



## Loving the Unloveable

**John 13:34 - 35** A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (35) By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

**John 15:12** This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

We have a responsibility to love each other. This is not a suggestion, or an optional extra, but it is a command. If we are followers of Jesus, then we have to love one another.

More than that, we have to love one another as Jesus loved us. This just doesn't mean we love those that we like. There will always be people we get on with better than others. There will also always be people that rub us up the wrong way. Jesus doesn't just love those who like Him. Even when people reject Him, when they curse Him and disobey Him, when they are at their most hateful and hurtful, Jesus still loves them.

Isn't that what He did for us? He loved us when we were not worthy of His love. We are not worthy of His love now. Yet He loved us and still loves us, in spite of our weaknesses, our failures and our flaws. If we are to love each other like He loved us, then we have no option but to love them in spite of their flaws; in spite of the fact that they get on our nerves sometimes; in spite of the fact that they will fail to meet our expectations; in spite of the fact that they aren't perfect.

God has extended his grace to us. The definition of grace is "unmerited or undeserved favour". If we are to love each other as God loves us, we also have to show grace – we have to show people favour and respect even when it is undeserved. We are called to love the unloveable.

The church, the body of Christ, is a place for all of us to experience unconditional love. The church is a place where people are to be loved and feel safe in spite of their imperfections. If you are able to go anywhere and be loved in spite of your warts and blemishes it should be where people gather to worship the One True God.

This is not a natural thing to do, because the world's idea of love is to love others when they meet your approval. God's idea of love is to love others because they are valuable.

The natural thing to do when someone is hurtful to us is to respond in kind, or to seek revenge. We are not called to seek revenge. If we respond in anger we are only going to bring more anger and problems. The law of sowing and reaping applies to communication, just the same as it applies to everything else. Sowing angry words or actions will only bring more angry words and actions in return.

A knight and his men returned to their castle after a long hard day of fighting.

"How are we faring?" asked the King.

"Sire," replied the knight, "I have been robbing and pillaging on your behalf all day, burning the towns of your enemies in the west."

"What!" shrieked the King, "I don't have any enemies to the west!"

"Oh," said the knight. "You do now."

Because loving the unloveable is not natural for us, we have to rely on the power of God to help us. The first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. The second is like unto it: to love our neighbour as ourselves. If you don't get the first right – loving God with all your heart, then you will not be able to get the second right. It is the love relationship we have with Jesus that will empower to us love others in the same way that He loves us.

Some names in the Bible makes us think of certain characteristics, or even sins. For example, Judas – betrayal, Thomas – doubting, Jezebel – loose woman. But what about Shimei – he had Dead Dog’s disease.

You remember the story of King David. The people desired a king, and eventually the Lord let them have what they wanted. The people chose who they thought had the right attributes for a king – they chose Saul, because he was bigger than anyone else. We know that God chose David to be king after Saul, and he sent Samuel to anoint him. After this David was taken into Saul’s house, and became his armourbearer, and also played music to soothe Saul.

Then came the incident of Goliath, and Saul became very jealous of David, and began to throw spears at him, and tried to kill him. Eventually David had to flee into the wilderness to escape, and Saul tried to hunt him down and kill him. Twice David had Saul at his mercy, and twice he refused to kill, or even touch, Saul. One time he cut a piece from Saul’s clothing to show that he could have easily killed him, but he greatly regretted doing that.

Eventually, after Saul died, David became king. Then he had a problem with his children, and his son, Absalom, tried to take the kingdom from him, and very nearly succeeded. Even when his own life was threatened, David asked Joab, the captain of his army, to treat Absalom gently. Joab ended up killing Absalom, and David mourned his death very much.

David made some mistakes, because he was a human, but basically he always tried to do what was right and proper. He refused to kill Saul because he recognised that Saul was the king, even though David himself had been chosen by God and anointed by Samuel. David was certainly blameless when it came to Saul’s death, and, even though he should have dealt with Absalom sooner, he had shown mercy to Absalom, and didn’t deserve his treachery. All of this brings us to Shimei with the Dead Dog’s disease.

**2 Samuel 16:5-8** And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. (6) And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. (7) And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial (8) The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.

Shimei threw rocks at David, and heaped abuse on him, saying that he was a worshipper of Belial, that God was punishing him for the death of Saul, and that God had taken the kingdom of him and given to Absalom. All these things were patently false. So where does Dead Dog’s Disease come in?

**2 Samuel 16:9** Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

Shimei was suffering from Dead Dog’s Disease. He was attacking the King, the God appointed leader, with false accusations and hurtful words, at a time that must have been the lowest of David’s life. David was no longer a young man, as he was when he was on the run from Saul. Now he was older, and had apparently lost his kingdom, his people had turned on him, his own son was trying to kill him and take over, and at that point the Dead Dog Shimei attacked.

Abishai said, “Let me take off his head”. How many of us would have said to Abishai, “Here, you can use my sword.” Or even, “Make sure it hurts.”

David didn’t do that. He let Shimei throw rocks and abuse at him. Later on in **2 Samuel 16:19** we see Shimei repenting of what he had done, and David’s patience with him allowed him the opportunity to do that. David had refused to respond in anger, and what he did is a lesson to us on how to love each other.

**1. Remember you need mercy too:** All of us have weaknesses. All of us make mistakes. There is not one of us that hasn’t treated someone wrongly at some time.

**1 John 1:8-9** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**2. Remember that God is faithful:** David said when Shimei attacked him, in

**2 Samuel 16:12** It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his

cursing this day

He also wrote a Psalm while he was running from Absalom:

**Psalm 3:** A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

(1) LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. (2) Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. (3) But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. (4) I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. (5) I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me. (6) I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. (7) Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. (8) Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

**3. Remember God's promises:** If someone upsets us, instead of focussing on that, we can instead focus on the many promises that fill the Bible:

**Hebrews 13:5** Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

**Romans 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

**1 Corinthians 10:13** There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

**4. Accept people as they are:** There is a big difference between “acceptance” and “approval”. When you accept someone it doesn't mean you are agreeing with them on everything. It doesn't mean you approve of everything they do. It means that you recognise that they are valuable.

**Romans 15:7** Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

**Romans 15:7 NIV** Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

**5. Don't add fuel to the fire:**

**Luke 6:28** Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

“Bless” here is the Greek word “eulogeo”, where we get our word “eulogy”. It means to speak well of a person, or invoke a blessing.

Sometimes it may not be possible to live at peace with someone who doesn't like you or you don't have a good relationship with. We are not responsible for what they say or do, but we are responsible for ourselves. We must do our part to try and heal the relationship. Some people may refuse reconciliation, and even hate you. Just don't add fuel to the fire. Try to do what you can to reconcile and pray for them. That is what Jesus did for those who nailed Him to the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

I want to finish with a promise:

**Luke 6:35** But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: