The hardest thing Jesus said

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Every time Jesus spoke, He spoke the truth, but the truth is not always easy to handle. There is probably no saying of Jesus harder for us to handle than the one found in Luke 6:27-28: “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.”

The ways that we naturally want to handle these people are reflected in the following bumper stickers:

Do unto others before they can do unto you.

I don’t get mad, I get even.

Keep honking, I’m reloading.

To err is human, to forgive is out of the question.

You cannot avoid difficult people who mistreat you, speak evil about you, or do you harm. (By the way, before you start making your mental list, you should know that you are probably that difficult person for someone else, whether real or perceived.)

The reality for true followers of Christ is that we must operate under a set of values opposite that of the norm. Jesus does not say to just refrain from hating them, to just put up with them, or to just ignore them. He says to “love” them. Not love them passively but actively. So how do we practically show love to our enemies?

Jesus said to “do good” to them. That may mean mowing their lawn when they are out of town or cooking a meal for them when they are sick. You may say, “They never did anything but harm toward me, why should I do good to them.” Because God did good to you even when all you did was bring harm to His name.

He also says to “bless them” or speak well of them or wish them well. We are not to just keep our mouth shut when we want to say something against them in retaliation, but to actually speak words of encouragement and hope to and about them. We may not agree with what they have done or said, but we actually want God to bless them and do a great work in their lives that will lead to Him being glorified through them.

We are to “pray for them”. Despite their belligerence, you have a real concern for their soul. Jesus modeled this on the cross when He said about those crucifying Him, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do”, (Luke 23:34).

How could I ever do any of this? This is impossible! Yes, it is when your efforts arise from your own strength. But Jesus modeled this for you and it is only possible by God doing a great work in your heart. Admit your weakness and desperately seek the power of God to transform you into someone like Jesus, who loved you even when you were an enemy of His!

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