

In Luke 6:28, Jesus said that we should love our enemies (those who hate, ostracize, and mistreat us – Lk. 6:22). We are to bless them, pray for them, and do good to them. In other words, our love should be expressed in actions that benefit them (do good to them), in speech that blesses them, and in our appeals to God on their behalf.

**6:29** *"Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either.*

**6:30** *"Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.*

**6:31** *"Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.*

Verses 29-31 give some examples of the character of Christian love.

First, He says if someone hits us on the cheek, we should offer the other cheek, as well. The word "hit" is used of either a punch or a strike with an open hand. It is probable that the action spoken of here was an expression of scorn and disdain. In John 18:22, Jesus was struck by a guard for questioning the integrity of the High Priest and the legality of His trial. It should be apparent from that incident that turning the other cheek is not to be taken literally in every circumstance for Jesus Himself did not understand it in that way; in this case, He did not stand by passively but exposed the hypocrisy and sinfulness of the High Priest instead. It is probably better to see this as illustrative of the principle that we are to accept being insulted, and should be prepared to be insulted again. In other words, when we receive injury we should not seek revenge, but receive more injury instead. The Scriptures say of Jesus, "While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23).

The second example of the character of love is in verse 29: "whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either." In Jesus' day, many people were poor and their only possession was the coat on their back. According to Exodus 22:26-27, the outer garment was to be an inalienable possession since it was used to keep the person warm by day and acted as a blanket at night. Jesus' disciples needed to be willing to give up not only the outer garment, but all (the inner garment as well). That is, even if our possessions are taken from us we should not let this stop us from loving and serving others. This kind of love is vulnerable because it is quick to forgive and ready to be abused again.

Thirdly, a disciple of Christ is to give to everyone in need and expects nothing in return. Once again, it is most likely an attitude that is being taught; the Christian should not withhold acts of love in order to keep possessions. Love must be ready to give up anything and everything if necessary.

In sum, we are to treat others as we would want to be treated (Lk. 6:31).

The world's standard is typically "do to others what they do to you." The moral or religious standard is "don't do to others what you don't want done to you." Jesus' standard is "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you." The difference between these three standards is profound. The first

standard is vengeful. The second standard abounds in the history of religion and philosophy. The famous Rabbi Hillel said, "What is hateful to yourself, do not to someone else." Confucius said, "What you do not want done to yourself do not do to others." Many other examples could be listed. But Jesus is the first and only one to state this in positive language. It is not enough to restrain from doing evil to others; the Christian must act in ways that positively affect others for their good. This is the way God loves.

**6:32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.**

**6:33 "If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.**

**6:34 "If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount.**

**6:35 "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.**

**6:36 "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.**

Verses 32-34 show what love is by contrasting it to what love is not. "Sinners" is used to describe "ordinary" people.

Jesus is contrasting the love of believers to the love of people who see themselves as possessing moral virtue or religious righteousness. Even people who do not love God practice a level of goodness toward others. Unbelievers commonly love those who love them, do good to people who treat them well, and take it for granted that if they loan to others they will get something in return. Christians are to exceed the world's conceptions of love. They are to love their enemies, do good to people who treat them poorly, and lend, expecting nothing in return (Lk. 6:35). It isn't enough to love as the world loves; we are to love as God loves.

- God's love toward His enemies is displayed in His *kindness*. In Matthew 5:45, Jesus says that God "causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." In Acts 14:17 Paul says, "He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." God's love does not discriminate in His acts of goodness and kindness toward those who hate Him. And He is not just marginally good; He gives good gifts that satisfy and food that brings joy to their hearts. Sinners return enmity for enmity; God returns love for enmity.
- God's love toward His enemies is displayed in His *compassion*. John 3:16 says, "for God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." Romans 5:8 says, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus was compassionate toward the self-righteous young ruler who had rejected Him. In Mark 10:21 it says that Jesus felt a love for him. In John 11:35, after Israel had solidified its hatred and rejection toward Jesus, He wept for Jerusalem. When He was crucified He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

- God's love toward His enemies is displayed in His *warnings* to them. Jesus' love for others prompted Him to say, "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:3).
- God's love toward His enemies is displayed in His *patience*. In Romans 2:4 Paul asked, "Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."
- Lastly, God's love toward His enemies is displayed in His *invitation* to them. Jesus encouraged all people to come to Him and He would give them rest (Matt. 11:28). In the Parable of the Great Dinner, the King told His servant, "Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled" (Lk. 14:23).

If believers are children born of God, they should reflect the same "genetic traits" as their Father. God gives to His enemies knowing that they will give nothing in return; He treats them with mercy and grace, and He loves without being loved back. What is true of God should be visible in us. Through love and mercy we manifest our sonship. We are to demonstrate the life of God is in us; we show that we are transformed, redeemed, and changed.

Lastly, we are to be merciful, just as our Father is merciful (Lk. 6:36). God's kindness is also seen in His mercy; He withholds judgment that men deserve. We should do as God does.

Loving in this manner is not natural. It is not normal. Thus, when we love as God loves, it makes it clear that we are God's people. In Matthew 5:44-45 Jesus said, "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." This is how we manifest our transformation. God-likeness is seen by others in our God-like love.

Loving our enemies becomes the distinguishing characteristic of kingdom people. God loves in an indiscriminant, unconditional way.

How do we do this?

If we love, expecting the unloving to love us in return, we will be very frustrated and disappointed; but if we love out of the love we have received in the gospel, if we realize that God has already done in the gospel what He asks us to do toward others it will change everything. Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." Christ loved us when we were in rebellion against Him; He loved us when we hated Him; He loved us when we didn't deserve it, and He reached out in grace and made us His children. We love because God has already given us a gift of grace that we do not deserve. Now He says, be like your Father. That is the way we can show the gospel. Ephesians 5:1-2: "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk

in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

**6:37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.**

**6:38 "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure-- pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."**

Verses 37-38 give four commands that are relative to our attitude toward our enemies. They are all in the present tense indicating that habitual behavior is in view.

1. Do not judge
2. Do not condemn
3. Pardon
4. Give

Verse 37 is widely misused. In our society, “do not judge” is quoted as evidence that Jesus does not want us to make any moral judgments about people's beliefs or behavior. But the Bible is clear that there are things that are wrong and they need to be called wrong. In other words, we are to judge in discerning what is right and wrong. In Matthew 7:15-16, Jesus told His followers, “Watch out for false prophets . . . by their fruit you will recognize them.” How are we to recognize who the “false prophets” are or identify bad “fruit” if we are forbidden from calling their teaching and actions wrong?

When Jesus says, “Do not judge,” He is telling His disciples not to be critical or judgmental; it’s a warning against fault-finding and forgetting that we are sinners as well. “These words of Christ do not contain an absolute prohibition from judging, but are intended to cure a disease, which appears to be natural to us all” (Calvin) - the desire to esteem ourselves and belittle or criticize others.

Similarly, we are not to condemn others. The word translated as condemn connotes hard-heartedness and lack of compassion. Although we should not ignore sin, we should be tender-hearted, compassionate, and patient toward others.

Thirdly, we are to pardon our enemies. We are never more like God than when we forgive others; that’s what God does.

The last command, “give and it will be given to you,” is elaborated upon with Hebraic hyperbole: “It will be put into your lap, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over.” Verse 38 of the NASB is not a good translation in that it inserts the word “they” in the text (i.e. “they will pour into your lap a good measure . . .”). “They” implies that our enemies will bless us if we respond in love toward them. However, the text simply doesn’t specify the source of the blessing and most believe that it is God, not our enemies, who will bless us in superabundance.