

Loving Like God

*“Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.
Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”*

Sermon Questions

1. The idea of loving our enemies is attractive to all kinds of people, even non-Christians. (Yes/No)
2. What command is more difficult to obey, a positive command or a negative one? (Pos/Neg)
3. Doing good to others so that they would do the same to you is key to happiness. (Yes/No)
4. Christians are called to love different than _____.
5. What reward do we have when we love those who love us? _____
6. What reward do we have when we love those who hate us? _____
7. To be “sons of the Most High” means that you love like God loves. (Yes/No)
8. Does the Bible teach pacifism? (Yes/No) Give two reasons to support your answer:

9. Does the Bible allow for self-defense? (Yes/No) Give two reasons to support your answer:

10. This passage focuses on: (circle all that apply)
 - i. Personal wrongs committed against you.
 - ii. Wrongs committed against you because of your loyalty to follow Jesus.
 - iii. Justice and how governments ought to punish the wicked.
 - iv. How it is always wrong to pray for judgment against an enemy of God and oppressor of the people.
11. When we are amazed by God’s love for his enemies (us), it motivates us to _____.
12. How can you love your enemies in tangible ways like God does?

Discussion/Meditation Questions

1. Jot down characteristics and examples of God's love that we see in Scripture. Are these qualities seen and increasing in your life?

2. Are there hard cases in which you're unsure how to properly respond? Consider how this passage helps you and then discuss with a wise friend or seek counsel.

3. In what ways can you give and do good without expecting anything in return this week?

4. Do you need to seek forgiveness from the Lord and others as you consider the forgiveness that has been extended to you?

Excursus: Eye for Eye and Tooth for Tooth

Does the Bible teach retaliation when it says, "eye for eye, and tooth for tooth?" Is Jesus now teaching contrary to Old Testament law? (cf. Matt 5:17–19).

It's important to understand that the *lex talionis* (law of retaliation or "eye for eye") was not meant to be a rule for retaliation against your enemies. In fact, in the ancient world, this principle was important to prevent cruel punishment. For example, a person could have their hands cut off for stealing a loaf of bread. The principle of eye for an eye was to ensure that the punishment fit the crime, no more, and no less. It was an expression of justice, especially applied to crimes adjudicated in court (or at the gate).

This did not replace the principle of grace, even toward an enemy. As it says in Exodus 23:4, "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him." It has been God's way to be gracious and merciful to our enemies while upholding justice in criminal matters. In our personal dealings, we ought to be characterized by grace and mercy, even with our enemies.