

A Study of the Gospel of Luke – Part One
Lesson 13**➤ Read Luke 6:27–36.**

Jesus' Sermon on the Plain continues in this week's passage. The focus of his teaching now shifts to a most difficult topic: how to respond to your enemies.

1. Jesus directs his instruction "to you who are listening" (v. 27), which includes "[a] large crowd of his disciples...and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon" (6:17b). Why do you think this lesson is not for his disciples only?

2. Jesus says very matter-of-factly that we will have enemies.
 - a. By what behaviors does Jesus define an enemy? (vv. 27–28; 6:22)

 - b. Why should the Christian not be surprised to be treated in these ways? (Jn. 15:18–19)

 - c. Think of someone in your life who fits this description, keeping him or her in mind as you work through this lesson. What was your initial response to this person's hate-filled treatment of you?

3. Jesus says that we are to "love our enemies" (v. 27). What does he mean by that?
 - v. 27 _____ those who hate you,

 - v. 28 _____ those who curse you,

 - _____ those who mistreat you.

4. In verses 29–30, Jesus “gives practical examples of the manner in which love must be practised towards one’s enemies.”¹ (See also Matthew 5:38–42.)
 - a. What impresses you about the response to insult or offense in each of these three examples?
 - b. Why is it better to bless than to retaliate? (Rom. 12:17–21)

“Agapé” Love

The word for the kind of love Jesus talks about in verse 27 is, in the original Greek, “*agapé*,” which can be defined as “an active feeling of benevolence toward the other person; it means that no matter what that person does to us we will never allow ourselves to desire anything but his highest good; and we will deliberately and of set purpose go out of our way to be good and kind to him.”²

5. Consider Jesus’ command to love (*agapé*) this person you have in mind. Perhaps you are thinking, “Really? I’m expected to be nice to so-and-so after what she did to me?!” How can these reminders from Scripture help you overcome the hurt and anger you feel in order to bless as the Lord requires? Romans 8:28–39

Philippians 3:8–11, 18–20a

Hebrews 12:1–3

“It is hard to return good actions for evil ones, and yet this is what the Christian is called to do: ‘Do good to them which hate you,’ Jesus said. It is easy to do good to those who love us, who hold us in high regard; but to be kind, generous and thoughtful to those [who] we know despise us, requires all the grace that the human soul can bear.”³

6. Romans 12:9 says, “Love must be sincere.” What enables us to genuinely love and desire good for others, even for those whose hatred of us may never change?
Colossians 1:21–22

1 John 4:7–19

Galatians 5:22–25

Philippians 2:3–5

Philippians 4:5–7

7. How did Jesus show purposeful, genuine love toward his enemies? Cite specific instances.
8. Verse 31, “the golden rule,” is a familiar principle to both Christians and non-Christians alike. Interestingly, the way Jesus phrases it is rather unique: “Jewish spiritual leaders and a few other persons had, before the time of Jesus, already pronounced this golden rule, but only in a *negative* form (what you do not want others to do unto you do not unto them). The Saviour, however, commands this in a positive sense.”⁴ Why is it important to actively bless rather than to simply refrain from treating badly someone who has hurt you?

Take some time to pray for the best interests of the person you’ve had in mind, and ask the Lord to reveal to you some other ways you can bless him or her.

9. Read verses 32–35a. How is the *agapé* Jesus requires radically different from the love demonstrated by “sinners”?

10. Verses 32–34 describe the way we often love others. Now look at the greater love Jesus calls us to in verse 35a. Jot down your own descriptive words for this kind of love.

“It is possible to be outwardly forgiving without showing real love. But it is love that Jesus looks for.”⁵

11. In verses 35b–36 we see deeper implications of the love Jesus has been describing. Why is it so important to Jesus that we be loving and merciful? (vv. 35b–36)

12. Read Titus 3:3–8. With this in mind, how is it possible to love your enemies without expecting anything in return? (vv. 35b–36)

According to N. T. Wright, Jesus’ point in this passage is that “you are to be like this *because that’s what God is like*... Only when people discover that this is the sort of God they are dealing with will they have any chance of making this way of life their own.”⁶

Only the perfect Son of God fully embodied this kind of love. Yet this is what he calls us to, knowing that we will obey his command imperfectly. Be encouraged that God has promised that “we are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). Take time to respond to this lesson in prayer.

¹ Norvel Geldenhuys. *The Gospel of Luke: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 211.

² William Barclay. *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Luke* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 76.

³ R. C. Sproul. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 116.

⁴ Geldenhuys, 212.

⁵ Leon Morris. *The Gospel According to St. Luke: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 129.

⁶ N. T. Wright. *Luke for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 74.