- Organise an awareness campaign;
- Teaching them how to take responsibility; and
- Stop corruption.

Finally, building on these points, the group (plenary) was asked to come up with concrete ways, that is, actions, in response to the needs of identified categories of people in Tshwane. They came up with these actions:

- Skills development tailored to a job opportunity;
- Call for implementation of the good government policies in place;
- Job creation – support entrepreneurs to create more jobs; and
- Provide ethical and spiritual support.

Synthesis: Emerging voice(s) of the ordinary readers of the text

It is clear from theological reflections that God's love is the driving inspiration for addressing homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness in Tshwane, and this comes within the observance of what participants referred to as an embodiment of what it means to carry the pains of others. This befits the notion of standing in solidarity with victims and/or survivors of violence in our cities.

Admittedly, the parable points to the fact that believers must implement the law of God through love for God and your neighbour. Hence, setting up [interventionist] organisations to meet homeless folks' needs such as rehabilitation centres; giving them consideration; giving them heart and love; providing counselling; job creation; respecting them; stopping crime and drugs, compassionate ministries, organising awareness campaign, teaching them how to take responsibility and stopping corruption, fall within the ambit and the key point of the parable and Jesus' answer to this man's question in verse 29 in that 'all in need – regardless of race, politics, class, and religion – is your neighbour' (Keller 2010:67).

In line with the foregoing, the ordinary readers recommended developing skills aligned with available job opportunities, implementing existing good government policies, supporting entrepreneurs to create more jobs and providing ethical and spiritual support. The implementation of these interventions will result in emancipation, restoring respect and protection. In the process, these vulnerable people will no longer be seen as half-citizens but as human beings and neighbours, just like most of us, who deserve to be respected and loved. These interventions suggest change in many ways.

The ordinary readers (Group 3) emphasised that the process of change should enhance an understanding that engenders loving and helping one another because the Law and its interpretation and application are rooted in love, which is the first principle of life. This echoes, on the one hand, what Keller (2010:68) contended: 'Not everyone is your brother or sister in the faith, but everyone is your neighbour, and you must love your neighbour'. On the other hand, implications highlighted by Barnes (1962) relative to the extension of the neighbour notion in that:

This extension of 'neighbour' from OT 'covenant partner' (i.e. fellow Jew) to the hated Samaritan would have shocked this lawyer/scribe. Yet, it is this very extension that characterized Jesus' teaching (and Luke's emphasis). The OT categories of national and racial emphasis are expanded into global spheres. (p. 62)

In the same vein, the ordinary readers went further by highlighting that the law expert should not be ignorant of the implications of love for the neighbour as depicted in the parable. Group 1, for example, put it: 'When you love your neighbours, you are able to save them. Those who love are able to show compassion'.

Thus, the ordinary readers condemned the attitude of the law expert who wanted to raise boundaries regarding loving your neighbour. For them, loving your neighbour is *ipso facto* demonstrated through *caring*, as it should be rooted in *unconditional love*. This attitude has deprived the victims and survivors of violence in our cities today, such as those identified by the homeless people in the preceding section, of tangible support, care and protection. They have remained 'crushed' and left to die along the road, with most people, including moral authorities, looking the other way. Therefore, the ordinary readers' suggested actions, such as skills development tailored to job opportunities, call for implementation of the good government policies which are in place, support entrepreneurs to create more jobs and provide ethical and spiritual support, will not only go a long way in protecting these vulnerable groups but also ensure that they are looked after as our neighbours. Yet, 'we learn from Luke's parable that even our religious commitments cannot guarantee we will act with compassionate care on every difficult occasion that presents itself to us' (Ryan 2021:14).

Conclusion and recommendations

With reference to homelessness associated with violence and powerlessness in Tshwane, this article has highlighted key insights coming from the margins on what should be considered in a transformative missiology, aimed at finding ways to address vulnerabilities and inequalities.

Drawing insights from an empirical missiological study based on encounterological reflection of Luke 10:25–37 with homeless people in Pretoria, four key actions are suggested: (1) skills development tailored for job opportunity; (2) implementation of the (pro-poor and vulnerable) good government policies in place; (3) support entrepreneurs to create more jobs; and (4) provide ethical and spiritual support.

Finally, given the prevalence of *violence which is a reality even today*, the homeless people recommend that humanity should embrace God's command of love as depicted by the Samaritan in the parable. *It is about giving, and it is about showing mercy - undeserved.*

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Disclaimer

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