

one

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus teaches us:

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly...

Give to everyone who asks you...

Treat others as you would like them to treat you.

If you love those who love you, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them.

And if you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks can you expect?

Even the pagans do as much, do they not?

And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what thanks can you expect?

Instead, love your enemies and do good, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

two

Jesus says love your enemies.

But I don't have any enemies. No one is trying to kill me.

Well, do you have people that are difficult in your life?

Well, sure, we all have people in our lives that range somewhere from challenging to toxic, people we expect to be a help to us, but instead they make our lives difficult, and we are mad at them.

Love them.

“Well, I can't, because they should be helping me and they're not.”

The problem is not these people. The problem is our expectation. We expect them to be a help and not a hindrance to our life.

So, lower the expectation - Think of them as your enemies.

As enemies, they're not really that bad. I really doubt any of them are trying to kill you. Or if they have, I suppose they're really not that good at it. So can you love them as an enemy? Well, yeah, for an enemy they're pretty easy to deal with.

three

Jesus says, "Lend without hope of return."

Time is money. The most valuable thing to us is our time.

We are happy to give time to people who will give us a return on our personal investment. We give time to our kids because it benefits us for them to reach their potential or at least to keep them from causing us grief.

We spend time with bosses, clients, and patients for our benefit.

It's really hard to give time to people who will not benefit us.

It's even harder to give time to people for whom it seems it won't even benefit them. People who may never change, may never get better, or become what you wish they would be. It appears to be a waste of our time.

Give your time to them anyway. Lend without hope of return.

Why? Jesus said, "Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters you do for me."

The time you give to those for whom it seems it won't do anyone any good, might be the only time you give purely to Jesus!

Then you will have treasure in heaven.

four

There is a subtle reason why it is hard to give time to people who are hard to be around. We don't need them.

Prior to T.V. air conditioning, the internet and Instacart, we needed others for the most basic things in life. We needed one another to plant and harvest crops and accomplish every basic need. And we wanted to be around other people because there was no other form of entertainment.

Today, we don't need anyone and the entertainment we can get by ourselves is unbelievably pleasurable.

This all makes it way too easy to avoid people who are not pleasurable. People from whom we gain no benefit.

However, unless we want to die with selfish immature souls, then we must make a commitment to spend time with a small group of family and friends to whom we give ourselves.

We need them and they need us so that we may both grow in love and the likeness of God.

five

The greatest way to mature in love is to give without hope of return.

Remember, love is to want or do some good for someone.

We should love ourselves, other people and God.

How will we grow from love of self to love of God and others? How will we mature in love?

By lending without hope of return. By giving our time to other people from whom we get little or no return.

Jesus identified himself especially with the poor, the helpless and dysfunctional people. Giving time to them is giving time directly to God.

This is the best way to mature in love, which is absolutely necessary because at the end of our lives we will be judged solely by our love.