



## Day 3

# Love

**Silence (2 minutes)** Take some time to be quiet, to calm down, and to listen. What has God been teaching you? What are the next steps He wants you to take? How is your spirit doing?

**Scripture** *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."* Matthew 5:43-48

**Discussion** Who are we to love? Jesus makes it clear that loving only our neighbor, those who love us, and our own people is not enough. God is kind to both the righteous and the unrighteous; those who honor Him and those who don't. Since we belong to the Father, we are expected to behave like Him. So, who are these people we are called to love? People with different worldviews, political ideals, and religious ideas? It can seem difficult to truly love these people, especially when they reject God's love, or even blaspheme when we try to show God's love to them! There are people with different beliefs about Jesus, the Bible, and religion. God loves the righteous and the unrighteous alike, and we are called to be perfect just like our Father. What does loving these people look like? Step one is always prayer. So first, we talk with the Father, tell Him we see this portion of Scripture and that we know He is good, and loving, and wise. We tell Him we submit to His will and that we want to be like Him, even if He has surprises and difficult situations for us to deal with. Then we ask Him how to live like Him, loving those who aren't our people, who don't love us, even people we regard as enemies. Quite possibly He will lead us to people already around us that we haven't gotten to know, or to become involved in new activities where we meet new people; people different from us. And then, we can get to know their name, ask about their weekend, activities, and family. When we see them we recognize that they too were created in the image of God, that we both have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and that Jesus loves and died for both of us.

**Application** Who in your life would you think is the hardest to demonstrate Christ's love to? Make a list of reasons why you find it so hard to love this person with God's love. When you are done, ask God to show you how He would have you love this person as Christ does in light of what you've listed.

**Prayer** Father, thank You that even before I had the opportunity to resist You, to disobey You, You knew I would, You loved me, and Jesus died for my sin so that I could be reconciled to You. Father, I do understand that You expect me to love those who don't love me, people who are not my people, people I dislike, my enemies. I submit myself to You, Your Word, and Your will, whatever that will look like. Please show me a person who is not my people so that I may love them. Please teach me and change me to be more like You, to love them. Please show me how to take the initiative, how to demonstrate Your acceptance and kindness. Help me see them as You see them. They too were created in Your image and You love them. I praise You Father that You are loving and wise. You are good. Amen.

**Silence (2 minutes)** Talk to God about what you are learning. What are your fears? Where are your hangups? Pray for direction.

**Scripture memory** for the week: *"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."* Mark 12:29-31

