

# Loving Those You Do Not Like

National elections seem to draw out some of the worst in people. There is shouting, finger pointing, accusations, name calling, and more. It is so easy to join the mob and get wrapped up in it. Today we are talking about loving those you do not like.

## Many Reasons to Not Like People

Political opinions seem to divide us more than most things and we often consider those with opposing political viewpoints an enemy, but there are other situations too. Maybe you live in the suburbs and have a neighbor who doesn't keep their yard tidy or their lawn free of weeds. You might have a neighbor in your apartment building who plays music too loud or too late. Of course, there are the people that drive fast or aggressively, cutting you off or causing you to brake quickly.

Those are just a few examples. There are many more. There are more reasons to dislike than like someone in almost every aspect of life. We don't like those who boast or tell lies. We are put off by the loud and brash. People who abuse others physically, emotionally, or verbally are easily disliked and despised. As Christians, how are we to react to these people?

## Eye for Eye

Some subscribe to the doctrine of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. This is found in two passages in the Old Testament. Let's read those. First, we will read Exodus 21:22-25

### Exodus 21:22-25

(22) "If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. (23) But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, (24) eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, (25) burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

And now we'll read Leviticus 24:17-22

### Leviticus 24:17-22

(17) "Anyone who takes the life of a human being is to be put to death. (18) Anyone who takes the life of someone's animal must make restitution—life for life. (19) Anyone who injures their neighbor is to be injured in the same manner: (20) fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The one who has inflicted the injury must suffer the same injury. (21) Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a human being is to be put to death. (22) You are to have the same law for the foreigner and the native-born. I am the LORD your God."

If you have been with us for any length of time, you have heard us explain the importance of keeping scripture in context when applying it to our lives. These two passages are no different.

Many people take these verses without understanding the context and run with them applying them with vigilante style justice and using them to defend personal retribution. What is important to understand with both of these passages of scripture is the community's involvement. Both of these



passages were codifying principles that were to be brought to a judge or court in public, have the circumstances weighed, and then an impartial judge would pass on the sentence. This is important. When we are the individual that has been grieved by someone else, we often say we want justice when what we really want is revenge. We cannot be clear headed and open minded enough ourselves to weigh the situation and justly come up with a solution and punishment. This is why we have arbiters, judges, and courts. It is easier to not like someone than love them.

### Jesus Tells Us to Love

We have often said that the New Testament is the greatest commentary on the Old Testament there is, and this situation is a perfect example of that. As we just said, it is easy to follow our own desires and instincts and want to hand out justice in the way and timing of our own choosing. Jesus disagrees. Look at what Jesus says in Luke 6:27-31.

#### Luke 6:27-31

(27) "But to you who are listening I say: 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 slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. (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.

Jesus is teaching a large crowd during what is most often referred to as the sermon on the mount. Thousands were gathered around him and he was teaching on many subjects. These verses tell us to be better than the law. The law was written for the lawless. When we start to follow Jesus and make Him our Lord and Savior, we are now outside of the law. Jesus is the fulfillment of the law and therefore abolishes it.

In this teaching Jesus is telling us to turn the other cheek, give more than is asked and more than is required, and look out for others especially in their time of need. In other words, he is telling us to love those we do not like. Jesus takes it even further when we continue reading in Luke 6:32-36.

#### Luke 6:32-36

(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 children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. (36) Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

This is the heart of what we are trying to get to today. What good is it to love those who love you or give to those who give to you? What good is it to show grace or forgive those who show you grace and forgive you? Jesus tells us to love our enemies and do good to them.

Right now we have political leaders who have tested positive for the Coronavirus. Some people disagree with these political leaders and are celebrating that; even some that are Christians! That is not loving our neighbor.



Jesus commissioned us all to be witnesses of His gospel. He told us the Holy Spirit would give us power to be witnesses in our communities, regions, nations, and across the world. Jesus gave us a new command recorded in John 13:34-35.

John 13:34-35

(34) "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (35) By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Jesus tells us to love others, even those we do not like and here he tells us that the world will know us by the way we love others. Just saying you are Christian is not enough. That is not being a witness. Showing your love for others, even those you do not like is the only way to truly show your love and devotion to Jesus Christ and be a real witness to the world.

From the cross Jesus forgave all those gathered around who hung him there. His death on that cross is what paid the price for all of our sins and he wants to forgive everyone in the world, but they must ask for it. The only way they know to ask for and accept his forgiveness is by seeing how we treat each other and those we disagree with. You do not have to agree with someone or condone what they are doing to love them.

Friends, we must love others, even those we do not like, if we expect to be a witness for Jesus Christ in this lost and dying world. It won't make everything better, but we may influence someone in such a way so that they ask Jesus to be their Lord and Savior. So love everyone, even those you do not like.

