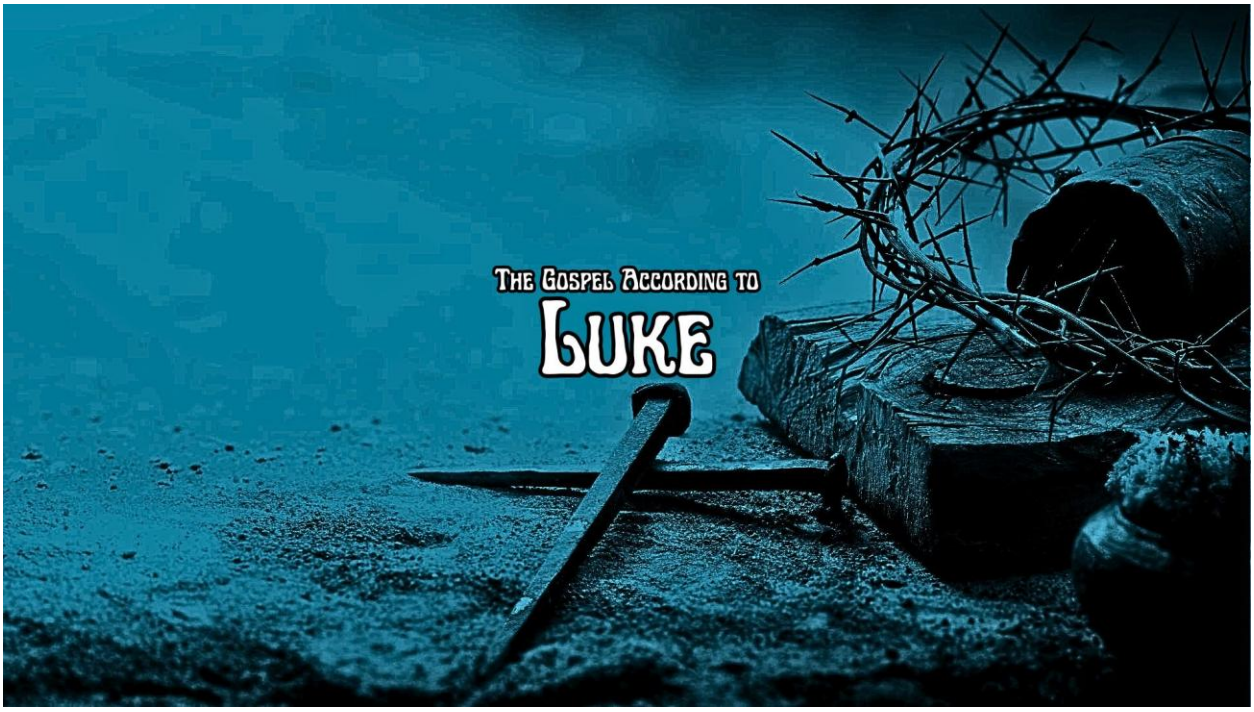
Small Group Guide

Based on the Sermon: Loving Your Enemies



Overview

This sermon draws from Luke 6:27-36, where Jesus commands his followers to love their enemies, do good to those who hate them, and lend without expecting anything in return. The central argument is that because Christ forgave an impossible debt on our behalf — at an enormous personal cost — we are called to extend mercy and forgiveness to others, no matter how difficult that may feel.

Key Takeaways

1. Loving people who love you back is easy. Loving your enemies is the standard Christ sets. Anyone, believer or not, can be kind to those who are kind to them. Jesus calls his followers to a higher standard — one that reflects his own character.

2. Christ died for us while we were still his enemies. The gospel is not that God loved good people. It is that God loved people who were actively opposed to him and made a way for them to be reconciled to the Father through the cross.

3. Our debt to God is impossible to repay — and it has already been canceled. Just as the servant in Jesus's parable had an unpayable debt wiped out, our sin debt has been wiped out through Christ. Understanding this should fundamentally change how we treat those who owe us something.

4. Forgiveness does not require what Christ went through. What Jesus endured to forgive us was immeasurable. What we are asked to endure to forgive others is comparatively small. The cross sets the standard and provides the motivation.

5. Judgment and vengeance belong to God, not to us. Because Christ is the only righteous one, he is the only one with the authority to condemn. Our role is to extend mercy, not to repay evil with evil.

Discussion Questions

Opening

- Think about a friendship or relationship in your life that has required real effort to maintain. What has kept that relationship going through the hard seasons?

Diving Into the Text

- Read Luke 6:27-36 together as a group. What stands out to you most from what Jesus says here? What is the hardest part of this passage to accept?
- Jesus points out that even people who do not follow God love those who love them back. What does he say this means for those who do? What is the difference he is drawing?
- The sermon referenced Romans 5, where Paul reflects on the fact that Christ died for us while we were still enemies of God. How does thinking about your own standing before God — before faith — change the way you see people who are difficult to love?

Going Deeper

- The sermon describes the parable of the unforgiving servant. In what ways do you relate to that servant? Are there situations in your own life where you have received great mercy but found it difficult to pass that mercy along to someone else?
- The sermon asks a direct question: if you cannot let go of what someone else owes you, do you truly understand what Christ canceled for you on the cross? How do you respond to that question honestly?

- The pastor made a point that forgiving someone else does not require nails, lashes, or a crown of thorns — yet Christ endured all of that to forgive us. How does that comparison sit with you? Does it change how you think about the cost of forgiveness in your own relationships?

Bringing It Home

- Who in your life right now is genuinely difficult to love? You do not need to share names, but sit with the question. What would it look like to take one concrete step toward loving that person this week?
- Romans 12 says vengeance belongs to the Lord. Is there a situation in your life where you have been holding onto the role of judge? What would it look like to release that and trust God with the outcome?

Practical Applications

Pray for someone you find difficult to love. Jesus specifically commands prayer for those who persecute or mistreat us. This week, commit to praying daily for one person who is hard for you to love. Notice whether your posture toward them begins to shift.

Reflect on your own debt. Set aside time this week to journal or quietly reflect on what your life looked like before faith, or on specific ways you have fallen short. Let that reflection fuel gratitude — and let that gratitude fuel generosity toward others.

Identify a debt you are holding. Is there someone who owes you an apology, money, loyalty, or something else? Prayerfully consider what it would mean to release that debt — not to excuse the wrong, but to place it in God's hands and stop carrying it yourself.

Look for an enemy to serve. Think of someone in your life who does not like you, has treated you poorly, or is hostile toward you. Find one small, practical way to do something good for that person this week without any expectation of return.

Memorize or meditate on Luke 6:35. Spend time this week sitting with what Jesus says about the character of God toward the unthankful and evil — and consider what it means that you are called to reflect that same character.

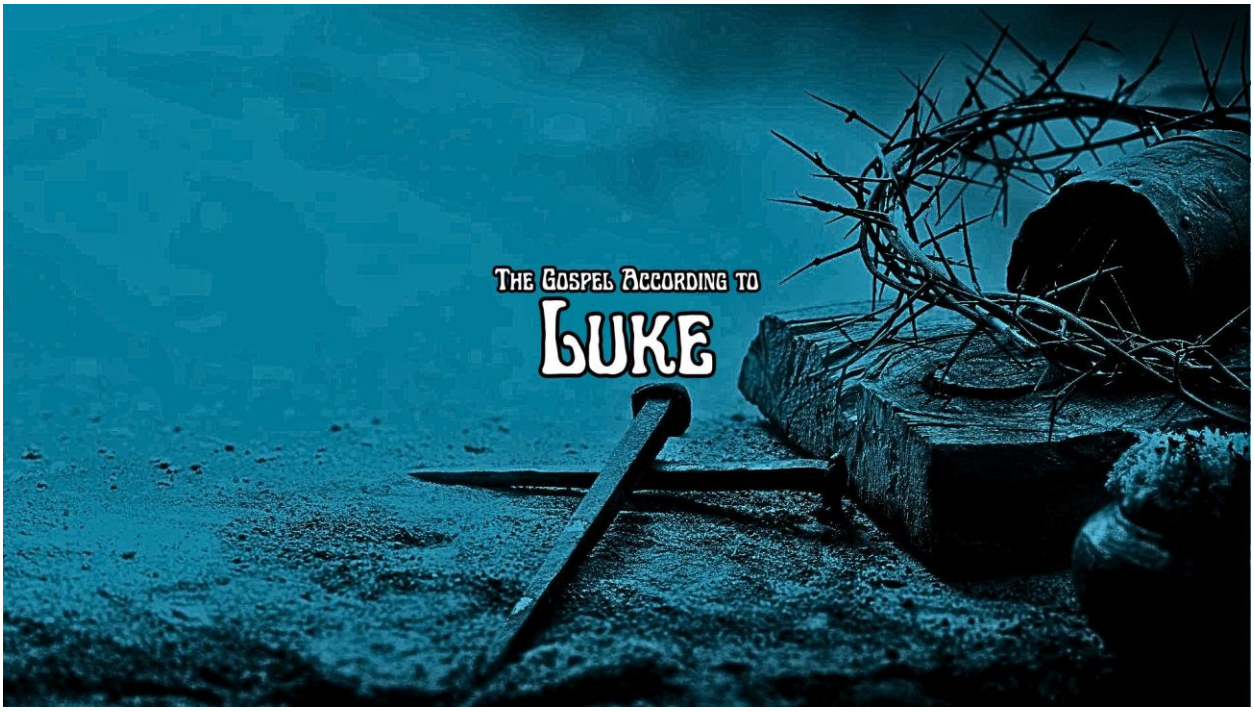
Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together along these lines:

- Thank God for canceling a debt you could never repay.
- Ask for the Holy Spirit's help in the ongoing battle between flesh and spirit.
- Pray specifically for those in the group who are walking through situations where forgiveness or love for an enemy feels impossible.
- Ask God to make your group a community that reflects the mercy of Christ to the world around you.

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Theme: Loving as Christ Loved — The Gospel of Mercy and Forgiveness



Day 1: The Standard That Changes Everything

Reading: Luke 6:27-36

Devotional: Jesus does not suggest that loving your enemies would be a nice idea. He commands it. This standard is not rooted in what feels natural but in what reflects the character of God. The passage reminds us that even those who have no relationship with God manage to love people who love them back. That is not the mark of a disciple. The mark of a disciple is extending kindness where it is not deserved and offering mercy where none is expected. Today, consider one relationship in your life where you have only offered love conditionally. Ask God to help you move beyond that limit.

Day 2: While We Were Still Enemies

Reading: Romans 5:6-11

Devotional: Paul makes clear in this passage that Christ did not wait for humanity to clean itself up before offering salvation. He died for the ungodly, for sinners, for enemies of God.

This is the scandalous heart of the gospel. You were not reconciled to God because you deserved it. You were reconciled because Christ chose to love you at your worst. This truth should dismantle any sense of spiritual superiority and replace it with deep, abiding gratitude. Reflect today on who you were before grace found you. Let that remembrance soften your heart toward someone in your life who has not yet received what you have received.

Day 3: The Canceled Debt

Reading: Matthew 18:21-35

Devotional: The servant in this parable had received something extraordinary — a debt so large it could never be repaid was wiped away entirely. Yet he walked out of that moment of grace and immediately refused the same mercy to another. Jesus uses this story to expose a dangerous blindness that can settle into the heart of anyone who has received forgiveness but failed to truly reckon with its weight. The size of what God canceled on your behalf dwarfs anything another person could owe you. Sit with that reality today. Is there someone whose debt you are still holding? What would it look like to release it entirely to God?

Day 4: The Cost of Your Forgiveness

Reading: Isaiah 53:3-6

Devotional: Isaiah describes in striking detail the suffering of the one who would bear the weight of human sin. He was despised, rejected, crushed, and wounded — not for anything he had done, but for everything we had done. This passage, written centuries before the crucifixion, gives us a window into what forgiveness actually cost. When the sermon reminds us that forgiving someone else does not require nails in the hands or a crown of thorns, it is pointing directly here. The price Christ paid to forgive you was total. The price you are asked to pay to forgive another is, by comparison, remarkably small. Let that truth move you toward release today.

Day 5: Mercy Given, Mercy Offered

Reading: Romans 12:17-21

Devotional: Paul instructs believers in this passage that vengeance does not belong to them. God alone is the righteous judge, and he alone has the authority to repay. This is not a call to passivity in the face of evil. It is a call to trust. When you release the need to condemn or retaliate, you are not letting someone off the hook — you are placing them in the hands of the only one qualified to judge rightly. This is the freedom the gospel offers. You do not have to carry the weight of justice. Christ carries it. Live today as someone who has been shown mercy and is now free to show it to others without reservation.