



# Compassionate

Jesus expects His followers to show compassion and mercy to others.

## LUKE 6:27-38

We can find an excuse for ignoring or discrediting people if we really want to. We may classify them as uneducated, too young, too old, or numerous other designations as a way to justify our mistreatment of them. In an effort to absolve ourselves of guilt, we place a title on them that puts them in some type of lesser-than-me grouping. Jesus operated differently. He loved all people, seeing them as worthy of His attention and help. He confronted His critics, showing them how to be compassionate in the process.

**What makes some people harder to love than others? Can you disagree with them and still love them? Explain.**

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# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **LUKE 6:17-49**

In Luke 5, Jesus demonstrated His authority over sickness and sin by healing a man who had been paralyzed (5:17-26). The religious leaders of the day resented His popularity and His claim to be God's Son, yet He continued to minister and draw followers to Himself.

These themes of authority and discipleship continue into chapter 6. Walking through a field of grain on the Sabbath, Jesus allowed His followers to pluck some of the produce to eat. For the spiritual leaders, such an action was tantamount to physical labor and a violation of their understanding of Moses' law (6:1-5). Jesus again demonstrated His authority by filtering their interpretation through a different paradigm. He claimed His role as the Lord of the Sabbath, having full authority to define what was appropriate for that context.

Later, Jesus again infuriated the establishment by healing a man on the Sabbath (6:6-11). In this case, the question was whether it was acceptable to show compassion and to do good on the Sabbath. The leaders were so blind to God's expectations that they could not rejoice when a person gained use of his hand.

Luke 6 also provides a summary of the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount. (The longer version is found in Matt. 5-7). In this block of teaching, Jesus facilitated a deeper discussion on compassion and God's expectations for our relationships with others. Jesus was calling His followers to connect with people on a different level—including those considered to be enemies (6:27-34). He noted that it is easy to love those who are like us, but that is not enough. We also must love those who make our lives difficult.

Jesus calls us to demonstrate love and mercy to all people, including those who cannot defend themselves. Regardless of who crosses our paths, Jesus calls us to love them the way He loves them.

**Read Luke 6:27-38 in your Bible. How are the commands and actions connected?**

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# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## LOVE ALL (LUKE 6:27-31)

<sup>27</sup> “But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. <sup>29</sup> If anyone hits you on the cheek, offer the other also. And if anyone takes away your coat, don’t hold back your shirt either. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who asks you, and from someone who takes your things, don’t ask for them back. <sup>31</sup> Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them.

### VERSES 27-28

Luke had just recorded Jesus’ teaching on a variety of blessings and woes (vv. 20-26). In verse 27, He returned to the last “beatitude,” which dealt with persecution and abuse. The previous woes in verses 24-26 were not addressed to His disciples, so Jesus used an emphatic **you** in verse 27 to return the focus to His followers.

In verses 27-28, Jesus emphasized four specific actions He expects of His followers. The first is to **love your enemies**, the most unlovable people in your life. Luke used the Greek word *agape*, which is the word used for the unmerited love rooted in God’s character. We share that love with others because we have experienced it firsthand from Him.

The love that God nurtures in our hearts finds expression in our actions toward others. Love is actively lived out. Instead of seeking revenge, Jesus expects us to intentionally **do what is good** for those who hate us. In addition, we should **bless** those who curse us and **pray** for those who mistreat us.

Loving our enemies doesn’t come naturally, but Jesus never called us to live naturally. Instead, we are challenged to rely on the power and passion of the Holy Spirit. That’s the only way to turn this expectation into reality.

**What makes praying for someone who mistreats us so difficult? What are some examples of prayers we should pray for those who curse us?**

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## VERSES 29-31

In verses 27-28, Jesus gave His followers four actions to carry out. Now, He gave them examples of how this might look in real life. **If anyone hits you on the cheek** referenced more a cultural act of insult than an attempt to injure. Still, the response required extraordinary patience and a spirit of forgiveness. In other situations, believers might be the victims of robbery or unjust confiscation of property. If someone **takes away your coat**, the compassionate reaction is to offer the shirt off our backs as well. Jesus wasn't encouraging passivity but rather compassionate responses.

Christians should be known for their extravagant generosity. Since everything we have belongs to God (Ps. 24:1), we should not hesitate to **give to everyone** who asks us. Jesus' message is clear: our response to mistreatment must be God-centered, not self-centered.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

A Hebrew saying from the second century BC said, "What you hate, do not do to anyone" (Tobit 4:15). The so-called Golden Rule in Luke 6:31 is different. Jesus called His followers to a higher standard—activity, not passivity—that reflects the character of God (Luke 6:35-36).

The command in verse 31 also appears in Matthew 7:12 and is one of the most familiar teachings in Scripture: treat others the way you desire to be treated. Jesus encouraged believers to take the initiative even when there's no assurance their kindness will be returned.

***We have a responsibility to stand in the gap and to defend those who cannot defend themselves.***

We live in a world where the stronger often prey on the weak. As Christians, we have a responsibility to stand in the gap and to defend those who cannot defend themselves. From the unborn in the womb to the neglected elderly, we are called to protect their dignity as individuals created in the image of God.

**How is our reaction to people who ask for help a demonstration of our level of trust in God? How does our treatment of others reflect our understanding of the sanctity of all human life?**

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**KEY DOCTRINE:** *The Christian and Social Order*

We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death (Matt. 25:35).

**WITH A PURE HEART** (LUKE 6:32-36)

**<sup>32</sup> If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> If you do what is good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that.**

**<sup>34</sup> And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to be repaid in full. <sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, do what is good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High. For he is gracious to the ungrateful and evil. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.**

**VERSES 32-33**

In the previous verses, Jesus outlined actions that should characterize believers' responses toward their enemies. Ultimately, we serve as God's hands and feet, providing a tangible display of His love and mercy for the world. To drive home His point, Jesus asked a set of rhetorical questions that focused on the motives for each action. He acknowledged that it's easy to ***love those who love you***. But even those who do not claim Jesus as Lord do that regularly.

Christians are called to a different standard, and being different means pouring out the same love on our enemies that we pour out on those closest to us. We don't have the freedom to pick and choose the ones we love. We should be motivated by pure compassion for each person—just as God loved us (Rom. 5:8).

In Luke's world, **credit** implied repayment for a service. But Jesus' followers were to expect nothing in return for their love. The same is true for our good works. Even unbelievers are comfortable with a "I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch mine" mentality. Jesus challenged His followers to something better. Their actions should be motivated by the desire to reflect Jesus to the world—not by anything they might gain as a result.

### VERSE 34

Jesus next challenged His listeners to consider how they approached meeting the needs of others. It seems natural to lend only to people who will repay their debts. But this attitude aligns perfectly with the world's way of doing things—not how Christians should act.

When a person gives without expecting **to receive**, the transaction ceases to be a loan. It becomes a gift, an act of generosity. Instead of calculating interest or looking for ways to call in a favor, we should invest in relationships.

Settling our accounts with honor and integrity is just as important today as it was in the first century. But Jesus' focus was on the heart, rather than the material possessions. When we willingly meet the needs of others, we prove our trust in God and make a huge difference in the world.

### VERSES 35-36

All three verbs in the opening sentence of verse 35—**love**, **do**, and **lend**—are imperatives. They are commands reflecting God's heart, not suggestions reflecting our preferences. As believers, our love sets us apart. When we love others with pure intentions, expecting nothing in return, we create ripple effects that stretch into eternity. We demonstrate that Jesus changes people, and that can be incredibly appealing to unbelievers longing to find love and peace.

The act of loving others never goes unnoticed by God. Jesus promised a **reward** greater than anything we can imagine. But it is important to understand that He was not necessarily referring to material treasures. While He provides for our needs in this life, the true blessing will be realized in the next life. We should also remember that we don't act to receive a tangible reward but are motivated to act by the hope of hearing the Savior tell us we did well.

Our loving actions toward others also demonstrate our personal relationship with God. Children often imitate their parents, and the same is true in spiritual families. The idea of being a child of the **Most High** reminds readers of the angel’s description of Jesus as a “Son of the Most High” earlier in Luke’s Gospel (1:32). Likewise, we prove that we are children of God when we act like our Father.

As believers, we know what it means to experience mercy. We were once **ungrateful and evil**. Jesus directed us to pay mercy forward to others. The word **merciful** in verse 36 means “compassionate.” We are to be compassionate, as God is compassionate (Ps. 86:15).

**How is the believer’s love and good works different from an unbelievers’ love and good works? How does the love of Jesus enable a believer to show love to both the unborn and the person carrying the unborn?**

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**BIBLE SKILL:** *Compare similar commands.*

Make a list of each of the actions that Jesus commanded in today’s study. Beside each one, review these corollary texts: Matthew 5:7,39-42,44,46; 6:14; 7:1-5,12; Mark 4:24. Use a concordance to find similar commands. What insights did you gain about each command?

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**AND WITH MERCY (LUKE 6:37-38)**

<sup>37</sup> **“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.**

<sup>38</sup> **Give, and it will be given to you; a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over—will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”**

## VERSES 37-38

In the command to **not judge**, Jesus was saying that Christians have no license to tear others down through criticism—especially if the goal is to improve our own standing. God rescued us from judgment, condemnation, and an unwillingness to forgive, and we obscure His grace if our actions deny Him.

In addition, obeying these imperatives is a sign of humility. God alone has the right to judge and condemn others because He alone is completely just and completely righteous at the same time. When we try to enforce our standards, we usurp His authority.

Just as grace and forgiveness beget grace and forgiveness, generosity gives rise to abundance. When we are faithful with the gifts God has given us, He will entrust us with more. Jesus affirmed this truth in other teachings, such as the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). Good stewards are given the privilege of practicing greater levels of stewardship.

Jesus used the image of a container of grain being **pressed down** and **shaken together** until it overflows. The receiver is not cheated but gets an amount that is more than fair. The idea is that the contents settle and leave more room for additional resources. While Jesus was in no way advocating a prosperity theology, we really can't out-give God. He will always give us what we need. But as we honor Him with our gifts, He will allow more to pass through our hands.

But it is important to recall that giving is not just about monetary resources. We also can be generous with intangible gifts, such as time, talents, grace, and compassion. Also, we should remember that giving reflects the character of God. He gave His Son (John 3:16-17), and He continues to give good gifts to His children (Matt. 7:9-11; Jas. 1:17). When we give generously—whether it's our time, talents, or the gracious acts mentioned in verse 37—we are showing the world what God is really like.

**How does refusing to judge and choosing to be generous reflect God's character to the world? How could showing mercy draw someone to Jesus?**

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# APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers are to treat all people with dignity and respect, including the unborn.
- Believers are to love all people with pure intentions.
- Believers are to exhibit God’s character in this world.

**What are some tangible ways you and your Bible study group can show dignity and respect to the unborn? What obstacles will you need to overcome?**

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**How can you demonstrate God’s love and mercy when taking a stand for the unborn? How can we demonstrate Christlike character to all people?**

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**Examine your motives for standing for the unborn or for not doing so. How can you more fully align your motives with the motives of Jesus?**

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## PRAYER NEEDS

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