



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 6:27-36**

To understand the value of loving your enemy.

## The More You Know

In *Maybe You Should Talk to Someone*, psychotherapist and writer Lori Gottlieb recalls a formative experience in her training: “During my training [as a therapist], a supervisor once told me, ‘There’s something likable in everyone,’ and to my great surprise, I found that she was right. It’s impossible to get to know people deeply and not come to like them. We should take the world’s enemies, get them in a room to share their histories and formative experiences, their fears and their struggles, and global adversaries would suddenly get along.” Perhaps it is an oversimplification of sorts, but it does illustrate some important truths. The more you know someone, the more challenging it is to hate them. Fear, as it turns out, is often connected to the unknown. Beyond that, it is difficult to hate someone when you come to discover that they aren’t much different than you. Learning to not hate your enemies is one thing, but what about *loving* them?

In Luke 6:27-36, Jesus continues His *Beatitudes*, and makes some radical statements concerning our enemies: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Lk. 6:27-28). What is the value of such a practice? This week’s passage answers that question.

## The Command

Verses 27 and 28 begin with a command from Jesus: “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.” Continuing with the trend that we saw last week of turning cultural expectations upside down with the rich and the poor, Jesus begins

to teach on the counter-intuitive nature of Godly love in the face of persecution. He instructs His disciples to engage people who hate, persecute, curse, and abuse you by praying for them and loving them. Below is a brief breakdown of what this kind of radical love and forgiveness demands in more specific circumstances.

### **THE ONE WHO STRIKES THE CHEEK**

In verse 29a, Jesus says, “To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also.” The language is perhaps a bit more forceful than a simple slap on the cheek. The word for cheek (Gk. *σιαγών*) can also mean jaw, and it’s likely that Jesus means more specifically “someone who punches you in the jaw.” The natural response would be to take a defensive posture while regaining composure, and to then retaliate. However, Jesus commands the disciples to turn and offer the other cheek. The Christian disposition towards aggressive and hurtful behavior is disarming, not because it is feared, but because of its radical mercy.

### **THE ONE WHO TAKES AWAY YOUR TUNIC**

Jesus continues in verse 28b: “From one who takes your cloak do not withhold your tunic either.” The cloak was a reference to the outer garment that an ancient person would wear, but the tunic would have been the inner garment that touches your skin. To sacrifice the outer garment did not render oneself nearly as vulnerable as the inner garment. Jesus is suggesting that Christians make themselves vulnerable in the face of evil. The theologian and Bible commentator James Edwards said it this way: “The purpose of such calculated vulnerability is not to invite aggression, but, by ceasing to offer resistance, to provide no further cause for aggression. Not surprisingly, such teachings are regularly considered impractical, even absurd. The twentieth century was powerfully altered, however, by courageous observance of this essential teaching. Gandhi’s radical response to injustice, which he inherited from Tolstoy and bequeathed to Martin Luther King Jr., was to “become naked,” i.e., put himself in a defenseless posture vis-à-vis powerful aggressors in order to shame them into repentance by the evil in their hearts.”<sup>1</sup> Grace, as it turns out, is quite sufficient in and of itself to disarm an evil heart and lead it to repentance.

### **THE ONE WHO BEGS**

The third circumstance is measured in verse 30a: “Give to everyone who begs from you.” This is often read cautiously, and with good reason. What about the one who seeks to take advantage? Remember, Luke’s Gospel fits into the scope of several broadening categories. Luke is to first be read in the context of itself, and then in the context of all Lukan books (including the Acts of the Apostles). Beyond that, it should be read in light of the entire New Testament, and then in light of the entire canon. With that in mind, consider 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, which does provide parameters for those *professing Christians* who “lead an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.” Christians are to “keep away” from them. With that in mind, those who are in need, regardless of their faith, should be cared for. Christianity is and has always been a charitable faith interested in the well-being of all humans.

### **THE ONE WHO TAKES**

Verse 30b continues: “From one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back.” The concept here is that materialism should never outweigh the potential for making an impact on a person for the sake of the Gospel. If by going to an individual who has stolen from you will weaken your ability to share Jesus with them, consider your loss as less than what can be gained from them coming to faith.

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<sup>1</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 199.

**THE GENERAL RULE**

All four of these examples are summarized in the so-called “Golden Rule,” which is found in verse 31: “And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.” This rule is rooted in the Old Testament, in Leviticus 19:18: “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” The concept is painfully simple: Whatever you desire others to do for you, do for them, and whatever you do not desire others to do to you, do not do to them. Living with this kind of reciprocal love places the appropriate, God-ordained boundaries around one’s actions towards others.

**The Connection**

After issuing a clear command for who we are to love and how we are to love them, Jesus makes an even clearer connection by talking about *why* all of this matters. Jesus says in verse 32: “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.” In other words, if Christians limit their love to only those who love them first or do nice things for them, they are no different than the rest of the world. Our love proceeds from an understanding and experience of God’s mercy in our own lives that we want to pass along: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (Lk. 6:36). Our love should never look like the world’s love, and it should always set us apart as followers of Jesus (Jn. 13:35).

**What About Now?**

The applications are not really any different for us now than they were for Jesus’ disciples then. We are to love even those who hate us and seek to harm us. When our love and mercy is poured out on those who are the most undeserving, we are truly loving others as the Father loves us; “For God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). It also means that we should value people’s eternal state more than material goods. If someone has stolen from us, we ought to use every opportunity to share Jesus with them, not demand our things be returned. If a thief can be restored to a right relationship with God, he/she must repent of their wrongdoings, and thus justice is accomplished either way. When we value our comfort and our belongings over the spiritual well-being of other people, we have missed the mark.

**Study Questions****Day One**

1. Read Luke 6:27-28. Who is Jesus talking to, according to this text? What four commands does He give?

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2. Read Luke 6:29. What two commands are given here? Why are these two commands so counter-cultural?

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**Day Two**

1. Read Luke 6:30. What two commands are given here? Why are these two commands so counter-cultural?

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2. Read Luke 6:31. In your own words, summarize the “Golden Rule” found in this verse. What is the basis of this verse (Hint: See above notes)?

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### Day Three

1. Read Luke 6:32. According to this verse, why is loving those who love you not that beneficial?

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2. Read Luke 6:33. According to this verse, why is doing good to those who do good to you not that beneficial?

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### Day Four

1. Read Luke 6:34. According to this verse, why is lending to those who are trustworthy not that beneficial?

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2. Read Luke 6:35-36. What three commands are given, and what is the reward for obedience to these commands? What are believers to exhibit, and based on what from the Heavenly Father?

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## Week 23 Discussion: The Best Kind of Mercy

In Luke 6:27-36, Jesus commands His disciples to love even their enemies. In order for this to happen, we must “be merciful even as your Father in heaven is merciful” (Lk. 6:36). Talk as a group about how being more in touch with your sin makes you more in touch with God’s mercy, and how being more in touch with God’s mercy makes you a more merciful person to others who fall short in your life.

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever taken a Freedom Group? If so, how in touch did you become with how broken you really are? If not, why have you not taken one yet? What is holding you back?
2. How does understanding your sin better inform the mercy and forgiveness of God?
3. How does understanding the mercy and forgiveness of God better equip you to have mercy and be forgiving of others who sin against you?
4. Do you consider yourself a merciful and forgiving person? Why or why not?
5. Out of all of the commandments in this passage, which of these do you struggle with the most? Why?
6. Out of all of the commandments in this passage, which of these do you struggle with the least? Why?

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus commands His disciples to love even the most unlovable and undeserving people in our lives.
2. In order to be merciful to our enemies, we must be in touch with the mercy of God for us.