

What Kind of Love?

Luke 6:27-36

Jesus' Early Ministry

❑ After calling his first disciples, Jesus continued his ministry of healing and teaching. News about Jesus spread, and “crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (*Luke 5:15-16, NIV*).¹

📖 “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles” (*Luke 6:12-13, NIV*).²

Jesus' Sermon on the Plain

📖 “[Jesus] went down with [the apostles] and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over...had come to hear him and be healed of their diseases... Looking at his disciples, [Jesus began to teach.] (*Luke 6:12-13, 20, NIV*)

❑ Jesus presented four “beatitudes” (“blessed are you...”) followed by four distresses (“woe to you...”).³ The beatitudes apply to Jesus’ faithful followers, while the distresses apply to others. For example, Jesus said...

📖 “Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you, and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man (Jesus)” (*Luke 6:22, NIV*).



Command to Love

❑ Jesus followed the beatitudes and distresses with his teaching on love. Read Luke 6:27-36. Verses 27-28 present Jesus’ fourfold command to love:

- Love your enemies (*6:27a*)⁴
- Do good to those who hate you (*6:27b*)⁵
- Bless those who curse you (*6:28a*)⁶
- Pray for those who mistreat you (*6:28b*)

1. Jesus commands a particular kind of love. How is it different from “normal love?”

Illustration of Love

❑ Jesus provides some illustrations of the kind of love he is teaching (*6:29-35a*). For example...

¹ This series skips over Luke 5:12-6:11, which includes three healings, the calling of Levi (Matthew), questions to Jesus about fasting, and some conflicts with Jewish religious leaders, including a conflict over Sabbath observance.

² “apostles” – in this context, the men chosen to accompany Jesus, and given special authority to teach and heal.

³ See Luke 6:20-26. Though this lesson skips over these verses, they provide helpful context for verses 27-36.

⁴ “love” (*agapāō*) – Obviously, this love is not based on feeling. It does not depend on the loveliness of the object loved. This love is a commitment to action. It is unconditional. It is not self-centered, but is concerned about others.

⁵ Jesus’ command seemed new. The Old Testament said, “Do not seek revenge...love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18), but that instruction used “neighbor,” not “enemy.” However, Proverbs 25:21 said, “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.” For similar teaching, see Romans 12:14-21 & 1 Peter 3:9.

⁶ “bless” (*eulogeite*) – to wish good things on another person, or call on God to bestow (give) good things to another person; “curse” (*katarasthe*) – to wish, or ask God to bring, bad things on another person. See Romans 12:14. Consider the examples of Jesus (Luke 23:34) and Stephen (Acts 7:60). This teaching does not mean that harsh warnings are not appropriate (Luke 6:24-26; Matt. 23, 1 Cor. 16:22). People need to be reminded of God’s righteous judgment.

- “If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also” (6:29a).⁷
 - “If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic” (6:29b)⁸
- ❑ These commands seem extreme, but Jesus wants to teach these principles in a vivid way. Jesus commands a radically unselfish attitude toward one’s rights and property. The principle of love is stronger than the desire to protect one’s rights, and to retaliate when treated wrongly.
- ❑ Verse 31 has been called “the Golden Rule.” While the general idea is found in many other moral teachings, Jesus’ teaching is the most demanding.⁹ The command is not utilitarian: “Do this to them *so that* they will do it to you.” The love that Jesus commands is unconditional.
2. Why is it so important that Jesus’ disciples love in this way? (6:32-34)



Basis of Love

- ❑ Jesus’ disciples were (and are) supposed to be different because of their relationship with God (as “[children] of the Most High”). God’s children are supposed to be like their Father. Thus God’s children should love as their Father loves (6:35-36; see *Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:7-12*).
3. How can we love this way? What truths can help us love even our enemies?¹⁰

Applying Jesus’ Teaching

- ❑ How would you apply Jesus’ teaching in the following situations? What should you *not* do? What you should you do? (Or maybe you have another situation you would like to consider.)
4. A coworker (or labmate) dislikes you, largely because you are a Christian. He/she often says negative things about you to other coworkers. This coworker sometimes ridicules (makes fun of) you in front of others. He/she sometimes steals your snack food from your desk drawer when you are out of the office. It is very difficult to work with this person!
5. Your next door neighbor is unfriendly, especially to you. When you pass by in the hallway, he/she seems to have a mean look. When he/she saw you leaving for church one morning (with a Bible in hand), he/she laughed at you. Your neighbor seems to have few friends, little money, and no car. You often see him/her walking as you drive to school/work.¹¹

⁷ Matthew’s account indicates a slap with the back of the hand (5:39), thus representing an insult. When insulted, one is not to strike back in kind (retaliate), but remain vulnerable to insult again. This does not rule out self-defense in all circumstances, but challenges our tendency to strike back whenever attacked in any way. Paul wrote, “Do not repay evil for evil...Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:17, 21). This teaching is directed to personal relationships, not the governing authorities who are responsible for promoting justice. Paul wrote, “For [the governing authority] is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer” (Romans 13:4, NIV).

⁸ “cloak” (*himation*) – outer garment (piece of clothing); “tunic” (*chiton*) – undershirt, or garment worn next to skin.

⁹ Confucius said, “What you do not want done to you, do not do to others” (*Analects 15:23*) – stated in the negative, like most others. Some teachings are stated in the positive (e.g. Seneca, *On Benefits* 2.1.1), but Jesus’ teaching is strongest.

¹⁰ We must realize that God is the infinite Source of love. We can only love like Jesus commands if we love with God’s love. God’s love must flow through us. This requires connection (relationship) with Him through faith in Jesus Christ. The indwelling Holy Spirit will empower us to love. What can help us love those who are unjust and evil? We need to remember that God is the righteous Judge. As Paul wrote, “Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath” (Rom. 12:19). God will clean things up, so we need to trust Him. We need to remember Luke 6:20-26.

¹¹ By the way, it is wise to be cautious when reaching out to someone you do not know well, particularly if the person is of the opposite sex. There are ways to show love without putting yourself in unnecessarily risky one-on-one situations.