

WHEN LOVE IS DIFFICULT, LOVE LIKE C.H.R.I.S.T.!

FEBRUARY 14, 2021

WORSHIP

Forever, How Great Is The Love, The Love of Jesus

WELCOME

Think of the most difficult person you have encountered. Describe what makes him or her difficult.

WORD

LUKE 6:27-28,31-33,35

²⁷ But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who are abusive to you... ³¹ Treat people the same way you want them to treat you. ³² If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same... ³⁵ But love your enemies and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil people.

We continue with Episode 2 of our LOVE SERIES this very day the world celebrates love. Many call it as Valentine's Day! Let us remember though that last week, we were warned of counterfeit love which is highly addictive and destructive. The prayer of the Apostle Paul in **Philippians 1:9** that our "**love still overflow more and more in real knowledge and all discernment**" means that we need to have a real, experiential knowledge (Gk. Ginosko) of the love of God and allow His light to shine through so we can see what real love is. The only way to grow in that love is to learn continually from the Lord.

How can we test true love? True love passes the test of time. Love is a choice. It is expressed in action. It's easy to love someone we have a good relationship with; but we find it hard to love difficult people—people with different or contradicting opinions, over-sensitive, moody, negative, critical or judgmental, easily angered, and our enemies. Without us realizing it, we can also be the difficult person to love for others. So, how do we love difficult people? Love like **C.H.R.I.S.T.:**

C-CHOICE

Loving difficult people is a choice that we have to make. Love, as told by Jesus, cannot be governed by feelings. Feelings should never be the basis of the way we act. Jesus' firm command is to love our enemies and **Luke 6:27-28** specifies the ways we can put this into practice. Sometimes, it means that our "choice" will go against our feelings and it has to have a firm reason. May that reason be the desire to follow Christ's example, always making that choice to glorify Him as we pursue the way of love!

H-ABIT

We are creatures of habit. Subconsciously, we act out certain habits mindlessly because we are so used to doing it. For example, we go through our morning routines systematically because the process is ingrained. We are controlled by habits. LOVE is also impacted by habits. **Luke 6:27-28 is a present imperative command.** It means to keep on loving and we have to **keep on** putting love into action. Loving as a habit requires stricter discipline. Apostle Paul understood well and wrote about the importance of discipline in **1 Corinthians 9:26-27**. Habits are formed and practiced. There are good habits to learn and be familiar with when it comes to loving difficult people: for example, speaking in a gentle voice, thinking the best of others, forgiving, and being gentle.

R-EACH OUT

Many times, we retreat or withdraw from difficult situations. We run away from confrontations, conflicts, and challenging "loved ones". **Luke 6:31** is a memorable point where Jesus gave a command that is different from the "golden rule" version of the world. "**Treat others the same way you want them to treat you**" is different from "what you don't want done to yourself, do not do to others". The latter dwells on passivity and negative thinking. Christ's command is proactive, putting the concept of love into tangible action. **Luke 6:32-34** doesn't ask us to retreat or withdraw. We make our first move and show love!

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I-NSPECT YOURSELF

To love like CHRIST, you must practice inspecting yourself. **Matthew 7:3-4** tells us to learn to look at ourselves first instead of looking at others. Jesus gave us a perfect illustration in these verses. We are gracious to ourselves but we judge others critically. We don't give them the benefit of the doubt! Ask yourself: are you moody, selfish, entitled? Is it hard to live with you? Reflecting in this manner may hurt us personally, but it does well for a slumbering, desensitized soul. Sometimes, we complain too much about how difficult others are, yet we miss out on acknowledging our own lapses.

S-URRENDER

Surrendering is not passivity or weakness. When you surrender to God, you give way for a Greater Power to take over your situation.

Jesus in **Luke 6:35** reminded us to **expect nothing in return** as you do good to this "difficult" person. Let God do His part. Constantly pray and entrust them to the Lord. Not only do you surrender the outcome to God, you are also to base your response on God's goodness. **Ephesians 4:15** speaks clearly to us that to be like Christ, we must learn to speak truth in love. We can only do that if we are surrendered to the Lord. Our part as we surrender them to God is to make sure we get rid of the things in our lives that are not pleasing to the Lord (**Ephesians 4:31-32**). Unforgiveness is counted in that list. We let go of these things and let God do the transformation. Keep entrusting that person as well as yourself to God.

Surrendering is to be thankful as well. God uses difficult people to change and transform us in order to grow in the area of love. When you look at things that way, you will see "difficult people" as blessings from the Lord!

T-HROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Romans 5:5 gives us a picture of overflowing love only made possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. To love difficult people is not easy. One of the root sins is not that we don't love God but that we do not love Him enough with our whole heart. We must know Him with our whole heart and learn to love like Jesus. **1 John 4:19-20** reminds us to love others as we have been loved by God. It is a tall order to follow but not impossible. If you have experienced the love of God which was given to us at our worst state and at our utter neglect and avoidance of God, we will be able to love the difficult, the unlovable, and the worst. We should love as we have been loved by God. Such love is patient, faithful, and one that looks beyond disappointments. Be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out this kind of life and love!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Self-Check.

Are you easy or difficult to love? Why do you believe that is so?

2. Setting It Right

Was there any time in the recent days or weeks that you have not applied the concept of loving difficult people by the C.H.R.I.S.T. standard? How will you respond to these difficult people starting today?

3. Living It Out

How can you become a more loving person? What practical things can you do to show love to difficult people?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray that God will work in your heart to love difficult people and likewise in the heart of those difficult people. Continually pray for a change of heart leading to changes in behavior. Demonstrate a CHRIST-like love to them through your words and actions. Share the message of God's love in season (Valentine's Day or Love Month) and out of season (everyday)!

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants a God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation
- Wisdom and timely, effective response to the pandemic

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends



27 "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28** bless those who curse you, pray for those who are abusive to you.

Luke 6:27-28