

# Explore the Bible: January 17

*Compassionate • Luke 6:27-38*

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Do you like milkshakes? My favorite is a strawberry shake made with the real pureed fruit! It's so sweet and refreshing, and just glides right down with no effort. On the other hand, consider a stick of beef jerky. It has the texture of a rolled-up piece of shoe leather, and is just as hard to chew!

In Hebrews 5:11-15, the writer compares two kinds of nourishment: milk and meat (or solid food). Some portions of Scripture (milk) are easy to digest, like the milkshake. Others, like the tough meat of beef jerky, require a bit more chewing. Because the teachings in today's passage definitely go against the grain of our oft self-centered ways, these verses clearly fall into the latter category.

We pick up in Luke chapter six as Jesus teaches a multitude. Adding a study of Matt. 5-7 to this week's passage reveals an expanded version containing material common to our focal verses.

Jesus challenges His newly-chosen disciples (soon to be apostles) and others gathered to consider how Kingdom values differ drastically from culturally-accepted norms.

Read verses 27-31, noticing how each verse focuses on a different situation these first-century followers might

encounter. In each verse, Jesus gives an encapsulated version of what He'll expand on in the next section. Ponder the verbs and their meaning: love, do, bless, pray, offer, don't withhold, ask, and do (NKJV). All these are action words requiring the Lord's enabling and we should consider these commands basically as life principles and attitudes.

Obviously, if someone hits you on one side of your face, the Lord isn't literally asking you to invite them to do the same on the other. Likewise, if someone sues you, you're not expected to tell them you have some more money they can take! The common thread in each verse shows we're not to demand our own way when others take advantage of us. Instead, we can confidently let the Lord be our Advocate when treated unfairly (see Rom. 12:18-20).

The concluding verse of this section is often called, The Golden Rule: "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). This reiterates how Jesus responded to a lawyer's question in Matt. 22:36-40. In addition to loving God with our total being, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

To drive home His points, in verses 32-34 our Lord asks some rhetorical questions. If we Christians only love those who return our love, do good only to those who respond likewise, or lend with the expectation of getting back what we loaned, we're no better than sinners who follow the adage, "You scratch my back; I'll scratch yours." Notice this thrice-used phrase, "What credit is that to you?" The next verse shows us that instead of earthly benefit (credit) when we love our enemies, do good, and lend freely, our "reward will be great" (v. 35).

This spiritual benefit will outshine any material reward life could offer. Our gracious actions emulate the Father's compassion and mercy, revealing that we indeed are His (vv. 35-36). Verse 37 cautions us not to judge and condemn. Our

Leader Guide says, "The phrase 'do not judge' comes from a root word meaning to consider someone guilty, and the 'do not condemn' has a similar source."

This doesn't mean we are to just ignore sin in our brothers and sisters. Other Scriptures clearly show those who are spiritually-strong have a responsibility to lovingly confront believers who stray (Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor. 1:15; 2 Tim. 1:24). However, we're not to set ourselves up as judge and jury. That is God's role and, as Christ has freely forgiven us (Eph. 2:4-5), we're to extend that same forgiveness to others (v. 37).

Second Corinthians 9:7-8 declares that "God loves a cheerful giver," and He will "make all grace abound" to the one who is generous in sharing. Luke 6:38 reiterates that concept: as we give, we will receive "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." This describes the abundance we can expect. Oh, we don't give to get but Scripture shows God abundantly blesses one who sacrificially shares whether it be money, time, possessions, or giftedness. So how do we possibly do these things? In Phil. 2:13, the Apostle Paul gives the answer: "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." His Spirit gives both the desire and the enablement. We only need to provide the yielded vessel.

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