



# Loving When It's Hard

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## 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?**

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### **Pray for Them**

**Matthew 5:44-45** *But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

**Luke 6:28** *Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.*

**Luke 18:1** *And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.*

### **Love Them**

**Romans 5:8** *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

**Matthew 5:44, 48** *But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.... You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

**Luke 6:27, 35** *But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and ye will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind unto the ungrateful and to the evil.*

**Romans 13:8-10** *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

### **Do Not Retaliate**

**Matthew 5:38-42** *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you."*

**Romans 12:19** *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."*

**Hebrews 10:30** *For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people."*

**Proverbs 24:17** *Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles.*

### **Forgive Them**

**Matthew 6:14-15** *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

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

**Ephesians 4:32** *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

**Colossians 3:13** *Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

## **Do Good to Them**

**Romans 12:19-21** *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

**Luke 6:27** *But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.*

**Luke 6:35-36** *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 is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.*

**1 Peter 2:12** *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

**1 Peter 3:16** *Having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.*

**1 Peter 4:19** *Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*

## **Consider Jesus**

**1 Peter 3:18** *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.*

**Hebrews 12:1-4** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.*

**1 Peter 4:1a** *Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.*

**1 Peter 2:19-24** *For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

## **Remember What You Once Were**

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

**1 Peter 2:10** *Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

**Ephesians 2:1-3** *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

### **Trust God**

**1 Peter 2:23** *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

**1 Peter 4:19** *Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*

**Psalms 18:2** *The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

**Psalms 56:3-4** *When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?*

### **Have No Fear/Do Not Be Troubled**

**Romans 12:21** *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

**1 Peter 3:14-15** *But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.*

**1 Peter 4:16** *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.*

**1 Peter 5:7** *Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares 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** *But they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.*

**1 Peter 4:17-18** *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God: and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"*

**2 Thessalonians 1:7b-10** *... When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.*

### **Respond with Humility Towards God and Others**

**1 Peter 5:5-6** *Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.*

**Philippians 2:3-8** *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

## **Endure, by His Grace**

**Hebrews 10:32-39** *But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.*

**Hebrews 12:1-4** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.*

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## **Rejoice in God and what He is doing through Your Suffering**

**Romans 8:28-29** *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

**1 Peter 4:13-14** *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*

**James 1:2-4** *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

**1 Peter 5:10** *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** *Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*