

Summer With Jesus Week 4

God Time – Love Your Enemies

Use a prayer journal. After you read the passages jot down what “jumped out” at you while reading. Then take a few minutes to write a prayer response to what you have read.

There are only five days of reading provided so if you miss a day, you have time to catch up. Do not get legalistic! If you miss a day or even a week...God still loves you!

Monday: Luke 6:27 AMP

Tuesday: Matthew 22:37

Wednesday: Deuteronomy 7:9

Thursday: Micah 6:8

Friday: Luke 6:35

Diving Deeper

August 1 – Love Your Enemies – Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 27-36.

1. What does it mean to love your enemies?

The Bible commands us not only to resist hating and retaliating against those who might harm us, but it tells us to go beyond that and actually bless them. That’s what Jesus instructed to those who heard His Sermon on the Mount: “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you” (Luke 6:27–28).

To truly love your enemies, you must treat them as if they were your friends. — John MacArthur, *Truth for Today: A Daily Touch of God’s Grace* (Nashville, Tenn.: J. Countryman, 2001), 221.

2. Who are our enemies?

Now the word “enemies” sounds like kind of an extreme term, and some of you may be thinking, I don’t have any enemies. But you do because an enemy is anybody you find hard to love. Sometimes it’s the person sitting next to you. Jesus said to love them, your enemies. Do you do that? It’s very hard to trust Jesus with this command of his. Something inside us says, This is not natural! They don’t deserve it. If I love them, how do I know they’re going to get what’s coming to them? Maybe your enemy is someone who has done something really bad. Maybe they’ve lied about you, cheated you, betrayed you, abused you, smeared your reputation, taken money from you, squelched you, or belittled you. Jesus says to love them. Jesus loved the people who killed him. He knows about enemies. — John Ortberg, *Now What? God’s Guide to Life for Graduates* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011)

3. Is loving our enemies the same as liking our enemies?

Christian Love (or Charity) for our neighbors is quite a different thing from liking or affection. We ‘like’ or are ‘fond of’ some people, and not of others. It is important to understand that this natural ‘liking’ is neither a sin nor a virtue, any more than your likes and dislikes in food are a sin or a virtue. It is just a fact. But, of course, what we do about it is either sinful or virtuous.

Natural liking or affection for people makes it easier to be ‘charitable’ towards them. It is, therefore, normally a duty to encourage our affections—to ‘like’ people as much as we can (just as it is often our duty to encourage our liking for exercise or wholesome food)—not because this liking is itself the virtue of charity, but because it is a help to it. On the other hand, it is also necessary to keep a very sharp look-out for fear our liking for some one person as exclusion to others that may seem to make us uncharitable, or even unfair, to someone else. There are even cases where our liking conflicts with our charity towards the person we like. For example, a doting mother may be tempted by natural affection to ‘spoil’ her child; that is, to gratify her own affectionate impulses at the expense of the child’s real happiness later on.

But though natural likings should normally be encouraged, it would be quite wrong to think that the way to become charitable is to sit trying to manufacture affectionate feelings. Some people are ‘cold’ by temperament; that may be a misfortune for them, but it is no more a sin

than having a bad digestion is a sin; and it does not cut them out from the chance, or excuse them from the duty, of learning charity. The rule for all of us is perfectly simple. Do not waste time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less. There is, indeed, one exception. If you do him a good turn, not to please God and obey the law of charity, but to show him what a fine forgiving chap you are, and to put him in your debt, and then sit down to wait for his 'gratitude', you will probably be disappointed. But whenever we do good to another self, just because it is a self, made (like us) by God, and desiring its own happiness as we desire ours, we shall have learned to love it a little more or, at least, to dislike it less. — C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 129–131.

4. How do we turn an enemy into a friend? Has anyone seen this happen?

The best way to destroy an enemy is to turn him into a friend. Paul, who in this regard (as in so many others) reproduces the teaching of Jesus, sums it up by saying, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21). He reinforces it by quoting from Proverbs 25:21–22: "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Whatever that proverb originally meant, Paul adapts it to his purpose by omitting the self-regarding clause which follows those he quotes: "and the Lord will reward you." In this new context the "burning coals" may mean the sense of shame which will be produced in the enemy, leading to a change of heart on his side too. But first do him a good turn; the feelings can be left to their own good time. — Walter C. Kaiser Jr. et al., *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 365.

5. Luke 6:31 and Matthew 7:12. Do to others as you would have them do to you. Question: If I do this, how do I get my needs met?

Jesus said, "Do for others what you would like them to do for you" (Matthew 7:12 NLT). We call this the "Golden Rule." Think of the powerful potential for change in this one rule! If we could begin to think and act in sync with this one rule in our relationships, the difference would be radical. Yet we ask -- "How do I get my needs met in this relationship?"

As unselfish as we may become, we still have needs—and we wonder how these needs will get met.

Here is a big answer to this big question: “I must give myself to meeting others’ needs if I’m to get my needs met!” The only way to get my selfish needs met is to be unselfish. Without exception clauses or limiting statements, Jesus says, “Do for others what you would like them to do for you.” This is the rule that will fuel any relationship. It is the rule that will meet the needs of both you and will meet the needs of both you and others in your relationships. — Tom Holladay and Rick Warren, *The Relationship Principles of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).

6. What is the opposite of the Golden Rule?

One of our relational rules is the Reciprocal Rule: “Whatever you do for me, that’s what I’ll do for you; you scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours.” Many play by this rule. It may well be our most popular rule as we work to make our relationships successful. There is certainly nothing wrong with returning a kindness that has been done to you—but this rule is really about our assumption that we’ve earned a kindness because we’ve been kind to someone else. In the end it is a rule based on selfishness, not service.

We also have the Ricochet Rule: “Do to someone based on what some other person has done to you. The way I’ve been treated in other relationships controls the way I treat you in our relationship.” This rule frequently invades a marriage. The way your parents treated you is determining the way you’re treating your spouse. The way a former spouse treated you or even the way your kids treated you strongly influences the way you’re treating your spouse. You’ve had a rough day at work, and you take it out on your family. This rule underlies the old story about the man who comes home after a lousy day at work and takes it out on his wife by firing angry words at her. His wife then speaks harshly to one of the children, the child walks away and kicks the dog, and the dog bites the head off a Barbie doll lying on the floor. It would have saved them all a lot of pain if the man had just come home and bitten the head off the Barbie doll!

Then we have the Hidden Motive Rule: “I act like I’m doing it for you, but it’s really to get what I want.” Most of us see through this one quite easily.

This rule is at work in the husband who lovingly gives his wife a new necklace right before he tells her about the new fishing boat he just purchased without her knowledge.

All our games and rules pale alongside the simple words of Jesus. The Message paraphrase of the Bible states it, “Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them” (Matthew 7:12). Want to transform your relationships? That’s the simple rule. — Tom Holladay and Rick Warren, *The Relationship Principles of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).