LESSON 6 • OCTOBER 11, 2020
LOVE YOUR ENEMIES


BIBLE TRUTH: Jesus teaches that the main principle in following Him is love.

MEMORY 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).

LESSON AIM: By the end of this lesson, we will EVALUATE Jesus’ teaching about what it means to love our enemies, REPENT of times when we felt animosity toward others or were hated by others, and OBEY Jesus’ command to love our enemies.

Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

LESSON SCRIPTURE
LUKE 6:27-36, 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.
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.
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.

BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS
A. Bless (v. 28) eulogeō (Gk.)—To invoke God’s favor
B. Do good (vv. 33, 35) agathopoieo (Gk.)—To be benevolent; to do good so that someone derives advantage from it

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY’S LESSON
AIM: Students will apply the principles of love that Jesus outlines to their lives.

INTRODUCTION
Love
God has revealed three factors meant to prompt the Christian to exhibit God’s nature of love by obeying the commandment of love: the intrinsic nature of God, the command to love, and the
fact that every human being needs love. Love should be an exercise of the divine will, which is a deliberate decision made in obedience and service to God. Love means three things: to do good, to bless, and to pray for one's enemies—which include three types: those who hate you, those who curse you, and those who abuse you.

Those who disagree with this philosophy are likely do so because they believe others will not respond in a positive way. However, whether or not others obey should not be the measurement of the believer’s obedience. Faith in God’s Word is all we need to obey this simple commandment.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: Students will seek to live the lifestyle that Jesus models.

I. GOD’S PEOPLE ARE CALLED TO LIVE A DISTINCTIVE LIFESTYLE (Luke 6:27–30)

Just as Moses established a “constitution” for Israel at Sinai (Exodus 20), Christ sets forth the foundation of Christianity as He begins His ministry (Matthew 5–7). An important part of this foundation is the principle, “love your enemies.” The Pharisees thought they knew the full implication of Moses’ Law when they said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy” (Matthew 5:43; cf. Leviticus 19:18). However, Christ showed that true righteousness exceeds what the Law demands. When others wrong us, we ought to respond with patience—but more than that, Jesus wants action. He commands us to actively do good to those who hate us.

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.

It is important to note the opening word, “but,” which serves to separate these verses from the woes listed just prior (vv. 24–26). Jesus is addressing His disciples in this passage. The woes do not apply to the disciples, because Jesus counts them among those who both listen to His teachings and obey them because they have ears to hear (cf. Luke 8:8, 14:35; Romans 11:8). They are members of His fold, subject to His teachings and commandments, and so they are meant to know the higher laws of life. This teaching opens by zeroing in on the last beatitude (v. 22; cf. Matthew 5:38–48).

The Greek word translated “love” (agapao, ag-ap-AH-o) denotes loving “in a social or moral sense.” It is a genuine and selfless concern. Love here means to love dearly and sincerely (cf. Romans 12:14–21). This word is used to express the essential nature of God that ought to be found in every disciple of Christ and must be shown to others. To exhibit this love is to behave like Jesus, who defined humility, long-suffering, and compassion. There is a human tendency to hate one’s enemy, but Jesus tells us that our attitudes should transcend this tendency in order to fulfill God’s requirements. He mentions that love for our neighbors is the second greatest command (Matt. 22:39). One’s neighbor is not just the person living next door, but every human being. In this sense, an enemy—no matter how great our antagonism against them—is a neighbor who deserves to be loved.

Jesus commands His disciples to show goodness in response to hatred. The Greek word translated “do good” (agathopoioe, ag-ath-op-oy-EH-o), means “to do well, to be of benefit to another.” Jesus is conditioning His disciples with a positive attitude to enable them to fulfill the law of love against the negative tide of maltreatment from evil people. This commandment of the Lord Jesus is meant to indicate the desired condition of the heart of a disciple. Each Christ-follower must have in themselves the spirit of love. With this spirit, they can tolerate harsh treatment from others, resist the pangs of offense, and develop the willingness to bless the one who curses them.
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The Greek word translated “bless” (eu-logeo, yoo-log-EH-o) means “to speak well of, to invoke a benediction upon a person, to praise.” On the other hand, the Greek word translated “curse” (kata-ro-mai, kat-ar-AH-om-ahee) means “to pray against, to wish evil against a person.” The disciple of Christ is required to counter the person who wishes them evil with a blessing.

In addition, we are given the responsibility of praying for those who misuse us. Jesus commands us to pray to God for those who mistreat us. The Lord Jesus says to pray for them rather than against them. God hears prayers about someone, when we have obeyed Him concerning that person. The Greek word translated “despitefully use” (ep-er-eazo, ep-ay-reh-AD-zo) denotes “to insult, slander or accuse falsely.” Despiteful use is an opposition against us, and we are required to express love to those who oppose us in this manner.

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.

Some believe verses 29 and 30 are intentional hyperbole, which is exaggerated language, that Jesus uses to make a point. Jesus places no limits on the self-denial aspect of love. True love is as infinite as God. Verse 29 starts the illustration of concrete examples of actions in response to maltreatment and presents a command to resist continuing violence. If someone hits you or takes from you, don’t hit back—in fact, allow another strike. Secondly, we are told to refuse retaliation against extortion. Jesus says if someone takes away our cloak, we should not stop him from taking our coat also.

To take one’s coat has the implication of a violent action taken through authority. This is a reference to abuse by those with societal power. The response to those who seek to abuse and humiliate us is to love, bless, do good, and pray. Is Jesus telling us to stand still and accept abuse or theft? To get the full meaning, we must examine the surrounding scriptures. Verses 27-28 tell us to take four actions regarding those who wrong us: love, do good, bless and pray for them.

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

Verse 30 takes us from the violence of those in authority to the negative actions of neighbors and even friends. To ask (Gk. aiteo, ahee-THE-o) means to beg. While “take” in this verse is the same as “take” in the previous verse, here a personal pronoun is used implying a friend who takes from you.

The spirit of love should make us generous without discrimination. Jesus knows that no matter our state, we are in a position where we can help other people. He commands us to give. “Every man” denotes any kind of person: the poor or rich, the old or young; relatives, friends, enemies, or strangers. “Every man” does not leave room for discrimination based on religion, background, race, color, beliefs, or social class. In other words, we are to lay down all we have for a friend (John 15:13).

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 1
Why is Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount so counter-cultural?

QUESTION 2
Does failing to love the unlovable indicate a lack of love for God? Explain.

II. GOD’S PEOPLE ARE CALLED TO LIVE BY THE GOLDEN RULE (v. 31)

Perhaps the best-known principle in the New Testament is this “Golden Rule.” Jesus’ guideline sums up the main way that His followers will live a distinctive lifestyle: “Do to others as you would like them to do to you” (v. 31, NLT), which is the
guiding principle of seeking another’s goodwill. We must follow this rule even when it hurts.

Today’s society has several common misconceptions about this verse. One is that to be gracious and loving in the face of hostility is a sign of weakness. On the contrary, it takes a great deal of strength to control the urge to fight back. Someone might also claim that these verses will lead to letting evil take over. However, Jesus is demanding that we fight vigorously against evil. Our battle, however, is to be fought by setting a good example.

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

This verse is considered the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. We have a natural desire to receive good treatment from others. We love to be spoken well of; we love to hear kind words, to be encouraged, and to be given gifts. Jesus says that whatever treatment we love to receive from other people, we should also desire to give to others. The Greek word translated “would” (thelo, THELO) expresses a desire or wish. What you wish for yourself is what you should wish for others.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 3
Why is the Golden Rule important to follow?

QUESTION 4
What one thing will you do this week in obedience to the Golden Rule?

III. GOD’S PEOPLE ARE CALLED TO UNSELFISH LOVE (v. 32-36)
Jesus makes it very clear that Christians have no corner on good deeds (v. 32). The non-Christian does good to those who will return the favor and lends to those who can repay. This kind of behavior does not distinguish us as Christians. Good for good is a fair exchange. Good for evil is the mark of a believer.

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.

Jesus teaches unconditional love. Love for others should not be spurred by the fact that the other person is capable of reciprocating that love. Sinners show their acts of love to people whom they believe are capable of paying them back because they consider it an investment into the lives of these beneficiaries. The motivation behind a sinner’s giving is the recompense he or she will receive from the person to whom they give.

Jesus’ point here is to define generosity in a new way and to encourage the growth of real relationships, as friends rather than as “business partners” who are seeking to exchange a favor for a favor. The Greek word translated “thanks” (charis, KHR-ec) in these verses is usually rendered “grace.” It connotes “favor, benefit, pleasure.” This means we derive favor and benefit by loving people who are not capable of reciprocating. The whole point of showing grace is that it cannot be repaid. We have been given such an abundance of grace and favor from Christ’s gift of salvation. We certainly have enough to spare!

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.

Jesus poses a different motive for the actions of His followers. He admonishes them to love, do good and give without hope of anything in return. We are inclined to believe that those who have hurt us are undeserving of our love or our acts of kindness. This mentality fosters
enmity and is a barrier to entering the realm of agape, selfless love. Jesus’ command to love our enemies enables us to break down this barrier in our hearts. While it may be easy and convenient for us to love those we are pleased with or those with whom we have some affinity, it is generally impossible to love our enemies.

According to God's economy, this impossible task of loving enemies leads to the greatest reward from the Lord. The Greek word translated “reward” (mithos, mis-THOS) means pay received later for services, wages. In this case, however, the term signifies our reward in heaven. Therefore, Jesus commands us to love, to do good, and to lend without expecting anything. God desires a distinction between His people and everyone else. The command to love our enemies is key to creating this distinction. According to Jesus, our acts of love firmly establish our standing as children of the Highest.

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

When we desire to take punitive measures against those who have done evil to us, Jesus urges us to be merciful to them. Since we are imperfect, liable to err, and likely to be subjected to adverse conditions of life, we inadvertently offend one another and become beset by ills. We all make mistakes, and we all need mercy from one another. Mercy can be regarded as one side of a coin, with love on the other side: While love gives, mercy forgives. Mercy is a positive reaction in which we show forgiveness and kindness to one who has offended us. Being merciful is the character of God, and so showing mercy to our offenders means manifesting God’s character to them. The child of God is called to be merciful like our Father in Heaven. This is the best way to maintain relationships with others and to demonstrate our relationship with God.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 5
Why is saying we love different than action that demonstrates love for a person?

QUESTION 6
How can we keep the principle of God’s mercy in the forefront of our minds?

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: Students will embrace radical love.

As followers of Jesus, one of the ways that we live a distinctive lifestyle is by practicing radical love. We can love those who are considered unlovable because we are loved by God. In this way, we point the way to Jesus and His radical Kingdom.

In our efforts to turn the other cheek, we should not conclude that we have no need for protection against lawbreakers. To love our enemies does not mean we allow ungodly behavior. The command to love our enemies actually places a weapon in the hand of the powerless. When deprived of physical, political, and economic power, we still have the power of a righteous life.

STUDENTS’ RESPONSES

AIM: Students will act with loving kindness.

It is almost normal to think of an enemy as some who attacks us with unkind actions. Too often, we categorize people as enemies because of their religion, ethnicity, or political persuasion. Because we have the favor of God and His Holy Spirit, we can resist labeling people as our enemies and embrace love without looking for it in return. Very likely someone you know will mistreat you, belittle you, or do something to upset you during the coming week. Brainstorm ways to obey God’s command, love them, or do something kind to prove your love. Consider having lunch or coffee with that person, or at the very least, send an encouraging text.
**PRAYER**
Father, Your standards are perfect! Thank you for Jesus who teaches us to do the unthinkable by loving the unlovable. This is not an easy response, Lord! We repent for the times that we returned harsh words to those whom we felt were rude to us. And we repent for the times that we ignored the needs of those whom we felt didn’t deserve our generosity. Cleanse us, O God! We will obey Your Word through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

**DIG A LITTLE DEEPER**
The violence in our communities by law enforcement creates a barrier to justice that is difficult to accept. It’s easier to draw lines that separate ‘us’ from ‘them’. Add to this, the voices of hatred that explode against people of color, and the command to respond in love becomes even more untenable.

The unjust system of mass incarceration is perhaps the most visible modern day expression of oppression that stems from hatred. Thankfully, the Equal Justice Initiative fights for the release of those wrongfully convicted; many of whom are on death row. The website, eji.org, offers historical information plus ways volunteers and donors can support their efforts.

**HOW TO SAY IT**
Assisi. Ah-SEE-see
Judea, joo-DEE-uh
Mosaic, moh-ZAY-ik

**DAILY HOME BIBLE READINGS**

**MONDAY**
The Lord Is Merciful and Gracious (Psalm 103:1-14)

**TUESDAY**
Responding to Unwanted Demands
(Matthew 5:38-42)

**WEDNESDAY**
Handling Family Difficulties
(Leviticus 25:35-39)

**THURSDAY**
Home Life of the Faithful
(Psalm 128)

**FRIDAY**
Forgiving the Ignorant
(Luke 23:32-36)

**SATURDAY**
Blessed and Rewarded
(Matthew 5:1-12)

**SUNDAY**
Love and Forgive Your Enemies
(Luke 6:27-36)

**PREPARE FOR NEXT SUNDAY**
Read Leviticus 19:18,34; Luke 10:25-37 and next week’s lesson, "Loving Your Neighbor."

**Sources:**

**COMMENTS / NOTES:**