

Love for Enemies

You are going to do what?" asked Jada.

"He needs a good mechanic," said Andre.

"So, you're going to charge him \$100 for a \$2,500 job!" Jada exclaimed.

"You know our shop is doing really well," Andre said.

"We can afford it. I want to bless him."

"You want to bless Colton? The man who hates, envies, and despises you?" Jada cried, coming from around the kitchen island and taking a seat across from her husband at the table.

Andre had known Colton before he was married. The two had shared a neighborhood. While Andre was finishing automotive school, being elected to city council, and creating a good name for himself, Colton was trying to keep out of trouble and running into one dead end after another.

Colton always said Andre got all the breaks. Then Andre met and married Jada, and the two were happy. Andre could not understand Colton's hostility. He was nothing but a "regular guy."

"I understand you're more spiritual than me," said Jada, "but why would you let Colton, an enemy, take advantage of you?"

"I'm choosing to live by the Word, honey," Andre said.

"He called me, because he knows I'm a good mechanic. It was an opportunity to show him some love."

"I want you to be in agreement with me, all right?" Andre said. "I want to do what Jesus would do."

1. *Describe people who irritate you, and why.*

2. *Why is loving people who regularly irritate you one of the greatest tests of how loving a person you really are?*

3. *How truthful is it to say, "I love everyone just like Jesus said to do"?*

Loving Unconditionally

Luke 6:27-31, KJV

27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.

30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

Luke 6:27-31, NIV

²⁷“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

To hear Jesus' admonition to love our enemies can be quite challenging. Regardless of the situation, Christians are not at liberty to hate others. Rather, the Lord calls us to love everyone, including those who treat us poorly or simply rub us the wrong way. Choosing to love an “enemy” may be exactly opposite from how we feel about the person.

Jesus admonished His listeners to do good to the people who hate them. Then He went on to describe some specific actions to take, the first of which is to answer a curse with a blessing. This act can diffuse a potentially volatile situation and possibly make a friend out of an enemy, or at least make the enemy less hostile. Then He said to pray for the person who mistreats you. Prayer may change the other person's heart, but more importantly, it will change the believer's heart who entreats the Lord on behalf of the offender.

Turning the other cheek has a specific meaning that has often been misunderstood or misrepresented today. Slapping the face in Jesus' day was not meant as an assault intended

to do bodily harm. Rather, it was an insult against the person. Therefore, Jesus was not speaking against protecting oneself or someone else from an attack intended to harm, maim, or even kill. The idea is to take the insulting slap even-temperedly and offer the other cheek for another slap.

Jesus then gave additional examples of how to show love to our enemy. If someone takes an article of clothing from you, offer another article of clothing with it. True love does not demand back what is wrongfully taken by others.

Then the Lord proclaimed what is often referred to as the Golden Rule, which is to treat others as we would like them to treat us. The principle here is that no matter how we may be mistreated by another, the right thing to do is to treat them in return with the respect, grace, and kindness that we hope to receive.

4. *Whom did Jesus say should be the object of our love?*

5. *What are some specific things that we should do to show love to our enemies?*

6. *What is the “Golden Rule” that Jesus gave to His listeners?*

Loving Selflessly

Luke 6:32-34, KJV

32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

Luke 6:32-34, NIV

³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.”

One characteristic of God's kind of love is that it expects nothing in return. Sinners expect their affections to be returned and will usually withdraw their affection if they get nothing back. When we love others even without any reciprocation, we are adhering to God's holy standard for us. Furthermore, unrequited love is not pleasant; no one likes rejection or worse. What Jesus experienced on the Cross was not pleasant, but He lovingly chose to die despite the rejection and pain.

Another aspect of showing Christlike love is doing good to others who do not return that good, or who even return evil for good. If we do good only to those who return the favor, then we are no different from the world. God's love calls us to a higher standard, and doing good for those who might not even acknowledge our kindness is His high standard.

The same is true when it comes to lending money to others. The world expects not only to be repaid the principle of a loan but also to receive additional funds in interest. This practice, which is so prevalent today, was prohibited under the law, especially when it came to lending to the poor.

Our compassionate God hears the cries of the afflicted and oppressed, so it would not bode well for anyone who took advantage of the misery of others (Exod. 22:25-27). Not taking advantage of a borrower is one thing, but not even expecting to be repaid is quite another. But that is the kind of selfless love our God shows us, and that is the kind of selfless love He expects us to show others, even those whom we consider to be unlovable.

7. *When it comes to doing good to others, how does godly love differ from that of the world?*

8. *When it comes to lending to others, how does godly love differ from that of the world?*

9. *How is it possible to show unconditional, selfless love, even to the "unlovable"?*

Loving Mercifully

Luke 6:35-36, KJV

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Luke 6:35-36, NIV

³⁵“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

The Lord emphasized that despite what our enemies might do to harm us, we are to treat them well and expect nothing in return. For those people who anger us or seek to do us wrong in some way, though we may be tempted to respond in like manner, loving-kindness and generosity toward them are what God expects of His children.

One of the temporal rewards we will have when we treat our enemies well is peace of mind and heart. When we forgive and deal with our enemies kindly, the bitterness that eats away at both body and soul flees, and peace of heart and mind flows abundantly. While it is good to say words of forgiveness, it is even better to do acts of forgiveness.

We are obedient children following our Savior when we show kindness to our enemies. Therefore, because we want to follow His example, we are to be kind and merciful to ungrateful, even evil people, just as He is. God’s mercy runs deep, and considering how merciful He is to sinners—including us, His children—we too are to be merciful.

10. *What will Christians receive when they are kind and merciful to their enemies?*

11. *What do Christians demonstrate themselves to be when they are kind and merciful to their enemies?*

12. *Why are mercy and forgiveness so important in the life of a believer?*

Deciding to Love, Not Hate

When Gregory Barnes, Jr. was pulled over for speeding by an Indiana state trooper, many things could have gone wrong. Barnes is African American; the trooper, Shawn Cosgrove, is white. Barnes could have accused the trooper of stopping him because of his skin color and created a scene. But Barnes, the vice president of STAR Financial Bank, knew he was being pulled over for a legitimate reason. He was speeding to his house to start packing for a move.

Instead of a confrontation, the website *OpposingViews.com* said Barnes took a photo of himself and the officer, both smiling, and posted it on social media, where it went viral.

As the two talked, they discovered they had more in common than they realized. Barnes said, "We talked more about how our individual days were going, and the situations within our society that have led to interactions such as his and mine to play out much more negatively, some even deadly, than ours. Then we talked about the situation that led to him pulling me over. In the end, we both thanked each other for our mutual displays of respect and agreed to take a 'selfie' together to help tell our story."

Barnes concluded his post with these words: "I can't stress enough that *no* demographic and/or profession of people are all bad. Neither of us is the enemy. We can continue to fight against each other until we are literally 'black and blue,' or we can show one another the respect we inherently deserve, not as 'black man' and 'blue police officer,' but as humans."

We can always choose to love, not hate. That's what Jesus did, all the way to the cross and on the Cross.

13. *Why is deciding to love and not hate always the better option?*

14. *How difficult would it be to show respect to someone who is your "enemy"? Explain your answer.*

15. *How does Jesus' example of love resulting in forgiveness show us the way to love our enemies?*

Loving ‘Those People’ Like Jesus

In order to love our enemies the way Jesus told us to, we have no better example than Him. What He did is described in the song, “I Want to Be More Like Jesus.” One verse says, “Remember there’s no greater love, then to lay down your life for a friend. The end of all my prayers, Is to care like my Lord cares. My one and only goal. His image in my soul.”

► *Who has wronged you or mistreated you? Who has caused you pain or discomfort? Say this prayer for them and for you: “Lord, I pray for _____ today. I forgive them for _____ . I pray blessings for them and their family, and I pray that I can see them as like me, a sinner in need of Your grace. In Jesus’ name, amen!”*

KEY VERSE

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. —Luke 6:27-28, KJV

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” —Luke 6:27-28, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

October 12 through October 18

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Deuteronomy 15:7-11—Help Your Neighbor in Need.
- Tues.** 1 John 4:16b-21—Love God and Brothers and Sisters.
- Wed.** Mark 12:28-34—Adopt the First Commandments.
- Thurs.** Luke 17:11-19—Jesus Accepts Thanks from Healed Samaritan.
- Fri.** Luke 9:51-56—A Samaritan Village Refuses to Welcome Jesus.
- Sat.** John 4:1-15—Jesus Offers Samaritan Woman Living Water.
- Sun.** Luke 10:25-37—Follow the Samaritan’s Example.