

How to Love Your Enemy



I) Intro

“Loving your enemy” is often thought of as the elimination of any tension.

There's no confrontation, no correction...

...just affirmation.

When you trace that line of reasoning to its inevitable conclusion, you have a situation where...

- Law Enforcement (Rom 13:4-5)
- Discipline (Prov 15:10; Prov 25:28)
- Education (Prov 4:13; 18:15)
- Personal Responsibility (Rom 14:12; Gal 6:5)
- Moral Courage (Josh 1:9; Prov 28:1; 1 Cor 16:13)
- and a healthy Work Ethic (Prov 6:6; Matt 25:14-30)...

...are all regarded as detrimental.

In this discussion, we're going to be looking at the biblical merit of that kind of disposition, based on the example of Christ, and take a closer look at what it really means to “love your enemy.”

I) Turn the Other Cheek

There are a number of Scriptures you can refer to that make it appear that a Christian's response to immoral behavior is to not judge or be critical. The idea is to love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you and let that be evidence of your commitment to Christ.

- Matt 5:38-40, 43-48; 7:1
- Eph 4:29
- Jas 1:19-20

But, if “love” is nothing more than a perpetual affirmation of a person, then it would follow that nothing is inappropriate or deserving of condemnation. After all, we’re not supposed to judge ([Matt 7:1](#)), which further reinforces the idea that there’s no room for any kind of criticism in the heart of a true follower of Christ.

II) Real Love in Action

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ([1 Cor 13:4-7](#))

Agape love doesn’t delight in evil. [Matthew Henry’s Commentary](#) elaborates on that by saying, “It is the very height of malice to take pleasure in the misery of a fellow-creature. And is not falling into sin the greatest calamity that can befall one? How inconsistent is it with Christian charity, to rejoice at such fall!”

So, it makes sense, then, that, if you love your enemy, you’re going to promote their welfare by helping them avoid the consequences of sin.

And how do you do that?

Well, how did Jesus do it?

the actions of Christ	verse
He resisted evil	Matt 23:13-36 [see also Matt 3:7; 12:34])
He judged	Matt 11:20-24
He was critical	Matt 16:23
He got angry	Matt 21:12-13
He will punish His enemies and banish those who persecuted Him.	Matt 25:31-46

In addition to the fact that Jesus did criticize, judge, and resist evil, when you consider the way in which God empowered the Israelites in the context of their military endeavors, it's obvious that "loving your enemy" means something more than just being accommodating (Ps 44:3).

III) You're Not Being Kind If...

You're not being kind if you're making it easier for someone to sin. Nor are you loving your enemy, let alone your neighbor or family member, by enabling their disobedience. That would be like offering a glass of water to Adam and Eve so they can better digest the fruit they're eating ([Gen 3:6](#)).

Fact is, you are being disobedient by not calling out bad behavior, given what it says in [Ephesians 5:11](#):

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ([Eph 5:11](#) [see also [Jas 4:17](#)])

When you consider the whole of God's Word, and not just random verses taken out of context, a believer's response to evil looks much different than the accommodating applause that is often promoted by our society today.

Here's a recap...

- It's not "hate" to rightfully identify illegal / sinful behavior ([Lk 17:3](#); [Rom 13:4-5](#)).
- You're not being Christlike by ignoring fraud ([Prov 6:12-19](#); [11:1](#)).
- Foreigners and strangers are biblically commanded to obey the law ([Lev 24:17-22](#))
- You are not "loving your neighbor" by encouraging them to ignore those laws that apply to them ([Rom 13:3-4](#)).

IV) Conclusion: What Did Jesus Do?

"What would Jesus do?" is often cited by Liberals and like-minded Christians who want to insist that any kind of evaluation is rooted in prejudice and is therefore both irrelevant and immoral.

But the real question is "What did Jesus do?"

Jesus judged, He criticized, He got angry, He called out hypocrisy and sin. That side of Jesus is largely ignored by people who want to pretend that there are no Standards, only situations, and there are no Principles, only preferences.

You love your enemy by promoting their welfare, which is ultimately manifested in the way you direct them to Christ. You don't do that by enabling their wrongdoing or dismissing their sinful behavior. Grace means nothing without first acknowledging yourself as someone who needs to be forgiven. If there is no standard, then there is no sin. If there is no sin, there's no need for grace.

What did Jesus do?

He made grace attractive by first making it necessary.

An enemy that can be influenced will not see grace as attractive until he first sees it as something necessary. His perception of his iniquity is hindered when you say it doesn't exist, just like his hope to be forgiven can be discouraged when you insist it isn't deserved.

Loving your enemy, then, is to acknowledge the reality of his sin in a way that points them to Christ. You don't enable their sin, you don't ignore their crime. You address it in a way where God can reveal their sin, and then offer them the grace they now know they need.