

Teen Devotion

Year C – Epiphany 7

Uncovered



One truth shared: Jesus speaks clearly to his disciples and us and directs us toward radical love.

But to you who are listening I say, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.... Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

Luke 6:27-28,36

Uncovered Love

But, Jesus, that's not fair. It's not just. It is just not right.

That's the way it feels. If someone hurts us, that wrong must be righted. If an injustice occurs, there must be justice. If someone speaks evil about us, then we must speak up and speak out against them. At the very least, we should do nothing.

But Jesus goes beyond calling us to inaction here. He calls us to action. He calls us to *loving* action. He calls us to do good to those who may have done us harm. He calls us to pray *for* them, to intercede for them. He calls us to bless them and to mean it when we do.

This kind of love to which Jesus calls us seems to upside down. It's the hardest kind of love.

Well, kind of. When we think this way, we are assuming that we deserve better from other people and better from God. We assume that we've never hated, that we've never cursed, that we've never mistreated. We're thinking to ourselves that we have somehow deserved goodness and blessing.

Do you know what mercy is? It is to withhold the justice that is due. It is to *not* give what is deserved.

That's what God has been toward you. He has given you blessing and forgiveness, instead of eternal cursing and condemnation. He turns his face and his attention toward you instead of turning away from you in anger. He does not give you what you deserve—though he has every right to do it. Instead, he gives you everything—and I do mean everything—that you do not deserve.

Maybe you and that enemy of yours are not so different after all. Perhaps you and those who mistreat you are not so different after all. So, let's do the weird thing (at least to the world), the radical thing, the God-thing. Let's hear Jesus today and be merciful just like God has been merciful to us.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you call me to a love that is like yours. That's so hard. It's hard to not want to give what is deserved to another. But that's the way you loved me. You did not give me the justice I deserved. Teach me to be merciful, just like you are merciful. Amen.

Foundations Teen Facilitators Guide

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Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

- Think of the name and the face of one person that you are not on good terms with because of what they did or said to you.

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

- What is the hard thing that Jesus is asking you to do toward that person? Share what makes it so hard for you to actually do it.

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- Keep the name and face of that one person you're not on good terms with in mind, and read Luke 6:27-38. Compare your list of hard things that Jesus asks you to do with this list. What exactly is Jesus asking/telling us to do here?
- What makes it so hard for us to do? Why is it difficult for us to hear this?
- Consider carefully verse 36: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." What exactly is mercy?
- In what way(s) are you the same as those who mistreat you in various ways? In what way(s) do you need mercy?
- How does an examination of what we deserve, help us in being merciful to others?
- What is the goal of showing mercy to others? What are we seeking to do *for them* when we show mercy and do good to those who treat us poorly?

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the "connecting question" above.*

- Remember the name and the face of one person that you are not on good terms with? Consider just one way that you will put today's devotion in action toward him/her.