

Bottom line: **you set the pace for peace****DAY ONE: Love Your Enemy** Read Luke 6:27-36

Loving our enemies is no easy task. But Jesus gives us some specific ways we can start practicing this kind of love: **do good** to those who hate you, **bless** those who curse you, **pray for** those who mistreat you (Luke 6:27b-28). In all of these actions our role is to take the first step. In doing so, the hearts of our “enemies” are often softened and reconciliation becomes an option.

To **do good** is not a new concept. Exodus 23:4-5 instructs the Israelites how to interact with an enemy by returning their lost donkey. The idea is to perform some task that benefits the recipient. We tend to withhold any activity that might benefit one of our “enemies,” thinking that their harm might teach them a lesson.

To **bless** relates to how we speak about our enemies. It’s easy to utter words defaming a person’s character rather than building them up. The next time you feel like spreading some damaging information, instead try building them up.

To **pray for** your enemies is something we do in private, asking God to bless and transform their lives. Don’t forget that God loves them as much as he loves you and wants to bless them just like he wants to bless you.

Pick one of the above three actions and start practicing today. Learning to love your enemy is a skill that comes as we over time model the love Christ has for us.

**DAY TWO: Enemy** Read Luke 6:27

Jesus’ command to *love your enemies* is both clear and radical. One challenge we face is identifying who is our enemy. When we use the term *enemy*, we tend to think of sides in a military conflict. A better understanding of Jesus’ use of *enemy* would be anyone who injures or opposes us. This is often the people closest to us in homes and schools that sometimes feel more like a warzone.

An enemy is more than just an irritation. We get irked and annoyed when we get cutoff on the freeway or the neighbor’s dog barks all night long. But when we start to harbor prejudice and hate in our hearts toward a person, that person becomes our “enemy.” It’s these people Jesus is commanding us to love: it may be your parents, class mate, neighbor, sister, or friend. Consider who it is that causes you to be in a bad mood. God wants you to love this person.

As you read the above descriptions, someone probably comes to mind. If not, ask God to prompt you toward anyone you might be harboring bitterness or contempt for. Take a few minutes today to confess to God the struggle you’ve been having in your heart toward this person. God wants you to love this person as he loves you. One way to start is by offering a prayer of blessing on this person’s behalf. Ask God to bless and provide for this person. If this person has truly wounded or opposed you, this will not be easy. Trust God for his help as you continue to bring your struggle before him.

DAY THREE: Motivation Read 1 John 4:7-12

Sacrificially loving someone, even someone we want to love, is difficult. It always costs us something. It's not a trade or a bargain and it's not a win-win kind of deal. Love demands sacrifice for the purpose of blessing and person who receives it. The Apostle John understood this truth and shares with us the purest motivation—to know God and be known by him.

The best of human experience is to know and be known. Being accepted and feeling like you belong is something we crave in our most meaningful human relationships. This kind of relationship is available with God when we love others as he loves us.

When we love others sacrificially, as Christ sacrificially died for us, we experience an intimacy with God that could not be afforded otherwise. This is who God is and it is the language he speaks.

As you welcome God into your day, remember God loves you more than you can possibly imagine. He wants to draw you into incredible intimacy with him. May his love fill you and spill over into all relationships in your life.

Take a moment to be encouraged as you listen to *You Are For Me* by Kari Jobe. God is for you and desires for you to know the fullness of life that comes through loving others as he has loved us.

DAY FOUR: Reconciliation Read Romans 5:6-11

The entire Bible is the story of God rescuing his creation. In this rescue drama, God is always the one to move first. From God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt to the descending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, God lovingly takes the first steps to rescue and redeem his people. The centerpiece of this grand reconciliation story is the cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus not only showed perfect love for all humanity, he did it first.

The Apostle Paul put it this way, *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8). While we were enemies of God, he sent his only Son to bear our sins that we might be brought into his glorious family. As one pastor puts it, through Jesus we are *picked up, brought home, and adopted as sons and daughters of God*.

Today, as we continue thinking about sowing peace in our relationships, take some time to memorize Romans 5:1. remember that this kind of love was first demonstrated to us in the cross of Jesus Christ and it develops over time. **You can set the pace for peace** because you have experienced God's kindness and peace. Plant kindness with your words, your actions and your attitude and overtime you will reap a harvest of great relationships.