



Loving When It's Hard

What does God say about relating to someone who is hard to love?

If you have picked up this Personal Growth Study, you likely have someone in your life who you are having a difficult time loving. Does God have anything to say to us about how to treat someone who hurts us or is opposed to us in some way? He does!

This Personal Growth Study is aimed at helping you “think Bible” about this important area of your life. As you know, good relationships require a lot of hard work. Sometimes we hurt others. And sometimes others hurt us. And there are times when our efforts to seek forgiveness and restore a broken relationship—or simply live in a peaceful way with a difficult person—don’t work. Unreconciled relationships create a lingering hurt. Unresolved conflict weighs heavily on our hearts. We often struggle to respond in a Christ-honoring way to suffering caused by others. We need God’s Word, applied by His Spirit, to shape our thinking, to change our desires, and to enable our obedience to respond like Jesus Christ.

The verses in this study have been placed under broad categories which capture Bible truths you need to know. Here are some simple steps you can take to make this study useful in your life:

- Spend the next couple of weeks slowly reading through each category of verses—one category per day.
- Look up each verse in your own Bible and read it in context. Notice what comes before/after the verse(s) cited in the study.
- Ask questions as you read, such as: *What stands out to you in this passage? What do you learn about God—what He says or Who He is for His people? What commands must you obey in order to be like Christ?*
- Record personal insights about each verse in a journal.
- Ask God to enable you to **think** His thoughts, **love** what He loves, and **yield** to His will in joyful obedience. God’s words and ways are not always easy to follow, but they are always wisest and best!

One of the best things we can do when someone hurts us is to pray for them. Jesus commands, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Mt. 5:44). This is not our natural response. But because of our union with Christ, we have much hope. Jesus perfectly obeyed His own command. On the cross, Jesus prayed for those who hated and hurt Him (Lk. 23:34). United to Christ, believers have *His* power at work in them to obey His commands—even the ones that seem impossible (Eph. 3:20)!

Praying for those who hurt you serves to protect your heart from bitterness, nurturing a heart of mercy instead. Pray these verses back to the Lord on a regular basis. God will use this practice of dependence to change you from the inside out!

What Does God Say About Relating to Someone Who is Hard to Love?

Pray for Them

Matthew 5:44-45 *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you? That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

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

Luke 18:1 *And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint [lose heart].*

Love Them

Romans 5:8 *But God commendeth [shows] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Matthew 5:44, 48 *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

Luke 6:27, 35 *But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you. 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: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.*

Romans 13:8-10 *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

Do Not Retaliate

Matthew 5:38-42 *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*

Romans 12:19 *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

Hebrews 10:30 *For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.*

Proverbs 24:17 *Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth.*

Forgive Them

Matthew 6:14-15 *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

Luke 23:34a *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

Ephesians 4:32 *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Colossians 3:13 *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

Do Good to Them

Romans 12:19-21 *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Luke 6:27 *But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you.*

Luke 6:35-36 *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: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

1 Peter 2:12 *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

1 Peter 3:16 *Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.*

1 Peter 4:19 *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

Consider Jesus

1 Peter 3:18 *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*

Hebrews 12:1-4 *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*

1 Peter 4:1a *Forasmuch [since] then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.*

1 Peter 2:19-24 *For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*

Remember What You Once Were

1 Corinthians 6:11 *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

1 Peter 2:10 *Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

Ephesians 2:1-3 *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Trust God

1 Peter 2:23 *Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

1 Peter 4:19 *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

Psalms 18:2 *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.*

Psalms 56:3-4 *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.*

Have No Fear/Do Not Be Troubled

Romans 12:21 *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

1 Peter 3:14-15 *But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*

1 Peter 4:16 *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*

1 Peter 5:7 *Casting all your care [anxieties] upon him; for he careth for you.*

For Unbelievers, Remember Their End

Hebrews 10:31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

1 Peter 4:5 *Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.*

1 Peter 4:17-18 *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

2 Thessalonians 1:7b-10 *... When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.*

Respond with Humility Towards God and Others

1 Peter 5:5-6 *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*

Philippians 2:3-8 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

Endure, by His Grace

Hebrews 10:32-39 *But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

Hebrews 12:1-4 *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*

1 Peter 2:19-24 *For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*

Rejoice in God and what He is doing through Your Suffering

Romans 8:28-29 *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. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

1 Peter 4:13-14 *But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*

James 1:2-4 *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

1 Peter 5:10 *But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

1 Thessalonians 5:18 *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*