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POOR AND BLESSED

Luke 6:20 *Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Before Jesus, and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the church, God showed His favour to people in granting material prosperity. But not many in the Early Church were blessed in that way ([1 Corinthians 1:26](#)). Indeed, Jesus seems to have a special ministry to the poor, not giving them wealth - but dignity and courage because they knew He valued them. Indeed He commended the poor widow above the wealthy religious leaders when she gave away everything she had ([Mark 12:42-44](#)).

Riches so often get in the way of depending on God ([1 Timothy 6:17](#)); the poor do not have that problem. Of course, deprivation can bring bitterness to people who are in rebellion against God. But those who look to the Lord will always find blessing. His own disciples had left everything to follow Him ([Luke 5:11, 28](#)) and they were first in Jesus' mind as He looked at them and placed this blessing at the top of His list. He wanted them to know that they had not left their financial security for nothing: He had called them to be part of His Kingdom. The goal of their faith was not earthly riches but the salvation of their souls ([1 Peter 1:9](#)).

When God pronounces blessing, God's people can relax and rejoice because He will do whatever is needed to ensure that we enter into all the good He has set before us. The poor with faith are far happier than rich people without God. That is not to say that poverty is good; but that blessing comes to our house when we trust in God's love and are content to be dependent on His provision. Likewise, while it is good to relieve poverty, if the gospel is not proclaimed and embraced, the new comforts can become a snare to the soul. So the most important thing in life is to know that you are included in God's Kingdom. See www.crosscheck.org.uk to know more. Although many at work may be seeking greater wealth, your life and attitude should demonstrate that you believe God's way to happiness through Christ is much more valuable.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You for allowing Jesus to give up the splendour of heaven so that He could live in our fallen world, without our usual comforts, and be put to death for our salvation. Forgive me when the lust for wealth motivates me to work with a greedy attitude; or when I try to get things wrongly. Help me to see that Your love is all I need and that You will not abandon those who trust in You. Although the love of money empowers many of my friends towards their own ruin and sometimes even invades the church, help me to see every deprivation as an opportunity to trust You more. May my Christ-like attitude strengthen the resolve of my work colleagues to seek a different way, and to find satisfaction in Jesus alone. For His Name's sake. Amen.*

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A VERY DIFFERENT FUTURE

Luke 6:21 *Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Although this passage has similarities to Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, Luke says that the scene was not a mountain but a 'level place' ([Luke 6:17](#)); it is therefore called the 'Sermon on the Plain'. Jesus is teaching the crowds, and also specifically training the newly-called disciples. Ministry was not going to be a joy-ride for them. With their Master, they would have to experience hunger and sorrow; and as leaders of the Early Church, many would be persecuted to death, while others suffered all sorts of personal deprivation.

So Jesus contrasts the hardship of the apostolic lifestyle with their future hope, and He gives His personal promise to bless them in the future. Hunger and sorrow are never good, and they will not feature at all in heaven ([Revelation 7:16; 21:4](#)). But until that time, they are a part of the fallen world we live in. Satan used Jesus' hunger to tempt Him to satisfy Himself; but He said that '*man shall not live on bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God*' ([Matthew 4:4](#)). So we learn that fleshly attempts to find satisfaction can never remotely match the satisfaction of obeying God's Word and receiving His blessing. Jesus wept too, for this world can never redeem itself; the apostles would share that sorrow for the lost world as well as deep grief when they thought they had lost their Master.

Full contentment and perfect joy awaits us in Glory with Jesus. It is tempting to seek it here, and Satan tries hard to convince us of our right to heaven on earth; but it cannot be ours permanently until Jesus comes back to claim us as His own, exclusively. Through 2000 years, the church has endured very difficult times only because they believed the promise of Jesus, that He would bless them with His presence and peace one day. That is the 'hope' of the believer. 'Hope' is a technical word in the New Testament which means the confident assurance that what God has promised will be personally fulfilled in His presence one day in the future.

Every Christian must hold onto that hope. It is there to enable us to persevere in the most difficult times. It is the conviction that 'Jesus is the light at the end of the tunnel'. Do encourage your fellow believers, at work and in the church, who are going through hard circumstances. While we want the Lord to answer our prayer and relieve our pain now, if He does not - do you believe that He will fulfil His promise? Assuring your friend of that is a real ministry of comfort and compassion.

Prayer: *Gracious Lord. Although this life is full of difficulties and personal hardship, thank You that You understand and that Jesus has experienced it too. Forgive me for moaning and complaining when I should be trusting in Your daily provision and anticipating the joyful satisfaction of Your presence. Help me to minister in truth to my friends in need; comforting them with Your promises. And may I hold to them strongly also, as a witness of Your amazing grace in my life. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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HAPPY TO BE HATED

Luke 6:22-23 *Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets." (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Nobody likes being disliked. Hatred and malignant anger are not good; but Jesus would submit to them both. The reason He could endure it, and the pain of the cross, was because He knew about the joy beyond the suffering ([Hebrews 12:2](#)). The future apostles needed training to tread the same path. Although it was hard enough to think about their Master's distress, and they were scared for their own lives ([Mark 14:50](#)), they would soon rejoice in the privilege of persecution for the sake of Christ ([Acts 5:41](#)).

So in this first training session, after the Twelve had been called by Jesus, He is blunt about their ministry career prospects. Hated, insulted, excluded, and rejected: that was all part of the apostolic job description (as it would be for Jesus). But they also needed to learn to take the long view of eternity; where horror, hatred and hassle are eliminated for ever. And even more importantly, God will positively reward those who have endured persecution along with Jeremiah, Joseph, Daniel and David ... "*great is your reward in heaven!*"

Our short term reactions are either controlled by the pain of immediate circumstances, or by the long term view. Jesus said that when the opposition starts, get excited because God has promised far greater blessings in the future Glory. So James says, "*Consider it pure joy ... whenever you face trials of many kinds*" ([James 1:2](#)): and Peter says, "*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials*" ([1 Peter 1:6](#)). The assurance of heaven's reward is an essential part of the Christian's hope. It is an unshakable conviction given by the Holy Spirit to every born again believer, sustaining us in weakness, and enabling us to triumph in trouble.

So you often see those Godly people who suffer being the most serene and those in grief showing most grace. It is an essential part of your Christian witness; indeed that is partly why God allows troubles to come - so that others can see that Jesus lives in you: because you use the long term certainties to control your reactions to short term distress. Let your colleagues at work, today, see what Christ is doing in your heart.

Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father. I am amazed to realise that Jesus endured so much hostility, grief and pain because He knew the eternal outcome. Thank You that Jesus understands the life I have to lead now; and has planned a great reward for those who stay faithful in the face of persecution. Forgive me for not dealing well with such troubles, and for failing to see Your long term purposes and the treasure You have stored up in heaven for me. Please fill me again with Your Holy Spirit so that I can rejoice despite distress and may my lifestyle be obviously Christ-like so that others will see the effect of having Jesus living in them. For His Name's sake. Amen.*

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WOE TO THE WEALTHY

Luke 6:24 *"But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Woe is a slightly old-fashioned English word. It means, 'grief is coming' which is a fair translation of the Greek word used here. It is both a prediction and a warning: definitely not a route to be recommended. This 'woe' is the other side of the coin to the 'blessing' in verse [20](#). There, the poor who seek God's kingdom are satisfied. Here, the rich seem to be self-satisfied; they have already reached the climax of contentment and there is nothing more for them. Like the rich fool ([Luke 12:15-21](#)), everybody leaves everything when they die: the more they have, the more they leave. And those who trust in their riches will have nothing but grief in eternity.

It is important to feel secure; but it matters how we go about achieving security. Surrounding ourselves with expensive possessions may give the illusion of safety and the power to control our destiny, but they are no way to God. Jesus said that we cannot serve two masters, either we serve money, possessions and all that they promise; or we serve God ([Luke 16:13](#)). Of course riches are not wrong in themselves; it is our attitude to them which exposes our hearts. Either we treat them like toys - to please us and make us feel good; or we use them like tools for the Glory of God and under His command ([1 Timothy 6:17-19](#)).

In a world where we are taught to want more and get more, Jesus' words have a cool chill about them. They are a serious warning about how to invest for eternity, although they are considered foolish by those who have no ambitions beyond the grave. But Jesus' words should also warm the hearts of those who seek God's Kingdom and righteousness: they know that He will provide for them ([Matthew 6:33](#)) sufficiently in this life, and abundantly in the next. So it may be time to take a personal stance against the greed of business, the financial power of professionalism and against business practices which are not clearly righteous. Your stand may help others who instinctively feel that greed is wrong and know they ought to be rich toward s God ([Luke 12:20-21](#)), but do not know how to get out of the cycle of ambition or the lust for more. The answer is only found in Jesus, whose love and comfort completely satisfies in this life and the next. www.crosscheck.org.uk may give them the starting point they seek.

Prayer: *Almighty God. I lay at Your feet my greedy lust for more and my anxious concern over my possessions. I know that they can never win Your favour, and that trusting in their power can never make me secure now or for eternity. Forgive my foolishness and help me to trust You alone - for my salvation, and for everything which You know I need to serve You on earth. Help me at work, not to be sucked into unrighteousness by greed, or to assume that I should have more than You provide for me. May my lifestyle be a good witness to the values set by Jesus as I live by Your grace and await my eternal inheritance. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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WOE TO THE SATISFIED

Luke 6:25 *Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Prosperous people think that they have a right to as much food and merriment as they want. Others, are grateful to have enough for survival. In this verse, Jesus gives a stern warning about the dangers of a lifestyle ruled by comfort and pleasure - if you live for what you can get in this life, there is no future with God in eternity (Jesus tells a parable about this in [Luke 16:19-31](#)).

This is the second of Jesus' 'woes' to match the second 'blessing' ([Luke 6:21](#)); it is about the dangers of seeking bodily comfort and satisfaction in pleasure. Of course, Jesus is not intending every follower to be impoverished or miserable. Food and social enjoyment are part of God's common grace to us, but they must be received with thanksgiving; as His gift and not our right. This world is a very temporary place, and one day God will replace it with a perfect environment which will be suitable for eternity ([Hebrews 1:10-12](#)). Likewise, our life here is much shorter than most would like. It's purpose is to introduce us to the God who made us and prepare for an endless life with Him.

Those who ignore God's right over their lives, and spend their days indulging the flesh, have no good (or even neutral) eternal future. [Galatians 6:7-8](#) says, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life." Such warnings are not intended to bind us in fear, but to urge us to change our beliefs, motivation, values ... and therefore, behaviour. However much we try to live differently, only those whose hearts are changed by the Holy Spirit's presence will see lasting fruits of character which will please God. But once you are saved, you have a great responsibility to ensure that your selfish passions are brought under the Lordship of Christ. When that happens, people at work and in the community will notice, and some will also want to seek the Lord you serve.

Prayer: *Gracious God. Thank You for giving me enough in life so that I can learn to depend on You. Forgive me when I desire so much more and fail to be contented. I recognise my fleshly instinct to create the impression of security, by surrounding myself with things and people. May I learn not to rely on such things or run after them, but learn to commit myself wholly to You. Then I will be able to look ahead with confidence to the day when Jesus Christ returns to claim me as His own. And while I am on earth, may my attitudes and values witness to my colleagues, family and friends that I really do love You more than anything or anyone else. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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WOE TO THE POPULAR

Luke 6:26 *Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Popularity opens the door to many temptations, especially for religious people. The admiring crowd with their personal compliments are powerful tools to reopen the old life of sin. Corrupt human nature longs to be the centre of attention, with the ability to influence, persuade, command or simply bathe in the glory of human approval. Whenever we take the glory without passing it on to Christ, we put ourselves in His place - the danger-zone where Satan can tempt us that we are above our Maker, and therefore we can do whatever we like.

Jesus knew His disciples would find popularity hard to resist, and so He was really teaching them as He rebuked the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. The nature of truth is to cause a reaction in sinful hearts. The right reaction is to repent and change; but mostly, people react by hardening their hearts and blaming the messenger. On the other hand, those who simply affirm what will make sinners comfortable will be popular. Effectively, as they give permission to continue in rebellion against God, they lock the door to truth and throw away the key ([Luke 11:52](#)). But Jesus pointed out that such 'people-pleasers' were false prophets, who join a long catalogue of others who take the glory away from God and the truth away from people.

So often, popularity is the trade-mark of those who bend, abuse, misuse or deny the full truth of God's Word. The apostles would therefore need to be alert if they became popular, not to be deceived into telling people what they wanted to hear ([2 Timothy 4:3-4](#)), thereby abandoning the gospel of Christ. Perhaps it was a mercy that most of the time they were persecuted, like all true prophets! So let us beware of the seduction of the popular vote and the attraction of applause. May Christian leaders be more concerned to handle God's Word faithfully than how much the people like what they say. May believers in the workplace clearly explain Bible truth (despite the risk of unpopularity) as well as sharing testimony and doing good works, so that their friends and colleagues may hear God speaking.

Prayer: *God of truth and love. Thank You for the gospel of Jesus which cuts a shaft of light through the darkness of our world. Please forgive me when I am more concerned about negative reactions from people that I fail to speak Your Word clearly. And forgive me for disguising Your gospel as simply a matter of 'my religion', 'my church' or 'my experience' so that I deprive my friends of saving truth. Please help me to handle popularity as well as persecution - in both, looking to Jesus and giving You the glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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LISTENING AND LOVING THE UNLOVELY

Luke 6:27-28 *"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

We tend to listen out for what we want to hear. But Jesus said that, unless the disciples and the crowd chose to hear His very different 'take' on relationships, they would learn nothing. His lesson was about loving. Naturally, we love those who love us and hate those who are hostile. However Jesus knew that enemies would stay hostile unless love came into their lives from somewhere: and the most potent source of love to an angry person comes from the victim of his/her anger.

Blessing and cursing are mentioned frequently in the Bible. They are words spoken with a deliberate intent that good or bad things would happen to somebody else. Of course, Satan uses curses as a permission to spoil and destroy. So Jesus (as the life-giver and restorer) said they should never use curses because He has no interest in seeing Satan's work perpetuated in the lives of those He loves. So although the devil manipulates people into hatred in order to precipitate an avalanche of enmity, Jesus wants that bad cascade to stop and be reversed. So He commands that the right response to a curse is to desire that person's good and to confirm that by speaking it out.

Ill treatment, victimisation, bullying, threatening and abuse are unfortunately no strangers to the workplace, and there may be little we can do directly to change somebody's attitude. But we can and must pray. Sometimes it seems easier to pray that God will bless the friendly employee or employer. However, those who understand the motivation of Jesus in submitting to suffering in order to save rebels (see www.crosscheck.org.uk to know more), will appreciate His prayer "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*" ([Luke 23:34](#)). Although that is a hard lesson to learn, the disciples did ([Acts 7:6](#)). If we are to be disciples of Jesus, we need to learn the lesson too. Firstly, we have to want to listen to what He says; and then we have to do it. The proof of our discipleship is whether we do!

Prayer: *Loving heavenly Father. I am amazed at the graciousness of Jesus Christ who not only submitted Himself to so much abuse and injustice but also prayed that the perpetrators would be forgiven. Although my trials seem much less serious, please help me to listen to the words of Jesus so that I may learn to love the unlovely, blessing those who curse and praying for those who do me harm. May I practise this discipleship in the office and hospital, hotel and port, and in private and public. Help me to fix my eyes on Jesus as the perfect example of God's love towards rebellious sinners, spiteful accusers and evil liars. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK

Luke 6:29 *If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

This verse has become so famous; it has become a part of colloquial English, although most people do not know where the phrase comes from! This is the fifth of Jesus' seven sayings about the unconditional love which should characterise all the citizens of God's Kingdom: Love your enemies ([v27](#)); do good to those who hate you ([v27](#)); bless those who curse you ([v28](#)); pray for those who ill-treat you ([v28](#)); do not fight back ([v29](#)); give without demands ([v29-30](#)); treat others as you would like to be treated ([v31](#)). Before you think, "These commands are impossible", remember that Jesus demonstrated every one of them. And He certainly did not fight back.

[Isaiah 53:7](#) says, "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." Jesus fulfilled that prophecy. At His arrest Jesus offered no resistance; "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." ([Mark 14:48-49](#)).

The disciples, and the early churches, were expected to learn from the words and example of Jesus; and do the same. They did! They rejoiced that God had counted them worthy to suffer for Jesus' sake ([Acts 5:41](#)). Stephen was stoned to death offering no resistance ([Acts 7:54-60](#)) and James was executed ([Acts 12:2](#)). However, the church grew because their cheerful handling of persecution validated the truth about Jesus, and many others believed. So 'turning the other cheek' is not just passive acceptance of evil, but a positive statement that the truth about Jesus is too important to throw away when people get aggressive. So, how does that relate to you in the office, factory, ship, hospital, school, sales room or farm? When others demand more than they should, do you fight back; or do you let your reaction speak for Jesus?

Prayer: *Loving God. Thank You that Jesus not only said the truth, but He did it too. Please forgive me when I know, and even speak, of Your love but fail to practise it. Please help me to be so secure in Your love that I will not resent injustice against myself and trust that You will demonstrate Your powerful character through my life, so that others may know that they don't have to fight for survival, but rejoice in the confidence of Your love. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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HOLDING THINGS LIGHTLY

Luke 6:30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. (NIV)

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Materialism invaded our world long ago; along with abuses of power, legal disputes over property, illegal and violent behaviour. Today's verse might refer to street robbery, suing for damages, violent neighbours, unscrupulous family members; or the habit of poorly paid Roman soldiers and civil servants (like tax collectors) who assumed the right to demand whatever you had without reference to any authority. And such travesties of justice are still common today in many parts of the world.

Jesus' advice was not to demand your rights. He wanted the disciples to know possessions are not the key to life; and even very personal possessions must be held lightly. Those who cling on to what is theirs, believing that things create security, are like a monkey who found a jar of nuts: the monkey put his hand into the jar to pull out the food, but the clenched fist was too big to pull out of the neck of the jar ... when the lion came, his choice to hold onto the nuts meant he lost everything.

Jesus wanted the disciples to know that their only security came from trusting in Him, and being willing to let everything else go. It is still the same today. In a wicked world, you cannot always get justice; greedy people will always want to get more out of you than they should. But, as Jesus said in [Luke 12:15](#), "... a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions". To believe that is to be a fool who risks losing everything. On the other hand, to believe that we are called to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, then He will provide us with all we need, is to be a true disciple. For workers and managers, academics and homemakers, it is a daily challenge. How we react will speak volumes about who we believe!

Prayer: Great God of love and sacrifice. Thank You for this reminder to hold the things of this world much more lightly. Please forgive me when I think that they will make me secure, and when I invest so much worry into getting more for myself or keeping what I have. Help me to understand that security today and tomorrow is Your gracious gift to me, as You have promised never to leave or forsake Your people. Help me to be wise in my business dealings and when money seeks to come between friends or family. May I trust You wholeheartedly and choose not to enter the stressful world of self justification. And if my friends and colleagues are worried about such matters, help me to point them to the words of Jesus. For His Name's sake. Amen.

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THE GOLDEN RULE

Luke 6:31 *Do to others as you would have them do to you. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

This verse has been referred to as the 'Golden Rule'. It is simple, unambiguous, non-compromising; and interestingly, it resonates with our instinct for natural justice and is echoed by many philosophies. We know that it is the essence of God's law to Israel, because Jesus says that this command sums up the teaching of the Law and the Prophets ([Matthew 7:12](#)). In other words, this is what God expects of the citizens of His kingdom.

Although it sounds good, and it is (!), do you know anybody who always succeeds in doing it? The only person who has is Jesus. He came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets ([Matthew 5:17](#)). But we cannot keep this rule because everybody is born as sinners, and we still have a nature which can respond to sin. Sin's essence is to be self-pleasing not others-serving; and whenever we fall to temptation we are unable to relate with others as Jesus wants us to. So why has He given us a command which we cannot keep?

Firstly it is important to know God's standard for behaviour. If we do not know, we have nothing to aim for: and also we will not know when we have fallen short, so that we can seek His mercy and renewing. But there is help. Jesus came so that He could break the power which sin holds over us (see www.crosscheck.org.uk). When people are born again by the Holy Spirit, they start a new life in which sin does not have to win in our lives ([Romans 6:14](#)). Then we can learn how to relate to others as we read the Word and allow His Spirit to work in us so that we may please Him ([Romans 15:1-2](#)). So, how far have you got in learning to relate with others as Jesus did? Now we know the 'golden rule' lets ask for His help to do it.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You for giving us clear guidance about how to relate with others, at home, in the church, in the community and at work. Please forgive me when I have broken Your heart by treating others selfishly. Please help me to be aware of this verse through this day and in the weeks to come, so that I may not excuse wrong behaviour. I want to be open to Your Holy Spirit's help so that I may obey Jesus. Please show me how to live so that Your Name will be glorified. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

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THE GODLESS LOGIC OF SELF-INTEREST

Luke 6:32-35 *If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners', expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

The 'if' statements of the Bible are designed to make us think about the logic we use to justify our lifestyle. Jesus provoked His new disciples into thinking about why they were kind to people, by suggesting that they had the morality of prostitutes ('sinners'). Such people were known to give people what they paid for, love those who loved them, show kindness to kind people and lend as long as they would be repaid.

So Jesus set the standard for a new lifestyle: love your enemies, show kindness and lend money to those who cannot repay. Why? Because, in God's economy, grace is the ruling principle. That is just as well, because none of us could ever deserve all that we receive directly, and indirectly, from God. His kindness is available to the undeserving, and His generosity is way beyond our ability to repay. Although the Old Testament spoke about God's grace, it was not until Jesus, that anybody could see what it looked like in practice.

The disciples were to learn that they had to receive grace from God; they could not earn it. And, as they received, they now knew that they had to dispense the same undeserved-love to others. Jesus said that they would be repaid, but not in this life - although the first instalment is the knowledge that we have been appointed as God's sons, because He is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. We know that is true, because Jesus has been very kind to us, hasn't He? If that is so, should we not also behave in the same way - if we really are sons of the Most High? The workplace may provide excellent opportunities to practise this principle; or indeed, anywhere that the ungrateful and wicked may be found. To live like that requires an active choice: that is why Jesus gave us a command to action. All He is seeking is our obedience today.

Prayer: *Gracious God. How much You have done for me, especially when I was ungrateful and wicked in my heart. Thank You for that grace, demonstrated on the cross, which enables me to benefit from Your love. Forgive me when I have limited my love to those who can repay me, and when I have forgotten how much wicked and ungrateful people need to experience Your kindness through me. Please help me to abandon the logic of self-interest and to embrace Your command to give without expecting any return, other than knowing that I am doing Your will. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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HEAVENLY MERCY

Luke 6:36 *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

The Bible leaves us in no doubt that God is awesomely powerful. It is not good to fight against Him or to incur His wrath. God's judgement on sin is properly terrifying as we can see by the ten plagues that punished the rebellious Egyptian Pharaoh, and other plagues that destroyed rebellious Israelites. But the gospel tells us that Jesus came to earth to bear the full weight of God's wrath against our sin, and all those who trust in His salvation receive mercy instead of judgement (see www.crosscheck.org.uk to know more).

So, the real reason Jesus came was to demonstrate God's merciful heart to sinners; and in His death to enable mercy to flow without injustice. He died for all, including the most rebellious of all. But, how are they to know that God might be merciful to them - especially if they have not experienced mercy in their upbringing and through their lives? Indeed, many people whose lives have been full of harsh circumstances think of God as an angry person waiting to beat them ... that could not be further from the truth because He is waiting to be merciful to them ([Isaiah 30:18](#)). But if they don't believe that can be true, how can they dare to come close enough to seek Him?

The answer is found in God's family. He uses His children to demonstrate His mercy in acts of kindness, with compassion and care, to show the unloved that it is possible to receive what they do not deserve (grace), and not to receive what they do deserve (mercy). It is that sort of godly mercy which melts cold hearts and allows hard hearts to start to feel real love; often for the first time. This is one of the primary callings for God's people, but it is only possible because they themselves have first received mercy through the blood of Christ. However, if you know the joy of sins forgiven, then surely there is an obligation to be merciful to others; but if you are out of the habit of showing mercy, you will need to get back into practice! So, ask the Lord to show you people at work or in the community who deserve God's wrath, and choose to show them kindness for Christ's sake. It does not matter how they respond, you are just getting into practice! But keep on until it becomes a lifestyle habit; and eventually they will ask you how they can find your merciful God.

Prayer: *Merciful God, my Heavenly Father. Thank You so much for all the mercy You have shown to me in withholding Your anger until I could learn to accept Your salvation. And thank You for the joy of sins forgiven. Please forgive me in being so quick to accuse, but so slow to show mercy to others; especially as some of the most difficult people have had little love or kindness in their lives. I want to be used by You to be an agent of mercy in a bitter world. Please help me choose to show mercy as a part of my mission in Your Name. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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EQUAL TREATMENT

Luke 6:37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven." (NIV)

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

True relationships require mutual understanding and respect. People working in the same company need to share common values: families cannot hold together unless they choose to love each other. Jesus had just commanded the disciples to be merciful, because that is how our Heavenly Father operates. Mercy is part of the 'family value system' of heaven; it is essential to Christian faith. Those who receive mercy must show mercy.

Jesus was warning the disciples that hypocrisy in this area is unacceptable to Father God. The spiritual leaders of His day were good at making up rules to catch people out and condemn them. Indeed religion based on rules will always end up being hypocritical, because even the religious leaders cannot keep them all. But Jesus came to show a totally different way of being in favour with God - a way that is open to everyone: trusting God for mercy because of Christ's death and resurrection. So those who have escaped judgement, should stop accusing others. And how can those who rejoice that their condemnation was placed on Jesus, condemn others?

Of course, at this stage in His ministry, Jesus had not yet died for sins, nor had the Holy Spirit been given to the church. But this was the disciples' training course. They were learning the principles which needed to be taught in the church for many years until Jesus returned. Peter must have remembered because he wrote, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins" ([1 Peter 4:8](#)). The principle of forgiveness is contrary to our fleshly nature but totally consistent with God's nature. It is the antidote to the poison of bitterness, and the window of hope to those trapped by evil. To put this into practice today, identify somebody you have to work with or see often, who is out of order: pray for that person and choose not to resent them. Where you have been wronged, forgive.

Prayer: *Loving God, my Heavenly Father. Thank You for these words which warn me against the danger of slipping back into legalistic worldly thinking, and damaging the work of Your grace in my heart. Forgive me for the ease with which criticism grasps my heart and I become a hypocrite. I want Your Word to reshape my thinking, and with Your help I will choose to change my arrogant attitudes of heart. Thank You for those difficult people, those 'thorns in the flesh' You put in my way, so that I may learn how to demonstrate Your grace. In Jesus name. Amen.*

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DISPROPORTIONATE REWARD

Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (NIV)

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

God is not mean. He does not abuse His servants nor ill-treat His friends. He rewards those who give service, time, labour, money, possessions and worship in His Name. But God never defines a particular reward for individual acts of sacrificial giving. Perhaps that is because we are not employed by Him on a contract; so we are never given the luxury of predicting what we get for what we give. Neither are we to compare our reward with anybody else's. Nor are we allowed to know when or how God's reward will arrive - in time or eternity. Also God is not limited by human ideas of what is best: as [Ephesians 3:20](#) says, He is: "... able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine ..."

However, Jesus wanted His disciples to be clear about the quality and quantity of His reward. It is always good, and always exceeds what is given. As apostles, they should not hold back from giving through fear of being reduced to nothing. The more they would give the more God gives. Indeed, all we have is God's: as we pass it on, He is glorified and we receive further provision. The more we pass on, the more He gives us to give to others.

So it is right that we should be encouraged to give. However, unfortunately this principle has been misused by some leaders who demand money with promises that God will give more money in return to make the giver more prosperous. But there is no evidence of the Lord Jesus or the apostles ever being rich in money, although they were rich in faith, hope and love. It should be obvious that if we give because of what we can get, greed and not grace is operating in our hearts. But do not let the abuse of Jesus' words stop us from being obedient. If we can respond to genuine need in the Name of Jesus, we should do so gladly without thought for our own welfare; and simply trust the Lord to deal graciously with us in this life and the next.

Prayer: Gracious God. I praise You for all You have given to me in Christ, and for every daily provision. I recognise that I am not on this earth for my own amusement, nor to simply increase my own level of comfort. Please forgive me when such thoughts control my decisions. Forgive me too when I am indifferent to the needs of others or the opportunities for the gospel; when I keep for myself what You have given me to pass on. Please help me to have an open hand and open heart so that I can give of my time, labour, energy, compassion, money, possessions and worship so that You will be glorified. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

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TEACHING BEYOND INSIGHT

Luke 6:39-40 *He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

What is the first essential of teaching? Surely, the teacher must be able to see more than the student. Effective travel guides must know where they are, where they want to get to and how to get there. No teacher or guide can ever lead others beyond their own understanding. If one blind man leads another, obviously, both of them are walking into danger.

The newly appointed disciples were not to be like the religious leaders, who valued their own self-importance and power of control over others ... but did not even know how to find God for themselves, let alone lead others. They may have been sincere, but they were dangerously incompetent ([Luke 11:52](#)). Unlike them, Jesus did know the way to the Father - because He had come from the Father ([John 16:28](#)). And if the disciples followed Him, they would be safe; and well able to lead others ([1 Corinthians 11:1](#)).

Presuming to be a spiritual guide to others without knowing Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord is profoundly dangerous. Not only will the student meet disaster, but so will the teacher. That is why we have the gospel: it is God's essential and powerful tool to open our eyes so that we may be saved ([Romans 1:16-17](#)). If you have believed, and have become a disciple of Jesus, then ask Him to train you to teach the gospel to others (you can show it to your friends at www.crosscheck.org.uk). It is more than a good idea, it is to prevent them falling into the pit of God's wrath.

Prayer: *Loving Father. Thank You for showing me who Jesus is and helping me to believe the gospel. Forgive me for my indifference to the great spiritual needs all around me: the souls who are blinded and dangerously lost; and the many sincere religionists who seek to lead them but cannot bring them to You because they do not know Jesus. Please give me a desire to share Your gospel; please train and equip me to do so. Help me to be ready to respond to those who ask me about my life in Jesus, and also ready to speak Your truth into the darkness around me. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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THEATRICAL HYPOCRISY

Luke 6:41-42 *"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

When Jesus used the word 'hypocrite', everybody knew He was referring to actors. In the Greek theatrical tradition of Jesus' day, the most common plays were tragedies in which the misfortunes of the main character stemmed from unrealised bad personality traits. The audience could see the tragedy developing although the character remained oblivious to his own faults. Speaking to His disciples as well as the crowd, Jesus used this sawdust and plank analogy to expose the laughable nature of hypocrisy. He did not prescribe multiple rules for the founder members of a new club; instead He asked them to think about the way they related as members of a new family. By asking the questions, "Why?" and "How can you do it?", Jesus exposed the sinful motives behind legalistic behaviour.

Christless religion is rule-based. Such religious leaders encourage rule-keeping and reprove/punish rule-breaking. So Jesus asked how they could see to extract a small piece of dust from somebody's eye when they were blinded by a huge plank of wood: it is obvious to us that they could not. In fact, nobody is sinless, except Jesus Christ; so only He is able to remove the blindness caused by our natural sinfulness. The role of the disciples was not to be legalistic referees of other people's behaviour, but to bring them to Jesus so that He might deal with their spiritual blindness and heal their souls.

Christians are sometimes accused of being legalistic moralists who pretend to be better than others. Unfortunately, that is sometimes true. But that is not a true advertisement for the gospel, not does it reflect the grace of God. If we are to work with the Lord, we must understand that our task is not to make people nicer (because we cannot), but to bring sinners to the Saviour. In many ways, that should be a relief. It is not our task to criticise wrong behaviour or to pretend we are better. If we are working with Jesus, our first responsibility is to ask Him to remove our own guilt (which is only possible because He has paid the penalty for our sin - see www.crosscheck.org.uk to know more). After that, as we have no power to change people, our witness is to pray and encourage our friends and colleagues to go to Him also.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You that I have not been called to prove my perfection or to criticise the behaviour of others. I know that my only righteousness comes by trusting You to forgive and save me, and that I am still a 'work-in-progress' under Your hand. Forgive me when I assume the right to make up rules for others, which neither they nor I can keep perfectly. Help me to be a faithful witness to Your saving grace; being open about how much You have done for me, and encouraging others to seek You with all their heart. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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TRUE TO TYPE

Luke 6:43-45 *"No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognised by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn-bushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."* (NIV)

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Fruit of all kinds - including figs, olives and grapes, grown on trees and vines - have been the mainstay of the Mediterranean economy for centuries. Of course a diseased tree will hardly support any fruit, while a healthy tree always promises a good crop in a predictable climate. Everybody listening to Jesus knew that the type and variety of fruit depended on the nature of the tree or vine, so He used this illustration to show that people behave according to what is in their heart. Wickedness comes out of evil hearts and graciousness out of sanctified hearts.

In training the disciples for their future role as church leaders, Jesus needed to emphasise the radical difference between His Kingdom and religion. Religious people can be sincere, informed and socially helpful; but the nature of their hearts is not changed by their indoctrination. Our worst excesses may be controlled by rules, but love does not naturally come out of hate any more than grapes come from briars. Caught off-guard, we say what we really mean.

Of course it is important to practise the disciplines which will lubricate the life of Christ flowing through us to others. But the disciplines alone will never make us holy. Only God can change our nature, by His Spirit, as we submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. People who are born-again have a new type of heart; one which will love righteousness, hate wickedness, respond to God's call, receive His grace and serve Him sacrificially with gladness. That sort of person is a breath of fresh air in the workplace: they provide a glimpse of heaven in legal practice, public service, commerce, art, healthcare or education. So, if you belong to Jesus, let His life flow through you today!

Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father. Thank You for the new heart You give to all who come to Christ in repentance and faith. Forgive me when I give in to the temptation to go back to my old way of life, thereby grieving Your Spirit who lives in me. Help me to fully embrace the grace you give me every day to live in such a way that Your love may flow from my heart, and Your power energise my working day; for Your glory's sake. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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WORDS VALIDATED BY ACTIONS

Luke 6:46 *"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

The word 'lord' in Greek refers to supremacy. A 'lord' was an owner of property and the master of people, somebody who had the right to decide and control. Used as a title, 'Lord' recognised the person as being in authority, and gave a solemn responsibility to serve and obey. The Bible writers also use 'Lord' as a name of God, which greatly heightens our obligation to do what He says today.

This link between words and actions is a fundamental part of God's economy. Words matter, because when God speaks - things happen. So Jesus' question in this verse goes to the roots of our human duplicity. We may say that we honour and serve our Master; but if we ignore His commands, disobey His laws, obstruct His plans and frustrate His purpose ... what kind of words are we saying: surely they are lies. We might think that we mean them but excuse our disobedience as 'weakness' when we are not very good at the action part. But that is only another way of saying that we do not really believe that Jesus is Lord.

So, agreeing with the Lord is not enough. Failure to take action demonstrates that our agreement is worthless. But when we obey, our actions validate our beliefs. More than that, obedience enables the Lord to validate our trust because His words always bring righteousness to those who do them. Alas, busy people may confuse activity with godliness. The question to ask is not, "Am I doing what I think is right?" but, "Am I obeying the Lord's words as written in the Bible?" That is why we need a time to be quiet before the Lord each day, to receive His words, agree with them, confess disobedience, and seek His help as we determine to be obedient. That kind of integrated lifestyle brings a gentle confidence into the home and workplace, as Jesus validates our obedience with His power.

Prayer: *Dear Lord God. Thank You for this reminder to be a real 24/7 follower of Jesus. Forgive me when I make up my own path or when I fall into line with Satan's temptations. Help me to understand the importance of accepting Your truth and doing it, so that my life may validate all that Jesus has done for me and bring Him glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH

Luke 6:47-49 *I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When the flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete." (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Construction workers know the importance of foundations. It is not the things we see which determine their lasting value, but what is unseen. Jesus used this building illustration to challenge religious leaders and alert His disciples to a new way of living. They were used to seeing so-called 'holy' people paraded in public, but what were their hearts like, deep down? Jesus said that His gospel words alone had the power to change people from the inside, so that that their lives would be unshakable.

The disciples had started to follow Jesus by obeying His words ([Luke 6:13](#)), and there was no other way to continue if they were to remain secure. But one of them, Judas Iscariot, ignored Jesus: he sadly proved the truth of this parable by building his life on the 'sand' of money and greed, leading to his destruction. So although Jesus provides the only safe foundation for a secure life with God, disaster will still come unless we are willing to obey Him. His building-site example gives no room for misunderstanding - build your life on the Lord Jesus Christ or face disaster.

Believing in Jesus (that means obeying His words) does not stop the storms; these will inevitably come, testing the foundations of every person's life. So having started with Him, we must keep on obeying Him - if we fail to do so, the cracks will certainly appear. Christians are often tempted to desert the grace of Christ ([Galatians 1:6-7](#)) by believing in the security of money, possessions, status, ideas, self-discipline or family solidarity; or even the approval of religious people. None of these will enable us to pass the test of death, and all will fail to deliver peace with God. Jesus alone has the power to make us peacefully productive in this life, and gives us confidence of His welcome into the life to come. So ... as His mother Mary said, "Do whatever He tells you" ([John 2:5](#)).

Prayer: *Holy Lord. I know that I can never achieve holiness for myself, however I may appear to others, because I am a sinner. And I know that none of the interesting distractions of life can ever bring me peacefully into Your presence. Please forgive me when I have built my life on things, people and ideas which can never really satisfy or purify me, nor can they give any assurance of heaven. Thank You for the gospel words of Jesus, calling me to Him and commanding my daily obedience. Help me to dismiss all other foundations for my life so that, even in the storms of life, I may have the confidence which comes from peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. In His Name. Amen.*

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MINISTRY LIFESTYLE WITH PURPOSE

Luke 7:1-2 *When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

It should be impossible to read the gospel accounts without realising that Jesus was always purposeful. He made deliberate choices about the places He visited, the people He met and the timing of everything. Sometimes He was in the middle of the crowd; then He would switch to being with His disciples, or being alone with His Father. But His itinerary was not a series of random ideas: He knew who He was going to meet, and every encounter was designed to bring glory to His Father as He moved towards His pivotal appointment with death on the cross.

Jesus had finished the 'sermon on the plain' ([Luke 6:17-49](#)), exposing the 'manifesto of His Kingdom' to His trainee apostles and the Jews who wanted to follow Him. Then He went into the busy market town of Capernaum to meet a Gentile soldier - a Roman centurion who was in charge of the local garrison of occupying forces. The Jews would have kept away from him, but Jesus knew that his heart was open to believe. The serious illness of the centurion's personal servant was the opportunity for the soldier and the Saviour to meet.

Nothing about God's work through Christ happens by chance. The Lord still has appointments with people who are individually loved and specially valued by Him despite their culture or religion. Of course, it is often our unwillingness to meet Him which apparently delays the encounters. So He may use our difficult or painful circumstances as opportunities to get our attention: and when we cry out to Him, He is always there. Had you ever thought that the Lord wants to show His love to your colleagues and friends? When all is going well, they might not be listening for Him; but when life is bigger than them, watch how the Lord chooses His moment. And be alert, He may want you to be there as well so that you can work with Him!

Prayer: *Father God. Thank You for Your love and for the care You have taken to attract my attention and win my heart. I am sorry for the times when I have been too busy to hear You, and I should be more grateful for those difficulties which have forced me to stop and listen to You. Please help me to be confident that You are always working for the good of those who love You; and help me to be alert to the opportunities You take to open the hearts of my colleagues and friends - so that I will be ready to work with You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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