

Love Extravagantly

LUKE 6:27-42

1



GOAL

Youth understand that true Christian love includes care and concern for all, including those who are difficult to love.

- A Art
- AM Active/Movement
- AT Abstract Thinking
- C Conversation
- CT Concrete Thinking
- D Drama
- G Game
- M Music
- QC Quiet/Contemplative
- S Service
- T Technology
- X Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God, give me strength as I teach your children today. Speak through me. Let your light shine through them. Amen.

THIS SESSION

To love extravagantly, it is important to know what love is. We love because God first loved us. Our understanding of the depth and breadth of God's love becomes the foundation on which we are able to love God, self, neighbor, and enemy. When we talk about loving others, we might discuss showing affection to the people in our lives or showing kindness to strangers. We do not often consider loving those who hurt or mistreat us. It is counterintuitive to love our enemies. In defining love from a Christian perspective, we examine biblical mandates for loving others even when it is difficult to do so. We stretch ourselves by examining historical examples of extravagant love and consider how we might display such love in our lives.

THE BIBLE STORY

Luke 6:27-42 is excerpted from Jesus' "Sermon on the Plain." This oration follows Jesus choosing his twelve disciples and commencing his ministry of healing and teaching. He proclaims blessings upon the marginalized and great distress for their oppressors. Nevertheless, Jesus teaches us to love our enemies and show kindness to those who mistreat us. Even though oppressors will inevitably reap the consequences of their actions, it is not up to us to dole out retribution, nor should we relish in their divine punishment. What makes Christians unique is that we show love to all people, regardless of whether we know them and irrespective of their treatment toward us.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Young people may have been told to be nice, ignore bullies, or refrain from seeking revenge when people mistreat them. There are times when these responses align with self-care and protection. However, young people may not have been challenged to move beyond these passive responses to *actively* love one another, including their enemies. Young people are encouraged to think critically about doing the hard work of loving people whom they may not like or who may have hurt them.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- "Love God, Neighbor, and Enemy" (p. 6): Obtain the *Love God, Neighbor, Enemy* infographic poster (bit.ly/FMInfographicPosters, Year 2 Set).
- "Loving across Traditions" (p. 8): Obtain a copy of the Golden Rule poster from Scarborough Missions, available at bit.ly/FMGoldenRulePoster and other places. (optional)

GETTING STARTED

- Paper and pens

NOT EVERYONE IS NICE

CT QC

As young people arrive, give each a piece of paper and a pen. Have them write on one side of the paper different ways they show love to another person. On the other side of the paper, write the name of an enemy or someone who is not very nice to them. Invite them to write about how they treat that person or that person treats them. Have them fold their papers so that the name is not visible to anyone. Use their papers again in “Praying for Our Enemies” (p. 9).



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

OPENING LITANY

QC

Welcome the youth with your usual opening activities. Explain that the theme of this session is “Love Extravagantly.” After you read a line of the litany, have youth repeat in unison “when we love extravagantly.” Their final line is “may we love extravagantly.”

We love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind
when we love extravagantly.

We love our neighbor as ourself
when we love extravagantly.

We love our enemies
when we love extravagantly.

Lord, in your mercy,
may we love extravagantly.

- Newsprint and markers

WHAT IS LOVE?

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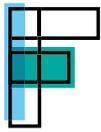
On newsprint, make two columns. Write at the top of one column, “Love is . . .” and on the other, “Love is not . . .”. Invite youth to list adjectives or characteristics to describe what love is. Then have them list words to describe what love is not. Notice together if one list is easier to generate than the other. Discuss possible reasons for this. Save the lists to use in “Redefining Love” (p. 7).

- *Love God, Neighbor, Enemy* infographic poster (Year 2 Set)

LOVE GOD, NEIGHBOR, AND ENEMY

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Display the *Love God, Neighbor, Enemy* infographic poster and have youth look it over and make comments. Invite youth to identify one word or aspect of the image that stands out to them. Encourage them to share why it resonates with them. Discuss which words or aspects challenge their understanding of love.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or more options.

LOVE DON'T COME EASY C AT

Distribute pens and a copy of Resource Page 1 to each person. Form groups of two or three. Give Bibles to each group. Have the groups read Luke 6:27–42 and think about how easy or difficult it is to follow the commands Jesus gives in the passage. Have them discuss their *thoughts* with their small group and note their *feelings* on Resource Page 1. Gather the groups, and discuss differences between their thoughts and feelings about following Jesus' commands. Talk about how these verses expand their understanding of love and whether it is easy to demonstrate the Christian love described in the passage.

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- Bibles
 - Copies of Resource Page 1
 - Pens

LOVE IS ACTIVE C CT

Explain that the kind of extravagant love Jesus models and preaches is active. Invite a volunteer to read aloud Luke 6:27–42 while others read along in their Bibles. Read the text a second time and have youth identify the verbs Jesus uses in his commands. List these on newsprint. Discuss what Jesus is asking his followers to *do*. Invite youth to talk about opportunities they have had to do the actions Jesus mentions. Read aloud the sidebar information.

Compare the Golden Rule with “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Discuss the importance of active love toward oneself as well as others.

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- Bibles
 - Newsprint and markers



Verse 31 is often called the Golden Rule. It is a powerful statement from Jesus, interpreting a Hebrew text where God gave Moses a similar guideline in Leviticus 19:18 (italics added): “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but *you shall love your neighbor as yourself*: I am the LORD.”

REDEFINING LOVE C CT

If you completed “What Is Love?” on page 6, use the same lists. You may create new lists labeled “Love is . . .” and “Love is not . . .” for this activity.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. While the text is read, have another person use a different color marker to make notations on the newsprint. When a word is read in Scripture that is already on the list, the note taker circles it. If a word describing love is read but it is not on the list, have the note taker write the word in the appropriate column.

Review the two lists. How did the group's initial descriptions of what love is and is not compare to the biblical description of love given in the 1 Corinthians passage? Alternatively, discuss how the new lists align with popular understandings of love. Discuss when and how we are guided by biblical love.

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- Bibles
 - Newsprint from “What Is Love?” (p. 6)
 - Markers



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

- Internet-connected device



Rather than having groups create a skit, provide paper and pen to list examples of the type of love they are assigned.

- Copies of Resource Page 2
- Internet-connected device (optional)



Teaching Note: This conversation may be triggering for some youth. Assess the needs of your youth before, during, and after this activity.

- Internet-connected device
- Copy of Golden Rule poster (optional)

AGAPE



Show the YouTube video “Martin Luther King Jr. on What It Means to ‘Love Your Enemies’” (bit.ly/FMLoveEnemies, 2:49). Remind youth that *eros* describes romantic or sexual love, *phelos* refers to platonic or love between friends, and *agape* describes a deep, unconditional love for a person because they are human.

Form three groups. Have each group reflect on one of the three types of love King described and create a 90-second skit to illustrate that particular type of love.

After each group presents their skit, engage in deeper discussion about *agape*.

- ➔ Why is this type of love important?
- ➔ King talked about “hating the system rather than the individual who is caught up in that system” and how we should “love the person but hate the evil deed.” How is this possible?
- ➔ What is one way you can demonstrate *agape* this week?

CHOOSING TO LOVE



Distribute copies of Resource Page 2, which provides a summary of the massacre that took place at Mother Emmanuel A.M.E. Church in 2015, as well as quotations from survivors of the attack. Read the summary and the quotations. Invite the youth to share their thoughts and feelings about what they have heard. Wrestle together in discussing these questions:

- ➔ What kind of love do these survivors express?
- ➔ What would it take for you to practice this kind of love?



Viewing Option: You may choose to show the accompanying video, “Wife of Charleston Shooting Victim Says She’s Glad Sentencing Is Over” (abcn.ws/3lNDdaW, 1:13).

LOVING ACROSS TRADITIONS



A Canadian Roman Catholic Mission Society called Scarboro Missions has created a poster showing how many religious traditions have a version of the Golden Rule. It may be viewed at bit.ly/FMGoldenRule. If possible, order a copy of the “Golden Rule Poster” from www.scarboromissions.ca and post it during this unit.

The poster includes quotations that resemble the Golden Rule from many religions. Explain that the call to love others as yourself crosses boundaries of religious traditions. Have youth look over the poster and identify one religious teaching that stands out to them. Encourage them to share why it resonates with them. Discuss how these stories and sayings from other major religions deepen their understanding of Jesus’ call to love.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

LOVE LINES

CT QC

Paper and pens

Invite youth to think about how often or easily they use the word *love*. Explain that some people are comfortable using the word and apply it to many things. We love certain foods, hobbies, or friends. Others of us are more sparing in our use of the word. We may not hear it much, or say it often. Where do you fall on a scale in your use of the word *love*?

Distribute paper and pens. Have youth draw a line with arrows at either end, title it “Love Line,” and mark and label the line from left to right: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always. List people or things about which youth have used the word *love*. Draw a line from each item to the point that corresponds with their use of *love* when referencing that person or thing.

Conclude the activity by discussing these questions:

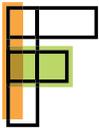
- What types of things do you love the most?
- Where are you on the scale in your use of the word *love*?
- Who or what do you hope to be able to add to the list as you work through the call of Jesus to *Love God, Neighbor, Enemy*?

PRAYING FOR OUR ENEMIES

QC

Papers from “Not Everyone Is Nice” (p. 6) and pens

Ask youth to use their papers from “Not Everyone Is Nice” on page 6. Have them write a few sentences about how they can show love to the named person. Invite the youth to pray silently for their enemy.



FOLLOWING JESUS

IDENTIFYING LOVE

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Go around the group, having each person name one action to show love of God, neighbor, and enemy. The first person names an example of loving God, the person on their left names an example of loving neighbor, and so on. Go around the group at least twice.

Lead the group in this prayer or one of your own:

Ever-loving God, we know that showing love is not always easy, especially when people have wronged us. But we also know that you are able to help us love extravagantly. Give us a heart like yours to love deep and wide, just as you have loved us. Amen.

Love Don't Come Easy

Listed in the first column are some of the commands Jesus gives in Luke 6:27–42. On the chart, place a checkmark in the column that more closely reflects how difficult or easy you *feel* it is to follow these commands.

| | I could never do this. | I could do this, but it would be very difficult. | I do this now, and it is very difficult. | I do this now, and it brings me great joy. |
|---|------------------------|--|--|--|
| Love your enemies. | | | | |
| Do good to those who hate you. | | | | |
| Bless those who curse you. | | | | |
| Pray for those who abuse you. | | | | |
| “Turn the other cheek.” | | | | |
| Give to each person who begs from you. | | | | |
| If a person steals from you, do not ask for your things back. | | | | |
| Do to others as you would have them do to you. | | | | |

Choosing to Love

Loving our enemies can be very difficult, especially when someone commits a horrible act against us. In 2015, a massacre took place at Mother Emmanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, South Carolina. A white supremacist shot and killed several black parishioners during a Bible study.

On this page are quotations from the survivors and relatives of those murdered during the massacre. It is important to note that, while these quotations express sentiments of forgiveness and mercy, not all of the survivors felt this way. This activity is not a critique of those who would or could not forgive the murderer, as their anger and pain are understandable. Rather, these quotations provide an example of extravagant love that we can strive toward.

“I forgive you. You took something very precious from me. I will never talk to her again. I will never, ever hold her again. But I forgive you. And have mercy on your soul.”
—Nadine Collier, daughter of Ethel Lance, who was killed

“I still don’t want you to die. . . . May God have mercy on you.”
—Rev. Sharon Risher, daughter of Ethel Lance, who was killed

“I forgive you. That’s the easiest thing I had to do. But you don’t want to help somebody who don’t want to help themselves. May God have mercy on your soul.”
—Felicia Sanders, survivor of the incident and mother of Tywanza Sanders, who was killed

“I know that you don’t understand that, but God requires me to forgive you. I forgive you. He also requires me to plead and pray for you, and I do that. Understand that as you have been judged, know that you have an opportunity to ask for forgiveness. Know that you can change your life. Stay focused. I guarantee if you choose to serve him you will have a better life.”
—Dan Simmons Jr., son of Rev. Daniel Simmons Sr., who was killed

“I wanted to hate you, but my faith tells me no. I wanted to remain angry and bitter, but my view of life won’t let me. . . . I acknowledge that I am very angry. But one thing that DePayne always enjoined in our family . . . is she taught me that we are the family that love built. We have no room for hating, so we have to forgive. I pray God on your soul.”
—Bethane Middleton-Brown, sister of Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, who was killed

Source: Emily Shapiro, “Charleston Victim’s Mother Tells Dylann Roof ‘I Forgive You’ as He’s Sentenced to Death,” abcnews.go.com (June 11, 2017), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/charleston-victims-mother-tells-dylann-roof-forgive/story?id=44704096>.