

Love Extravagantly

LUKE 6:27–42

GOAL

Adults examine biblical teachings about extravagant love and consider how they might display such love in their lives.

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



Visit our YouTube channel, bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR, for conversation starter videos.

PRAYER

O God, broaden my vision of the extravagant love you author and call us to live.
Amen.

THIS SESSION

To love extravagantly, it is important to know what love is. We love because God first loved us. Our understanding of the depth and breadth of God's love becomes the foundation on which we are able to love God, self, neighbor, and enemy. God loves us just as we are, but God loves us too much to let us stay as we are. God's extravagant love challenges us to love beyond ourselves. We are called to love others the way we would want God to love us. When we talk about loving others, we might discuss showing affection to the people in our lives or showing kindness to strangers. We do not often consider loving those who hurt or mistreat us. It is counterintuitive to love our enemies. In defining love from a Christian perspective, we examine biblical mandates for loving others even when it is difficult to do so. We stretch ourselves by examining historical examples of extravagant love and consider how we might display such love in our lives.

THE BIBLE STORY

Luke 6:27–42 is excerpted from Jesus' "Sermon on the Plain." This oration follows Jesus choosing his twelve disciples and commencing his ministry of healing and teaching. He proclaims blessings upon the marginalized and great distress for their oppressors. Nevertheless, Jesus teaches that we love our enemies and show kindness to those who mistreat us. Even though oppressors will inevitably reap the consequences of their actions, it is not up to us to dole out retribution, nor should we relish in their divine punishment. What makes Christians unique is that we show love to all people, regardless of whether we know them and irrespective of their treatment toward us.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- "Love's Dos and Don'ts" (p. 6): Draw a T-chart on newsprint. Write the headings "To Love Extravagantly, Do" and "To Love Extravagantly, Don't Do."
- "Loving across Traditions" (p. 6): Obtain a copy of the Golden Rule poster from Scarborough Missions, available at bit.ly/FMGoldenRulePoster and other places. (optional)

GETTING STARTED

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome participants and allow time for gathering activities particular to your group (*introductions, offering, prayer concerns, and announcements*). Distribute *Adult Reflection Guides*. Review the summary of the practice found in the Unit Overview on page 4 of the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Explain that a more detailed discussion of the practice can be found in the foundational essay that begins on page 67 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Encourage participants to read the essay during the course of the next six sessions.

OPENING RITUAL

Explain that the theme of this session is “Love Extravagantly.” After you read a line of the litany, have participants repeat this line in unison: “when we love extravagantly.” Their final line is “may we love extravagantly.” The litany is printed on page 7 of the *Adult Reflection Guide*.

We love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind
when we love extravagantly.
We love our neighbor as ourself
when we love extravagantly.
We love our enemies
when we love extravagantly.
Lord, in your mercy,
may we love extravagantly.

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

CONVERSATION STARTER VIDEO

Show the “*Love God, Neighbor, Enemy Overview*” video and the “*Love Extravagantly, Session 1*” video from the Growing Faith YouTube channel (bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR). Lead a brief conversation about participants’ thoughts and questions the videos prompt as you introduce the session.

LOVE GOD, NEIGHBOR, ENEMY

Distribute pens. Have participants turn to page 5 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Invite them to list words that come to mind when they think of “Love God,” “Love neighbor,” and “Love enemy” and write the words in the boxes on the page. They are not limited to listing three words per phrase.

Invite participants to share the different word associations they listed. List these on newsprint. Individuals may expand upon unique words. Tell them that they will explore Jesus’ sermon that bids us to love each of these extravagantly. Save the newsprint to use in closing this session.

LOVE LINE

Direct participants to the top of page 7 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*, to the paragraph that begins, “Some of us are comfortable using the word *love*.” Read aloud the paragraph and ask: Where do you fall on a scale in your use of the word *love*? Have participants read and follow the instructions on the page for completing a love line scale, marking it for the people and things each of them “loves.” For discussion, ask:

- ➔ What trend or common thread do you find in who (or what) you marked that you say you love?

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- This and all sessions require that the leader and participants have their copy of the *Adult Reflection Guide* with them.

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- Internet-connected device

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- Pens
 - Newsprint and marker

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- Pens

- ➔ Who or what do you hope to add to this list as you work through this practice?

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

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- Pens

LOVE IS ACTIVE

Explain that the kind of extravagant love Jesus models and preaches is active. Invite a volunteer to read aloud Luke 6:27–36 on pages 8–9 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Distribute pens. Have participants read the text a second time and circle the verbs Jesus uses in his commands. Gather all participants. Discuss what actions Jesus commands his hearers to *do* in this text. What opportunities do you have to do the actions Jesus mentions?

Call people’s attention to the text box about the Golden Rule on page 8. Have a volunteer read aloud the information. Invite a show of hands of who knew that the Golden Rule came from Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain. Compare the Golden Rule with “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). Discuss the importance of active love toward oneself as well as others.

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- Bibles
 - Prepared newsprint and markers

LOVE’S DOS AND DON’TS

Refer to the paragraph under “Love Includes Dos and Don’ts” on page 9 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Invite a volunteer to read aloud the first paragraph. Have a second volunteer read aloud Luke 6:27–36. Pose the questions on page 9: As you consider what extravagant love in the way of Jesus entails, what are you called to do? What are you being called to stop doing?

Use the T-chart on the prepared newsprint. Invite participants to list their responses to the headings, “To Love Extravagantly, Do” and “To Love Extravagantly, Don’t Do.” Record their responses on the newsprint.

Review the lists. Invite comments on what participants already do and don’t do and if there are new actions they intend to practice as they love God, neighbor, and enemy.

FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

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- Internet-connected device
 - Copy of Golden Rule poster (optional)

LOVING ACROSS TRADITIONS

A Canadian Roman Catholic Mission Society called Scarborough Missions has created a poster showing how many religious traditions have a version of the Golden Rule. It may be viewed at bit.ly/FMGoldenRule. If possible, order a copy of the “Golden Rule Poster” from www.scarboromissions.ca and post it during this unit.

Display the “Golden Rule Poster,” which includes quotations that resemble the Golden Rule from many religions. Explain that the call to love others as yourself crosses boundaries of religious traditions. Have adults look over the poster and identify one religious teaching that stands out to them. Encourage them to share why it resonates with them. Discuss how these stories and sayings from other major religions deepen their understanding of Jesus’ call to love.

THE CALL TO LOVE

Direct participants to “The Call to Love from Dr. King” on page 11 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Have them take time to read the information. Invite participants to talk about their impressions, their questions, and what stood out for them. Select from these questions for discussion:

- ➔ What is the difference between loving someone and liking someone? How do we love a person that we may not like?
- ➔ King mentions three requirements for loving our enemies: capacity to forgive, recognize the image of God in another, and seek understanding over hate. What more might be needed?
- ➔ Where do you see examples of the durable power of love in the face of an enemy?

THE FOURTH WAY

Introduce the video by reading aloud the paragraph describing “The Fourth Way” on page 15 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Show the YouTube video “We Refuse to Be Enemies” (bit.ly/FMRefuse, 5:43) in which Daoud Nassar talks about choosing the way of love in his context. Invite participants to talk about their impressions, their questions, and what stood out for them in the video. Use these questions to continue discussion:

- ➔ What is significant about the video’s title “We Refuse To Be Enemies”?
- ➔ What does “The Fourth Way” represent?
- ➔ What are Nassar and his community doing to show love toward their neighbors?
- ➔ Why is it important that those who want Nassar off the land begin to see him as a human being? How can this perspective encourage love of both neighbor and enemy?

Imagine you are creating a sign for the entrance to your home that sums up your understanding of love. What would your sign say?

PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

CHOOSE TO LOVE

Have a volunteer read aloud the opening paragraph in “Practicing the Practice” on page 12 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Discuss ways that choice is involved in love. Invite participants to offer examples of when they have chosen love instead of another response. What considerations go into choosing to love?

In “Choose to Love” on page 12 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*, there are suggestions of reminders or cues to bring a person’s attention back toward love. Have participants review the reminders list and discuss concrete items that would be helpful to them. Write ideas for items in their *Adult Reflection Guide*.

PRAY FOR ENEMIES

This activity is best done by participants working independently. Invite them into a period for silent reflection and prayer. They may follow the prompts in “Pray for Enemies” on page 13 in the *Adult Reflection Guide* and write their responses and prayer in their guide.

Internet-connected device

 For artistic/creative groups:
Make available paper, markers,
and colored pencils for participants to
create an entrance sign.

Pens

Pens

Gather the group and invite them to continue this activity of loving their enemies by working through “An Act of Love” on page 14. Conclude with prayer, inviting participants to pray concurrently while offering the words they wrote. Let them all say, in unison, “Amen.”

FOLLOWING JESUS

EXTRAVAGANT LOVE

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- Pens
 - Markers
 - Newsprint from “Love God, Neighbor, Enemy” (p. 5)

Conclude the session as you began, with word association. Have participants turn to “Following Jesus” on page 16 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Invite them to list words that come to mind when they think of *Extravagant* and *Love* and write them in the boxes on the page. Point out synonyms for *extravagantly* included on the page.

Invite participants to share the different word associations they listed and add these to the newsprint list. Discuss what love given extravagantly looks like.

CLOSING PRAYER

Close the session with participants saying together the prayer printed on page 16 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*.