

INTRODUCTION

Don't you like the unexpected? Years ago, before husbands were allowed into the birthing rooms, three anxious young husbands were biting their nails in the maternity waiting room. It was the first child for each of them. The doctor came out and told one guy, “Congratulations! Your wife just had twins.” The proud young father said, “That's great! But it's strange because I play baseball for the Minnesota Twins.” Later the doctor came out and told another dad, “Congratulations! You're wife just delivered triplets.” He said, “Really? That's strange, because I work for 3M corporation.” The third guy got a crazy look on his face, bolted and ran out the waiting room door. His two new friends ran him down, tackled him and said, “What's wrong with you?” He said, “You don't understand! I work for 7-Up!” Today I'm going to “deliver twins” because I got into this passage and realized there was more to say than I could say in one week, so I'm going to start this outline and I will finish it in two weeks on Christmas Eve morning.

Last week, we began studying Jesus' “sermon on the plain” which is much like His “sermon on the mount.” This message will examine what is often called the Golden Rule, the best definition of kindness. Today, I am going to challenge you to try a little kindness and see what a difference it can make in your life, your marriage, your job, and your family. Our culture has its own Gold Rule: He who has the gold makes the rules. But I like what Jesus had to say much better.

Luke 6:27-36. “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ do that. 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. 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 sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

The first reaction most people have to this is to say, “Nobody can live up to those standards!” For many, these words only produce frustration because they seem to be too difficult to obey. Before we go into the meat of this passage, let me share with you four very important observations about these principles. I call them

IMPORTANT FRUSTRATION-BUSTERS:

1. These are personal directives—not corporate or national

These aren't intended to be national laws or a corporate strategy. How long would a bank stay in business if they followed Jesus' command to lend to people without expecting a return? In His parable about the talents, Jesus himself spoke of the possibility of investing money to earn

interest. If you work for a financial institution, don't let these words frustrate you in your business. However, the Bible does warn against the danger of charging exorbitant interest.

How would it be for our nation to “turn the other cheek” if it was attacked? December 7, 1941 is a date that will live in infamy. Last Friday, Darryle Dunks invited WWII veterans to be honored and recognized on Pearl Harbor Day. I agree this is the greatest generation and they deserve our honor and acclaim for fighting against the forces of evil. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, would it have been right for our nation to just roll over and say, “Hit us again, Japan?” Of course not! However, some would read these words and say America should disband its military and become totally pacifistic. But these are personal principles for individual behavior. Even so, I *do* believe even nations and businesses should practice kindness and follow the Golden Rule.

2. Don't follow these directions to EARN salvation—but to DEMONSTRATE salvation

Many people think you go to heaven by obeying the directions in the Sermon on the Mount or this message. These are not requirements you must meet before you can be saved, these are the personal practices that are the result of your salvation.

It's possible to be kind and not be a Christian. There is a movement in America encouraging people to perform random acts of kindness. I strongly favor any effort that produces kindness but being kind won't make you a Christian. Only trusting Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior will make you a Christian. If you think you can get into heaven by simply obeying the “Golden Rule,” or by “turning the other cheek” you are mistaken. This isn't a checklist to get you into heaven, these are things you will *want* to do because you are on your way to heaven!

3. It's impossible to obey these directions without the POWER of the Holy Spirit

The biggest point of frustration with these principles comes from Christians who try to do these things in their own power. You may be thinking at this point, “Loving my enemies is hard.” No, loving your enemies is impossible. Showing kindness to people who have hurt you is not hard—it's impossible and the sooner you understand that it is impossible for you, the sooner you will surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit.

I'll let you in on a little secret: I love oatmeal raisin cookies—no chocolate chips—just raisins. I suspect those will be the only cookies in heaven! Some time ago Cindy and I were in a mall and I caught a whiff of something delicious. My nose led me to a Mrs. Fields Cookie store. I couldn't resist. I bought one of those huge, warm, oatmeal and raisin cookies. They put it in a little bag and I noticed it said, “Mrs. Field's Cookies made with Love and Other Natural Ingredients.” As I chomped down on the cookie, and read that statement, I had a revelation from the Lord. God can even use cookie bags! This profound thought came to me: “Love is *not* natural.” Well, at least I thought it was profound. You see, loving your enemies does not come naturally. Showing kindness to mean people does not come naturally. It's not normal behavior. Love for your enemies only comes supernaturally. It can only happen by the power of the Holy Spirit. If you don't recognize that one fact, when it comes to these verses, you will be as frustrated and nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs.

4. These practices reflect the character of God

An important question is “What is God really like?” God is the primary example of One who loves His enemies. Who are God’s enemies? We are. The Bible says we were all alienated from God by our sins. Listen to what Colossians 1:21 says about us: “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.” The fact that God loves us in our sinful state is testimony that He loves His enemies. One word used repeatedly to describe God in the Old Testament is loving-kindness. In verse 35, Jesus said God “is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.” That’s us before we are redeemed. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

For the last few weeks, I’ve been reminding you the New Testament is full of life principles, not laws. A Biblical principle is a practical concept guiding your life toward godliness. Because these practices reflect the character of God, you reflect godliness when you follow them. Because Jesus is God in the flesh, following these principles will make you more Christ-like (which is the same as godliness).

I was watching the final round of the Williams Challenge golf tournament last Sunday and I noticed Davis Love III and Tom Lehman are still wearing their WWJD bracelets. After the death of Payne Stewart, who wore a WWJD bracelet, several of the players put one on. From what I have read, these two guys are serious about being Christ-like. There may be some who wear a WWJD bracelet who are clueless about what Jesus would do in a given situation. Well, here is one of the best places to learn. He loves His enemies, He turns the other cheek and He is kind and forgiving. Do you want to be Christ-like? Here are your instructions—but remember, you will be frustrated unless you surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit.

I hope these four observations will help relieve some of your natural frustration about this passage. So, let’s move into the heart of Jesus’ message. I believe this is

The major principle: Holy Spirit-shaped kindness is when you treat others the way you would wish to be treated. (Luke 6:13)

Jesus said, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” My only objection to calling this The Golden Rule is it is worth far more than all the gold in the world! These words of Jesus were revolutionary. This demands a radical kind of living that flies in the face of natural human reactions. Throughout history, other religious leaders have made similar points, with one major distinction. Everyone except Jesus puts the principle in its negative form. For instance, Rabbi Hilliel said, “What is hateful to you—do not to another.” Philo, the Great philosopher of Alexandria said, “What you hate to suffer, do not do to anyone else.” Even Confucius said, “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.” Socrates, Buddha, Aristotle and others made similar statements but all these forms are in the *negative*. It’s like the well-known medical maxim: “First do no harm.”

But Jesus is the only one who made kindness proactive. *Do* to others what you wish done to yourself. He makes kindness pre-emptive: Don’t wait on the other person; show kindness first!

Those are words are still revolutionary. Now, if you are like me, you like very practical, clear directions. Jesus tells us exactly

HOW TO PRACTICE SPIRIT-SHAPED KINDNESS:

I. DEMONSTRATE LOVE TO YOUR ENEMIES—HOW?

Love and kindness are twin virtues. We trip when we read the word “love” because we use the same word when we say we love our mates that we use to say we love ice cream. Remember in the language in which the Bible was written there were at least three words we use to translate love. Eros meant romantic love. Phileo meant fondness. But the word Jesus used here is agape which means to seek the best for the other person. It is not a *feeling*; it is a *choice*. Love is a decision, and kindness is the act of showing love. Kindness is love in action. Kindness is love with its work clothes on. Here are two ways to demonstrate love to your enemies:

1. Injured? Don’t retaliate (your cheek)

Now, almost everyone is familiar with the phrase “turn the other cheek” but few people understand exactly what Jesus meant. I knew a young preacher who was attacked by a couple of young thugs years ago, and rather than fight back, run or defend himself, he didn’t resist and he had the tar beaten out of him. He “turned the other cheek” in his own words. He ended up in the hospital, feeling good that he had obeyed Jesus. Excuse me, but I think he completely missed the point. Some people think Jesus meant if someone balls up their fist and delivers a roundhouse punch to your face, you are supposed to get up and let them hit you again. This is *not* what Jesus was talking about.

My heart is broken to think some wives allow their husbands to physically abuse them and they base their passive behavior on these words. Physical abuse is *never* justified. If you are being abused, let someone know. While the Bible teaches parents are to physically discipline their children, it must never become child abuse. A wife or a child should never simply endure unreasonable abuse. Jesus is *not* talking about standing by passively and absorbing violence. It’s okay to defend yourself, to protect yourself and your family. And sometimes it’s best to simply run away. I remember one rather frank Scottish preacher saying, “If someone tries to pick a fight, you ha’e got two other cheeks a little lower that you need to turn—and then run!”

To understand what Jesus meant, you must understand it was a practice in His time in which a person would formally “challenge” or “insult” someone by taking their right hand and “striking” his adversary on the right cheek. (It was done with a mild backhanded slap). In Matthew 6, Jesus even uses those words, “if someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn your left cheek to them.” Dr. Joachim Jeremias is one of most respected scholars about Jewish life during the time of Jesus and he writes, The term “slaps you on the right cheek” refers not to a painful blow delivered in an assault, but to the intentionally insulting backhanded slap, designed to “express the greatest possible contempt and challenge.” This unique verb appears only here in all the New Testament.

Have you seen the movies where the gentleman takes his glove and “slaps” his adversary with his glove to issue a challenge? That’s pretty close to what Jesus was talking about here. The

point is, if someone issues a challenge to you, you don't have to fight them. This doesn't mean you aren't to protect yourself, or to defend yourself if attacked. It is a warning against retaliation. If someone slaps you with a glove or backhands you to challenge you to a duel, what is the most natural thing to do? Hit 'em again, hit 'em again, harder, *harder!* It's payback time! Jesus said, “No, don't be drawn into a conflict, if you can avoid it.” To put it another way, “It takes two to tangle.”

The Jewish law said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Before you criticize that idea, you need to know for ancient times, that was a radical ethic. It actually taught restraint. Human nature says, “You put out my eye? I'll put out both of yours.” Our sinful nature cries, “You knock out one of my teeth? Buddy, I'm going to knock out all of yours!” he Jewish law taught retaliation and revenge must match the injury. But Jesus came along and taught something much more radical. He said, “When someone injures you, don't retaliate at all.” The only thing wrong with following “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” is we would all soon be toothless and blind! Have you seen the bumper sticker reading, “I don't get mad—I get even?” That's the “eye for an eye” ethic.

Let's be honest here. Few of us are receiving these literal “slaps of challenge” Jesus was talking about here. Instead, most of us are on the receiving end of verbal slaps and we inflict a lot of verbal slaps on others, too. Every argument and conflict began with an opening blow. I believe the idea of “turning the other cheek” relates more to verbal abuse than to physical abuse. When someone slaps us verbally, what do we want to do? Hit back. “Well, the same to you, buddy and more of it!” The best opportunity to apply this principle is when someone hands you a verbal slap. Proverbs 15:1 says, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.”

You may go for weeks or even years without someone hitting you in the face with their hand - but chances are you are going to verbally slapped within the next month. It may be from an enemy, or it may be from your boss. It might even come from your spouse! If you are married, the best place to practice this principle is in your conversations with your mate. Maybe your mate is angry, or tired and you do or say something that just “sets them off.” The next thing you know, your mate is saying some cruel, unkind things to you. The most natural reaction is to jump right into the argument with both feet and get in your mate's face and say, “oh, yeah? Well, let me tell you a thing or two!” Then it goes downhill from there.

Try turning the other cheek. You may object and say, “But those words *hurt.*” Of course, they hurt; it hurts to be slapped on the face. But the best time to stop a fight is before it starts. Jesus is saying, “Don't retaliate!” You see, when we retaliate, we sink to the level of the slapper and we only end up hurting ourselves.

Kids, before television came around, folks used to listen to wonderful, funny radio shows. One of the funniest radio shows starred two characters named “Amos and Andy.” In one show, Andy was particularly exasperated over a certain fellow on the street who, as Andy walked by him on his way to work each morning, slapped Andy on the chest and said hello. It drove Andy crazy. He hated being slapped on the chest. Andy complained to Amos about the situation and told him he had resolved to do something about it. He said on the next morning he would strap some dynamite to his chest and when the annoying fellow slapped it, he would blow his hand off!

That’s a great illustration of what happens when you try to retaliate—you always hurt yourself as well as the person who has slapped you.

2. Insulted? Don’t resent (your cloak)

Now just as people have been confused about what Jesus meant when He said, “turn the other cheek,” there is even more confusion about what He meant when He said, “If someone takes your cloak, let him take your tunic, too.” On the surface, it almost sounds like someone is stealing your coat—so don’t resist them; instead let them steal your shirt, too. If you believe that, then the modern version would be “If someone breaks into your house and steals your TV, tell them they can take your VCR as well.” That’s *not* the point of Jesus’ words.

Once again, you must understand the Jewish culture during Jesus’ time to understand His meaning. If you were a Hebrew man who needed to borrow some money, you would ask an individual for a loan. According to the custom of the day, if you borrowed some money, you had to offer your outer garment as “collateral” to guarantee repayment of the loan. If you defaulted, the person got to keep your cloak. But if the person loaning you the money trusted you, they would refuse to take your cloak; they would just take your word you would repay the loan. It was a compliment to your character if the one making the loan didn’t require your coat. However, if the person loaning you the money didn’t know you or trust you, they would keep your cloak. And if you were a real credit risk, in other words a really sorry person, the one making the loan would also demand your inner garment as well. It was an insult, because no respectable Jewish man would take off his shirt in public. It was actually a major insult to keep a cloak and it was insult upon insult to demand the borrower’s shirt as well. Do you see the point here?

Jesus was saying if someone insulted you by doubting your integrity, don’t puff up and stomp off in anger. Go ahead; let them have your shirt, too. He is teaching humility. What is inferred is that you will repay the loan and reclaim your shirt and cloak. But then, the natural reaction would be to deeply resent the way that person treated you in the transaction.

The point Jesus is making is that you will be insulted. You will be mistreated and unappreciated. When it happens, don’t get upset and stew over it. Humble yourself and deflect the insult. Jesus already predicted in verse 22 that if you keep these principles you would be hated, excluded and insulted. He is saying, “Don’t let it get to you. Rejoice because that’s how they treated the prophets!”

Have you found how easy it is to love people who show love to you? Kindness is not loving those people who love you. Kindness is demonstrating love toward your enemies. Let’s take a little break and I’ll tell you one of my favorite funny stories to illustrate a point. Once there was an old guy named Leon who lived up north. He was always bragging to his buddies about what a great outdoors man he was. He even claimed he had hunted and killed bear before. He was a little overbearing and too cocky, so these three buddies decided to come up with a plan to cut him down in size a few notches. They invited him to go hunting with them and they rented an old cabin out the middle of the wilderness. They were going to play a practical joke on old Leon. They knew there weren’t any bears in that part of the woods, but they handed Leon a gun filled

with blanks and told him to go out and shoot the first bear and bring it back. Meanwhile they would wait for him back in the cabin. They could hardly contain their laughter until Leon was out of earshot.

Now Leon, who had never seen a bear, much less killed one, walked quietly through the woods hoping he wouldn't see any animals. Meanwhile his three buddies were playing cards back at the cabin laughing about old Leon hunting for bear with blanks!

Wouldn't you know it, against all odds, old Leon stumbled on a big old Grizzly. He was scared to death, but he pointed the gun and fired repeatedly, not knowing he only had blanks in the gun. This just made the old bear angry, so he charged Leon, who threw down his gun and ran for his life—straight back toward the cabin. The old bear was gaining on Leon's every step, but he was almost back at the cabin. He was yelling and screaming, and just before he reached the front door of the cabin, he tripped and fell. At that precise moment, the big old bear lunged for Leon and sailed right over his head and crashed through the front door of the cabin—right into the middle of the card table and three very surprised men. The table collapsed, cards flew and everybody including the bear was stunned for a moment. About that time, as the dust settled, Leon looked in at his buddies and said, “There you go, boys. Go ahead and skin that one while I go get another one.”

What's the point? My friend, if you ever pray, “Lord, teach me how to love,” do you think God is going to send you a sweet, lovable, kind person for you to love on? No. He's going to toss you so some mean old bear of a person and He's going to say, “There you go, love on that one for awhile—and when you finish with that one, I'll toss you another one.”

Jesus asks the question, “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?” The word translated “credit” in the NIV is the beautiful word *charis* which is usually translated “grace.” So a better translation would be, “If you only love those who love you, is it grace?” No. Jesus rephrases the same question two more times. He asks, “If you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you?” That's not grace either. Again He poses this question, “If you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you?” The point He makes three times is even godless people can do those things. It's natural to love those who love you and to do good to those who do good to you. We are to live supernatural lives. What makes us different? We are the ones who turn the other cheek. We are the ones who don't get irate when someone insults us. We are the ones who love our enemies and do good to those who hurt us. Try living that way and you will be marked as radically different in our culture.

CONCLUSION

It was during the Christmas holidays and Mr. Greene parked his car to pick up the morning paper. He noticed a dirty, poorly dressed boy looking at his car. Seeing the boy eyeing the car, he reminded himself to be quick or he might be missing a hubcap when he returned. He came out of the store with his paper under his arm and just as he opened the door to the car, the boy asked “Mister, how much would a new car like that cost?” Mr. Greene responded, “I really don't know; my brother gave me this car as a gift last Christmas.” The ragged little boy looked unbelievably at the car with a look of wonder in his eyes, and said something unexpected. He didn't say what

you might think, “Gee, I wish I could get a car like that.” He said, “Gee, I wish I could be a brother like that.”

Kindness doesn’t ask, “What’s in it for me?” Kindness always asks, “What can I do for you?”

Now, this is the perfect time of year to put this into practice. Here’s my homework assignment for you this week. I want you to make a list of five people who are your “least favorites,” people you really don’t like very much. These are folks that if you never saw them again in your life would be just fine with you. Now, are you thinking?

Here’s your assignment. This next week, demonstrate love to them. Show them kindness. Here’s how: Send them a Christmas card and write a personal note mentioning one thing you appreciate about them. Now, if you look far enough you can find something good about them or tell them you are just praying for them. That’s practicing kindness. Now, I wouldn’t ask you to do anything I wouldn’t do, in fact I’ve already done it so if you get a note from me you know I don’t like you very much!

Better yet, buy a small Christmas present and take it to them or send it to them with a little note. Have you noticed we tend to give presents only to those from whom we expect a gift in return? Jesus said, “Where’s the grace in that?” Some of you don’t like this assignment and you aren’t going to do it – I know. Because you say, “I can’t do that!” Right, you can’t do it without the power of the Holy Spirit loving that person through you. It’s one thing to say, “I can’t do that.” It’s another thing to say, “I *won’t* do that.” At that point it becomes disobedience. Don’t do it because I ask you to, do it because it is exactly what Jesus is telling us to do. Show kindness to those who aren’t kind to you, treat them as you would wish to be treated!

OUTLINE

IMPORTANT FRUSTRATION-BUSTERS:

1. These are personal directives—not corporate or national
2. Don’t follow these directions to earn salvation—but to DEMONSTRATE salvation
3. It’s impossible to obey these directions without the POWER of the Holy Spirit
4. These practices reflect the character of God

The major principle: Holy Spirit-shaped kindness is when you treat others the way you would wish to be treated. (Luke 6:13)

I. DEMONSTRATE LOVE TO YOUR ENEMIES—HOW?

1. Injured? Don’t retaliate (your cheek)
2. Insulted? Don’t resent (your cloak)



DISCLAIMER: These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes