

EXERCISE:

Read the four Bible texts and answer the four related questions.



Luke 15:11-32



John 3:14-17,



John 15:9-17



Matt 5:43-48, Joh 13:33-35

What do you learn in the four texts about applying Jesus' words?

Read the four stories and write down to whom Jesus is speaking and what he says about loving others.

Write something down about the Father's love for us.

Write something down about Jesus' love for us.

Is there a difference between loving in the OT and the NT?

We read in the OT that Moses says an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. What do we read in the NT about loving others, even our enemies?

Are there conditions to the love of Jesus?



Read John 15:9-17 through once more and describe the love about which Jesus is talking to the disciples.

After having written that down, what does He then ask the disciples about loving others?

Jesus speaks about a new commandment in John 13:33-35, what does He mean by this?

What is old and what is new?

You cannot give away what you have not received. In other words: if you do not receive the love of the Father, there is little to give away.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.

What have you learned today about the love of the Father and what are you going to do with it?

Who are your 'enemies'?

What are you going to do with them?



Read the story from John 3:14–17 and John 13:33–35 once again and apply it to your own life.

Pose to yourself four questions:

1. Is there a word from God for me personally in this text?
2. Is there a promise from the Father for my life?
3. Does Jesus ask me to do anything?
4. Decide to act upon this and ask Jesus to help you with this.

Going deeper

God's radical love, what is radical in God's love?



John 15:15-17

In various places in the Bible we see that God reveals secrets to those whom He loves. The second thing which stands out is that He chooses us, even before we knew Him. He does not choose us because we live a good life, no, He chooses us before we live well. The love of God has to do with his choice for us. His choice is eternal.




Luke 15:11-13, 20-23


Many Fathers would refuse to give their sons something if they **beforehand knew that** it would be misused. In this story we see that the Father lets the youngest son go and gives him that for which he asks. He leaves the choice to be with his father and to remain in his love in the hands of his son.

Later, once everything has gone wrong, we see that the father is standing waiting for the son to return. He is expecting the son. As soon as the son comes back, even before the son has said a word, without conditions, there is compassion,


followed by restoration of worth, honour and authority. That is radical!

 *Rom 3:3,4*

God's radical demand for love?

 *John 15:9,12,13*

God never asks us to do something which He has not done himself. He tells us His secrets, He chooses for us, in Jesus He even gave His son to die for us. That is radical love, that is what He asks of you and what He makes you capable of doing because you have taken on the nature of God. Because He radically loves you, you can love God and others radically through the radical loving nature of Jesus in you.

 *John 13:34*

Jesus says here to His disciples that they are to love one another. This is a new commandment. In the OT the most important commandment for the Jews was: Love God above all else and love your neighbour as yourself.

So what is new? Jesus adds something to this short sentence in the OT. He says: "As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

Jesus came to show the Father's love. He lived in love with the Father. That basically came down to Jesus doing what the Father asked of Him. Jesus was radical in His love. He left His father's house, He gave up His might, He became poor.

Eventually He gave his love so that many would be saved. This is love which is prepared to pay the price.

Jesus also asks us to do this!

Example

There have been various moments in my life that I have not been able to love others, either due to their different character or pain caused by them. I had to learn that despite all my efforts to love, I kept falling short. Every time I turned to the source of love, Jesus, there came help. He gave me the love I needed to be able to love the people with all my heart.

Walking in the kingdom of God demands radical love, but what sort?

 *John 17:20-23*

Unity

Jesus prays here with great passion that the disciples may live in unity because the world will then see that God is love. The unity which Jesus means does not arise by us being in agreement with other, but by us listening to the word of God deep within us. God asks us to love one another. Just as the Father accepts others, He asks us to do that too. Through your relationship with Jesus, the love of the Father in you can help you to love others and accept them as they are.

Example: we often talk about someone's bad deeds or habits with others, but do we talk to the person themselves about it? It is even more difficult to help them overcome their problems.

Jesus came with love and truth which sets people free. He did not only come with truth which judges, but with love for people and with truth which helps set the other one free.



Matt 5:43-45

Loving your enemy

Followers of Jesus are not only asked to love their neighbour but even their enemy. Corrie ten Boom writes in her book about speaking in Germany one day on forgiveness and love. At the end of the meeting an old man came to her. He asked her forgiveness. Corrie recognised the man as the one who had killed her sister in the second world war. The pain, the rage, everything surfaced. Now she stood before the choice to forgive or to hate forever. Corrie chose to forgive. Imagine that this principal would be applied in the Middle East; do you grasp how powerful this truth is? The world would look completely different. If one person would stop hating his enemy, what an amazing witness that would be!



Luke 14:26-27

Jesus in first place

Of course Jesus does not want you to hate your family. In the OT we read that we for example should respect our parents. Yet He does ask us to put everything in this world in second place to our love for God the Father and Jesus. Just as He lived out himself.

What does love look like in daily life?



Luke 10:25-37


In this story Jesus tells us what loving God means. Religious leaders see someone who has been robbed lying wounded. They avoid him like the plague. The Samaritan is different, he offers help and even pays the bill.

Jesus is not only speaking about religious deeds but about practical love. Empathising with the neighbour in need and doing something about it. Jesus shows with His own life how God meant it to be.

Something else Jesus wants to say in this story is that racism has no place in the kingdom of God. Samaritans were not loved by the Jews. Jesus shows God's love in His earthly life to other cultures. Cultures which, in that time, were not loved. Religious deeds mean nothing to God if you do not live in love. In other words, you can go to church, pray and read your Bible, but if you do not live a life of love, the message is worthless.


The early church in practice

What are the characteristics of the early church?

 Acts 2:43-47






In the book of Acts we read how the early church was established. One characteristic was that the church was regarded positively by the people. The love in the early church was clearly recognisable. You can see this in how they helped each other and lived together in unity.

They did not disregard the temple services and existing religion but they started to live differently in their own environment which led to others joining the followers of Jesus.

 Acts 16:16-31

Paul enters new terrain. His preaching leads him into problems. In prison he does not pose resistance, on the contrary, he even starts to worship God in prison with his friend. The result is immense. There follows an earthquake, the prison guard wants to kill himself. Paul however, does not flee, but tells the gospel to the prison guard and his family. This results in a baptismal service.

EXERCISE:

-  Ask God the Father to let you experience His love for you. Pray that God will help you to also share this love with the world around you.
-  Are you in situations in which you experience some as enemies? Are there people who make your life miserable? Are there people you prefer to avoid?
-  Ask God the Father to let you see them with his eyes and heart.
-  Walking in the kingdom is a walk with high and low points. Discuss with your mentor how you want to put this lesson about love into practice.
-  Study, on reading the book of Acts, how the early church demonstrates through love what the difference is between religious acts and living according to the kingdom of God.