

## Lesson 10

### Love Your Enemies

#### Group Icebreaker:

What does the word love mean to you?

#### Introduction:

In the New Testament portion of Scripture two primary Greek words are used to describe love: agape and phileo. These two words have distinct meanings. It is imperative to know which of the two words is being used in a particular passage of Scripture to develop an understanding of the text.

The word phileo deals with the **emotions** of love. It's the **feeling** of love! The use of this word denotes a fondness for an object. Some examples of fondness for an object are:

1. A mother love towards her child.
2. A husband love towards his wife.
3. Brothers and sisters love towards one another.
4. The Pharisees loved being greeted in the marketplace.
5. People love money.

The word agape deals with the **spirit** of love. It's the **service** of love! The use of this word denotes doing the right thing and is akin to the word charity. The word agape reveals itself in its character and actions:

1. Agape is the character of God, Himself. In the Scripture that says, "*God is love*"<sup>1</sup> the word used is agape.
2. Agape is how love behaves. The often-quoted passage on love in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 13 outlines agape's behavior.

#### Reading the Scripture:

#### Love Your Enemies The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5:43-48 & Luke 6:27-36

*Scripture excerpts from "Follow Me: A Message from God"*

You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you and pray for those who persecute you. And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way, in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the **tax-gatherers**<sup>2</sup> do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from

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<sup>1</sup> 1 John 4:8, 16

<sup>2</sup> **Tax gatherers.** Known as publicans these people were not well thought of by the Jews. They were local people who were assigned to collect taxes for Rome. Much of the time they were not fair in the amount of money they collected from the people.

whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, in order to receive back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Therefore you are to be perfect<sup>3</sup>, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

**The Commands:**

- ❖ Love your enemies.
- ❖ Do good to those who hate you.
- ❖ Bless those who curse you.
- ❖ Pray for those who mistreat you.
- ❖ Do good and lend expecting nothing in return.
- ❖ And just as you want people to treat you, treat them the same way.
- ❖ Therefore you are to be perfect.

**The Lesson:**

Jesus opens His teaching with the statement, “*You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, and hate your enemy.’*” Only the first part of the quotation is from Scripture. Nowhere in the Old Testament was it ever taught to hate your enemy. Evidently some leaders were teaching this concept at the time of Jesus.

Jesus commands His disciples to love their enemies. The word used is *agape*<sup>4</sup>. Jesus is stating that His disciples must “do the right thing by their enemies.” Fondness for them is not required, just godly behavior. Then He describes six practical ways to love a person’s enemies:

1. Serve your enemies.
2. Do good things for your enemy, not bad things.
3. Treat your enemy, as you would want to be treated.
4. Bless, speak well of or praise him.
  - a. The primary sense of the word bless used here seems to concern speaking well of your enemy, who is cursing you.
  - b. However, the true meaning of the word bless is “**to kneel or bow the knee to.**”
  - c. The thought conveyed by the word is that of a camel bowing down on its knees to allow a burden to be put upon it.
  - d. Read the example of Balaam’s donkey in Numbers 22:21-34
5. Pray for him.
6. Loan him what he needs, even if he can’t or won’t repay.

Jesus motivates His disciples by challenging them to become like their Father in heaven. He states that God does good towards both the righteous and the wicked alike. He causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on both. Love does not behave one way for some and another way for others. It is always consistent and does not change. For those called to be His disciples it helps to

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<sup>3</sup> **Perfect.** “Complete” or “fully mature”.

<sup>4</sup> **Agape.** *Love* . . . actively doing what *the Lord* prefers . . . always defined by God – a “discriminating affection which involves choice and selection,” (<https://biblehub.com/lexicon/matthew/5-44.htm>). *Simply defined* as a love that gives what is needed, rather than what is wanted (i.e. the benevolence which God, in providing salvation for men, has exhibited by sending his Son to them and giving him up to death . . . 1 John 4:8, “*Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*” and John 15:9-10, “*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*”).

remember that we were once His enemies. But due to God's persistent abiding love towards us we are now His friends.

**Group Discussion:**

1. What makes a person your enemy?
2. In what ways is it hard for you to love your enemies?
3. List some practical ways you can love your enemies.

**The Point of the Lesson:**

Do good to everyone.

**Application:**

At the next group meeting report any occasion you had to love an enemy and what was the outcome of it?