

“Love – Just Do It!”

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An Armenian nurse had been held captive along with her brother by the Turks. Her brother was slain by a Turkish soldier before her eyes. Somehow she escaped and later became a nurse in a military hospital. One day she was stunned to find that the same man who had killed her brother had been captured and brought wounded to the hospital where she worked.

Something within her cried out "Vengeance." But a stronger voice called for her to love. She nursed the man back to health. Finally, the recuperating soldier asked her, "Why didn't you let me die?" Her answer was, "I am a follower of Him who said, 'Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you'". Impressed with her answer, the young soldier replied, "I never heard such words before. Tell me more. I want this kind of religion." Can you imagine what that must have been like?

Open to Matthew 5. As Jesus was talking to the people and giving His Sermon on the Mount, He wanted to clear up a few issues the people had heard from the priests and leaders of the church. They had said there was an Old Testament command that everyone was to follow.

Verse 43, *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'* The lifestyle of the leaders of the church was to set up who they found acceptable and who they did not. The priests and leaders had said that God said, love your neighbor, hate your enemy, but that's not what God said. Listen to Leviticus 19:18, *"You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."*

Turn to Luke 10. The religious leaders were twisting God's Word to fit into their sinful way of life! Look at the way they treated people they didn't like. Verses 30-34, *"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him."* The two leaders didn't want to be inconvenienced and not be able to do what they wanted. Besides, to the Jews, Samaritans were the scum of the earth!

Jesus gave a New Commandment for His people. Matthew 5:44, *"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."* As a Christian, you're to love your enemy. You're to show good will toward them and bless them and pray for them. Oscar Wilde said, *"Always love and forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them more."* Benjamin Franklin said, *"Love your enemies, for they tell you all your faults."*

Jesus said in Luke 6:27-28, *"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you."* Jesus did exactly as He said when He came to earth to suffer and die for our sins, our wrongs. He was a true picture of the love of God. God didn't say that He would send His Son for the few, but loved the world so much, He sent Jesus for all because He cares about everyone!

So what are the reasons for us to love. Look at Matthew 5:44-47, *"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?"*

Allow me to make Jesus' words even clearer. If you love those who love you, big deal! If you don't love your enemies, you're no different than the world! Listen to Martin Luther's words on this, *"Do you see now how pious you are if you are friendly and kind to your friends? You are just about as pious as the thieves and the scoundrels, as the whores and the criminals, or as the devil himself!"*

We need to surrender ourselves to Him and live by His strength and power. Verse 48, *"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."* You and I are called to perfection, but there's no way we can do that on our own! Open to Ephesians 4. Paul talked to the Ephesian congregation telling them exactly what they were to do as God's people. Look at verses 31-5:2, *"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."* We need to imitate God's love everywhere!

There's a song that's on the contemporary Christian station right now that sums up this whole concept of love. It's sung by Jason Grey and a line of it goes like this, *"With every act of love, we bring the kingdom come. God put a million, million doors in His world for His love to walk through, one of those doors is you."*

No matter who, no matter what, be God's love to all! Give the world the best love you've got! His!