

January 14/15, 2023  
"Blessing and Cursing"  
Pastor Jeff Manion



## SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

### 2023 SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Intentional activities to deepen our relationship with God and mold us to be more like Jesus.

#### JANUARY PRACTICE

Bible Reading

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## Day 1 **1 Peter 3:15** | The Response

**Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.** 1 Peter 3:15b

Many first-century followers of Jesus were scattered throughout the Mediterranean suffering from mistreatment and persecution by non-Christians. Peter writes a letter to urge them not to lose hope and to stay faithful to the new life Jesus has called them.

We learned in last week's sermon when believers live the way Jesus taught, their lives stand out as being extraordinarily different. So different, they need to be ready to explain to those who ask why. This week we learn that a huge part of what makes Jesus-followers stand out is how they respond to people who hurt them. Peter teaches when people mistreat us, our response should be to give a blessing instead of a curse.

It's common to be good to people who are good to us. But when people are mean and cruel it's uncommon and extreme to be good, merciful and kind to them. When our response is "extremely good", people notice. Extreme goodness is hard to do and requires dependence on God's power. But when we're willing to give a blessing instead of a curse—we make Jesus believable and desirable to others.

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** We have all been mistreated at one time or another for simply being who we are. Consider how you have handled that and where you are on the scale of payback versus responding with mercy and kindness. Ask God to help you grow in this area and commit to giving a blessing when you're mistreated.

## Day 2 **1 Peter 3:8-9** | Our Calling

**Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.** 1 Peter 3:9

Jesus calls us to himself and his extreme goodness from the moment we first understand and believe Jesus died on the cross in our place. He wants us to be like him and not everyone else. Therefore, repaying evil with a blessing is our calling.

Peter tells us to relate to others with sympathy, compassion, oneness, brotherly love and humility (1 Peter 3:8). Showing mercy and kindness in the face of persecution is one more trait that sets Jesus-followers apart. Jesus says, "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" (Luke 6:27-28).

By telling us we're called to do what isn't natural, Jesus gives us a new purpose. Our first inclination is not to be kind when someone hurts us. We don't want to be extremely good to people who wrong us. But God never asks us to do anything he won't help us do. Our purpose is to reflect Jesus's character with our response—and his power is available to help us. The first step may be to pray and ask God for help to WANT to show mercy to those who don't deserve it. Then ask him for HIS HELP to do it. Watch this video clip as Pastor Jeff Manion shares what can happen when our response is a blessing.

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** Write 1 Peter 3:9 on a sticky note and put it where you can see it daily. Memorize it and ask God to give you his heart of kindness, mercy and love toward someone who has hurt you.

## Day 3 **Luke 6:35-36** | Motivation

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

The more we understand God's mercy—the more we are motivated to show mercy to others. This understanding goes back to Genesis when sin entered God's perfect creation. Adam and Eve chose not to trust God and disobeyed him with devastating consequences. Their relationship

with him was broken, and sin begins its hold on them and all people after them. “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). God shows mercy and compassion to all people by sacrificing his own son to bring us back into a relationship with him.

Peter’s call to respond to evil with blessing channels God’s mercy to us and echoes Jesus, who says, “But love your enemies, do good to them...and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked” (Luke 6:35). We are to be merciful because God is merciful. Giving mercy makes us easily identifiable as God’s children. It makes us look like our Heavenly Father.

This is no small request for Peter’s audience, who were Christians experiencing area-wide persecution. It’s a challenge for us as well. It’s easy to feel like those who are mean and cruel to us don’t deserve our mercy, kindness and love. Yet when we give it, we look like our Father in Heaven, reflect his extreme goodness and make Jesus believable.

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** In your journal, rewrite Luke 6:35-36 in your own words. Ask God to give you the opportunity to reveal his character this week by showing extreme goodness to someone who doesn’t deserve it.

## Day 4 Numbers 6:22-27 | Giving a Blessing

**“The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you,”** Numbers 6:25

“Blessing” isn’t a word often used today. What does Peter actually mean when saying to give your enemy a blessing instead of a curse? Blessing is a common word in the Old Testament and centers on the extreme goodness of God and his desire to nurture and protect his people. When God leads Israel out of Egypt, he tells Moses to instruct his brother Aaron, and his sons, who are priests, to tell the people, “Whenever Aaron and his sons bless the people of Israel in my name, I myself will bless them” (Numbers 6:27 NLT). A blessing from God means one has his loving protection and prosperity. To bless another is to desire their well-being.

Likewise, when we bless someone, it means we desire good things for them. Since God is compassionate and gracious, we are to follow his example. It could be a prayer for God to bless that person who continually insults us, a kind word to someone cruel to a family member or taking a meal to the person who has spread gossip about us and just had surgery. Giving a blessing to those who hurt us should be a habit we develop.

You may not feel like giving a blessing, but God doesn’t turn a blind eye when you do. It shows God you trust him to deal with that person how he wants to. And it allows you to express his extreme goodness.

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** Pray, “Father God, I want to be like you—merciful, kind and loving to those who hurt me. Forgive me for wanting to get even with \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_. Soften my heart and show me how to be kind. Help me continually think of them as you do. Help me to make giving a blessing a habit. Amen.”

## Day 5 Luke 6:27-28 | Giving a Curse

**Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you.** Luke 6:28

We’ve all had someone be intentionally cruel or unkind to us. They stole something and said we did it, ridiculed our clumsiness in gym class, or misrepresented us at work and grabbed the promotion we were hoping to get. To use Peter’s language, they “cursed” us. When that happens, our natural response is to really, really want bad things to happen to them. To curse someone is to want their undoing, and it doesn’t have to be taught.

To see just how natural it is to curse our enemies, look at Psalm 109:6-13, written by David when adversaries relentlessly pursued him. David asks God to kill his adversaries, making their wives widows and children orphans with no one to be kind to them. But David also moves on from vengeful words to confess his heart is wounded—and he is trusting God to save him. He puts his situation in God’s hands.

We can do this today. Instead of falling into bitterness and hatred toward those who hurt us, we hand them over to God instead. Jesus tells us to bless those who curse us and pray for those who hurt us. That’s what he did in the last moments of his life. Mocked and reviled by religious leaders, soldiers, and even the thieves being crucified with him, Jesus prayed, “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

**IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY** Forgiveness and giving a blessing can sometimes be complicated. If you’re unsure how to forgive or bless in a specific situation, pray and ask God into the process and seek godly counsel. Email us at [btw@adabible.org](mailto:btw@adabible.org). We would love to encourage and assist you.