

“You Are Loved: Love Your Enemies”

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INTRO) **PRIORITY OF LOVE** **Love** = “agape” We’ve spoken about 4 different loves (Friends, Family, Sensual). Agape = God’s love. So many songs ab love. “All You Need is Love.” Secular viewpoint, *love* = feeling.

Show **5 concentric circles** #1 (core = God’s Love) #2 (Incarnation) #3 (One another) #4 (Neighbor) #5 (Enemy) Key = #1 + 2, Agape

Luke 6:27-36 *“But I tell you who hear me: **Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,** ²⁸ **bless** those who curse you, **pray for** those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone strikes you on one cheek, **turn** to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. ³⁰ **Give** to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you. ³² “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ do that. ³⁴ And 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. 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 sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

1.) **YOUR ENEMIES** In the context of the series, it goes beyond loving one another and loving our neighbors – “Sinners” are capable of doing that: ³² *“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ do that. ³⁴ And 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. .* Jesus raised the bar when it comes to the daily conduct of His followers.

Jesus modeled this when He invited Levi & Zacchaeus to follow Him & when He asked God to **forgive** the soldiers as they crucified Him and when He laid down His life for His enemies. **Stephen** also modeled this as he prayed Jesus’ prayer of forgiveness and became the first martyr. Loving our enemy is the ultimate expression of **forgiveness**. Freely we have received God’s grace – now freely we give it to others, who like us, do not deserve it and aren’t expecting it. It’s our

opportunity to extend the same MERCY AND GRACE to someone who probably doesn't deserve it and certainly isn't expecting it.

Q: Do you have an enemy? There are numerous possibilities. **FAMILY**? Parents who abuse, neglect or abandon. Ex-spouses and children who've gone through the pain of divorce. **FRIENDS**? Jesus had 1 friend deny, 1 friend betray and 10 friends disappear at His hour of deepest need. **BUSINESS**? PIZZA HUT PHOTO: "We'll huff/puff and blow that Hut down." Business competition can create enemies. Enemies are often created over Money and Sex. **FAITH**? Christians have historically been **persecuted**. The saying was: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church" meaning that it was the commitment to the gospel unto death which spread Christianity. This is happening today in various places around the world. Christians are the most persecuted group on earth. Particularly in the Middle East – places like Mosul, Iraq have for the first time in almost 2,000 years, ZERO Christians living in the city. Persecution is alive and well in the world. Christians in these countries are paying a price for their faith and are subject to persecution of all sorts as well as martyrdom. ISIS is "my enemy" but I don't know anyone in it. It's an ideology. Same thing with American **POLITICS**. There's a lot of hatred in this country now. This election has inflamed tension unlike anything I've seen since 1968 when I was too young to understand what was going on. Another way of looking at it is – "**Am I someone's enemy?**"

2.) Jesus' **strategy**. We normally think of 2 polar opposites responses: **FIGHT** (aggressive - retaliate with violence) or **FLIGHT** (run away – passive). Jesus provides a 3rd way of responding (ACTIVE). Parenting – you don't beat/abuse them (FIGHT), and you don't let them run wild (FLIGHT), but find a 3rd way (ACTIVE)

Jesus lists 5 ways to love our enemies (He seems to presume we will have them):

1.) **do good** = behavior

2.) **bless those who curse you** = All people are people of sacred worth. We may not like them, but God loves them.

3.) **pray for those who mistreat you** Praying for your enemy = best starting place - gives the HS a chance to speak to us about the situation, and bring about a change of heart (theirs or ours). Also, Jesus never told us we had to like our enemies- we only have to love them, which is not based on a feeling but on a conscience choice.

4.) **turn your cheek** These examples helped His original audience better understand the principle. This "element of surprise" responded to injustice in an unexpected way and could catch another off guard (typical response would be to act the same way in return which only escalated the situation, or to passively

suffer through it which would cause us more harm). The point isn't to trick another, but to treat them in a way that helps him see the situation in a new light. Loving our enemies requires us to be thoughtful and creative in our response.

5.) ***Give/Lend*** Although it's not a one-size-fits all approach, Jesus' examples seem to be characterized by "**generosity**." Don't be passive or violent but *show generosity*. It removes the power from an oppressor and puts it in the hands of the oppressed. Not responding in the expected way creates new possibilities. This is hard to do, especially when you are in the minority! Our "weapon" is love. We can help our enemies recover their own humanity by loving them. Martin Luther King Jr. exemplified this. Romans 12:17-21 ***Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*** This is giving over to God the right to punish and to judge. We don't have to repay or take revenge – God will do it. In fact, we should be on mission to try to win our enemy over by forgiveness. The heaping of burning coals on someone's head makes no sense to us at all – that doesn't seem like a legitimate way to "win friends and influence enemies." But in that culture, people didn't have ONG. They used charcoal. And sometimes they'd walk some place to get some charcoal. They'd have some sort of bucket on their head which could transport charcoal. If you wanted to "jump start" their fire, for which they would be cooking their meal, then you could dump burning coals on top of their head. They'd really appreciate the help. So it's a simple thing – you see someone with a need and you could ignore them or you could help them. You might win over a former enemy by showing hospitality in this way.

without expecting to get anything back. The classic illustration of "Lower your expectations and raise your commitment."

³⁵ ***love your enemies***, We are to treat others as God has treated us. And we are to give over our right to judge

Then your REWARD will be great, Loving our enemies has immediate benefits in this life, but according to Jesus, it gets credited to us in the life to come. Win/Win. But it also has a benefit in this life – we don't have to live with hatred. Hatred, bitterness and an enemy-list poisons our own well.

CONCLUSION: This is about Following Jesus. “Don’t be like THEM”

(pagan/hypocrite). It should be different for you. Don’t exalt yourself – be humble. Don’t insist on being 1st – go last. Don’t boast about being “The greatest” – be least. Don’t try to find yourself – lose yourself. The 1st question for a follower of Jesus = is it different among us? Our surrounding culture has its way of leading. Our culture dominates and often oppresses those under it. It celebrates the rights & privileges that comes from being on top. Jesus calls us instead to wash feet, not demand that others take care of us. He asks His followers to give up rights & privileges to serve the interest of others, often of those who can never repay us. A Jesus-follower is wise – he knows who he is. A J follower is strong, and can lift up another. A J follower is assertive – he turns the other cheek. What makes us 1st followers is not that we love God but that He loves us. Who did Jesus choose? He didn’t select members for his team who’d make him look good. He didn’t choose the brightest & best or the cream of the crop but the curdled milk, the skimmed milk & the dregs at the bottom of the cup. Jesus’ 2nd defining statement: “Follow me.” Not my teachings – ME. Not “listen” to me – but Follow me. Other rabbi’s invited their students to be attached to their teaching about Torah, but J invited them to be attached to him. To follow J doesn’t mean you have all the answer or that you are altogether personally. Or that suddenly the shades go up, the light floods in & the shadows disappear. It just means you keep on moving after the One who’s chosen you. As you travel in his footsteps, things gradually – sometimes very gradually – get brighter. To FJ = you are someone in love. F are > believers. The devil & demons believe in J.

We had a memorial service this week for a Jesus-follower, Bud Mathes. (SHOW PICTURE) Bud wasn’t always a Jesus-follower. He grew up w/o loving, nurturing parents – finished HS, got married, took 12 different jobs & moved 12x in 3 years. His wife, Diane, had a baby at 20. Things were hard. She and their daughter finally started going to church & asked him to go. He resisted. Finally said he’d only go if the “Big Guy came to see him.” They’d lost a son – never made it home from the hospital – lived only 1 day. Bud was angry. He told that pastor, Bill Mason, “I can’t be a Jesus-follower because I like my scotch whiskey.” Bill told him to look in the Bible and find where it says you can’t drink scotch whiskey and follow Jesus. Bud slowly came around. At some point, he gave his life to Christ. He was a changed man. 15 years after his 1st daughter, they had a 2nd. Julie, the older girl, knew her dad before Christ. Mandy, their 2nd, never knew him when he wasn’t a Christian. At his memorial service on Wednesday, I noted two things: 1.) His smile. 2.) He loved. And I thought Mandy had a terrific quote about Bud: “He was imperfectly perfect.”

The 2 worst things you can do in life? Refuse to be loved. Refuse to love. Love is at the very heart of following Jesus. Jesus expects his followers to learn to live in his love. That means 1st followers will be genuinely loving people. *“Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”* 1 John 3:18 Don't just talk a good game. Get out there and do what you say. Live the love that abase itself and exalts the beloved.

Remember that we were God's enemies. He loved us WHILE we were His enemies. Won't you tell them this great news – YOU ARE LOVED! Now..you can love, too.