

LIVING THE RADICAL LIFE

Loving the Unlovable: Pressed Down, Shaken Together and Running Over

Jesus is calling us to experience the abundant life by living a radical, counter-cultural lifestyle that emulates who He is and how He lived when He had His turn to live here on earth.

One of the most misunderstood and misapplied verses in Scripture is found in Luke's account of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Luke adds an additional comment that Matthew omits in his account. You very likely have heard this verse misquoted often: *Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over* (Luke 6:38, NASB). It seems most often this verse is quoted in reference to one topic—giving money to the church or to God. Could it be this verse has *nothing* to do either of those?

To correctly understand what Jesus is saying in this verse, we need to return it to its full context, which begins in Luke 6:27. Here, Jesus is calling his followers to live a radical, counter-cultural lifestyle that is the antithesis of the way the world lives and treats people. He outlines for us three radical behaviors that form the foundation of His revolutionary, Kingdom lifestyle. As you might expect, Jesus routinely models all three of these behaviors during his life and ministry here on earth. It is worth noting that He repeats each of these behaviors three times in his sermon to drive His point home even further.

Here are the three radical behaviors He is calling all of us to live out. The verses in this passage (6:27-38, NIV) have been grouped by the specific behavior so you can see both His repetition and the entirety of His comments on each behavior.

I. Give Love

(1) ^{27b}*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.* (2) ³²*If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.* (3) ^{35a}*But love your enemies, do good to them.* ³⁶*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.* ^{37a}*Do not judge, and you will not be judged.*

When we love like Jesus, we will love and do good even to those who hate us. We will always show mercy to those who oppose us (just as God's love compelled Him to show mercy on us when we opposed Him). And this Christ-like love never judges harshly or unfairly, but always gives the other person the benefit of the doubt. If Jesus lived today, He might tell us to "cut them some slack."

You see, in the world of unbelievers, people will love those who love them. But Jesus is calling us to an extreme reversal of the ways of the world. He is calling us to love even those who

hate us—to be radically counter-cultural in how we live with and treat the people who occupy this planet with us.

2. Give Blessing

(1) ²⁸*Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.* (2) ³³*And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that.* (3) ^{37b}*Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.*

Jesus then gives us another radical, counter-cultural behavior. Not only are we to love those who hate us, He is calling us to actually bless even our fiercest enemies and “do good” to them. He adds that we are even to pray *for* them. (You will find it quite impossible to regularly pray blessings on your enemies and continue to be hostile toward them.) Jesus is telling us that we are not to condemn them, which is exactly what the natural man will do to those who would curse and mistreat him. The world will seek *revenge*. Jesus is calling us to seek *blessing*. How radical!

3. Give Release

(1) ²⁹*If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.* ³⁰*Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.* (2) ³⁴*And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.* ^{35b}*Lend to them without expecting to get anything back.* (3) ^{37c}*Forgive, and you will be forgiven.*

You have heard the phrase “beg, borrow, and steal.” Here, Jesus is telling us how to respond to people who will beg, borrow, and steal from us.

Beg: *Give to everyone who asks you—with no consideration for their worthiness.*

Borrow: *Lend to them without expecting to get anything back.*

Steal: *If anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.*

How bizarre! How radical! In Jesus’ counter-cultural lifestyle, there is *no* recovery of any kind ever sought for any action anyone might take to “extract” anything from us. No retaliation. No restitution. It is complete and unconditional release to everyone. *Forgive* (or as some translations say, *pardon*) everyone—all the time—for everything. We lay no claim *against* anyone or claim *to* anything. In Jesus’ counter-cultural lifestyle, *all* are released.

We would all agree that in order for us to start consistently living like this on the outside, something equally radical is going to have to happen on the inside. We are going to have to change the way we think if we are going to change the way we live. Fortunately, Jesus does not

leave us on our own to figure out what needs to change internally. Right in the midst of this teaching, He tells us how to change our *thinking*, so we can successfully change our *living*.

Jesus Gives Us the *Standard* for Our Radical, Counter-Cultural Behavior

³¹*Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

As fallen creatures, three things are quite common in all our lives: (1) We love ourselves more than we love anyone else. (2) We are most interested in what blesses us. (3) We are the first to extend ourselves the benefit of the doubt when we make mistakes or behave badly. So, we are naturally inclined to behave the way Jesus is teaching us. The problem is that we aren't all that willing to behave toward others the same way we are more than willing to behave toward ourselves.

Jesus gives us the standard for how to treat others: the way you like to be treated yourself. We certainly know how we want to be treated. Now all we have to do is to extend the same treatment we want to those around us. You see, this "Golden Rule" is really a most radical rule!

Jesus Gives Us the *Extent* of Our Radical, Counter-Cultural Behavior

^{38b}*For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

Jesus then expands this radical "treat others as you want to be treated" Kingdom behavior even further by telling us that the more unconditionally we love, the more extremely we bless, and the more absolute our release of others, the same will come back to us in direct proportion: abundant love, abundant blessing, and abundant release! The more extreme the measure of these behaviors we dispense to others, the more extreme the measure that we will receive back.

Here is what makes this statement so incredible: Jesus is telling us that we are the ones who set the bar of abundance that will be applied to us. It is not up to Him. It is up to us!

Jesus Gives Us the *Results* of Our Radical, Counter-Cultural Behavior

^{35b}*Then your reward will be great.*

Here is the "payback" of treating others like we would want to be treated and using an abundant measurement to dole it out to them. Jesus tells us, *Your reward will be great*. Now we finally come to the verse that we are considering. Jesus' radical, counter-cultural lifestyle teaching concludes with this verse:

^{38a}*Give and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over.*

Here is my amplified version of this verse, *Give (love, blessing, and release to others) and it will be given to you. They (love, blessing, and release) will (then) pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over.*

To whom are we to be doing this giving? To those who hate us, to those who mistreat us, to those who slap us on the cheek, to those who borrow from us and never repay, and to those who steal from us.

Do you see now that verse 38 has *nothing* to do with giving money to the church or to God and it has everything to do with giving ourselves to a world that frankly would prefer we weren't even here?

Jesus summarizes this radical, counter-cultural lifestyle in one short verse later in his ministry in John 10:10 (NASB) when He says, *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.* Jesus is calling us to experience the abundant life by living a radical, counter-cultural lifestyle that emulates who He is and how He lived when He had His turn to live here on earth.

So, how radical and counter-cultural are you prepared for your lifestyle to become? Jesus said, *Follow me.* Do you think He really meant it?

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. What is your reaction to the message in this lesson?
2. What was your understanding of this passage prior to this lesson?
3. Why is Jesus' teaching on love so radically different from the world's?
4. How do we typically react to those who hate us?
5. How does Jesus call us to react to those who hate us?
6. How are we to react when people want to beg, borrow or steal from us?
7. Why is extending "unconditional release" counter-cultural when people take from us and do not give it back?
8. Why is changing "how we think" a prerequisite to changing "how we live"?
9. How does the Golden Rule fit into this teaching of Jesus?

10. How does our willingness to unconditionally forgive others impact how we will be forgiven by others?

11. To whom are we to be doing this giving? How is this different than how many Bible teachers are explaining this passage?

12. What is going to change in your life going forward because of this lesson? What are you going to start doing differently?