

July 26/27, 2025

"Abnormal Kindness"

Pastor Jeff Manion



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

2025 Focus: 50 Key Truths

Each Friday, explore a key truth about our Christian faith and how we can live in light of this truth.

Day 1 [Matthew 5:43-48](#) | How Love Behaves

You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." Matthew 5:43

Jesus speaks to a wildly fractured group filled with tension. The Jews hate their Roman occupiers. Yet they're divided about what to do. The Sadducees collaborate with Rome to maintain power and keep peace. The Pharisees believe God will bless them for keeping the law and separating from culture. Zealots want to take down Rome by any means. Tax collectors work for Rome and pocket the profits. Each group despises the others as enemies. Jesus speaks into this sizzling tension about *loving* their enemies. He invites a tax collector *and* a zealot into his inner circle. Jesus defines love as behavior that is radically different from what they've ever heard. In Jesus's kingdom, love equals kindness.

Taking Jesus seriously means being kind to people who are unkind to us. The Apostle Paul later expounds on Jesus's teaching, showing us how love behaves. Love lives out patience and kindness. Love doesn't envy or boast. It isn't proud, self-seeking or easily angered. Love doesn't keep a record of wrongs ([1 Corinthians 13](#)). The Holy Spirit empowers us to live out these behaviors when we don't feel like it. Jesus's teaching on loving enemies is good news for us. Whether it's an angry ex-spouse, bitter parent, wayward child, gossiping coworker or callous neighbor, we can grow in love. Like a muscle that strengthens under strain, love can grow when life is hard by the power of God's Spirit.

TODAY: Read [1 Corinthians 13](#) and substitute the word "love" with your name. _____ is patient. _____ is kind. As you read through the passage, ask God to show you where you need to grow in loving behavior toward difficult people.

Day 2 [Matthew 5:43-44](#) | Praying for Enemies

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 5:44

Jesus doesn't lower the intensity of his teaching. He calls his people to pray for their enemies and those who harm them. Jesus doesn't ask his followers to do something he isn't willing to do himself. He would model this loving behavior on the cross. While under excruciating pain, as people sneer and spit on him, Jesus prays for the very people who are killing him. He cries, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Jesus loves even his enemies. He calls and empowers his followers to do the same.

Just because we have enemies doesn't mean we have to be an enemy. Through the power of Jesus, we can pray for the good and blessing of those we don't like or have hurt us. Praying for enemies doesn't mean we ignore the pain or dismiss the wound. Prayer becomes a bridge between our hurt and healing. The situation may not change, but God can bring healing to us. Prayer enables God's love to fill the corners of our hearts, rather than allowing bitterness or hatred to set up house. As we pray for our enemies, we are taking Jesus seriously.

TODAY: Think of someone who hurt you and whom you struggle to love. Pray a blessing over their life and allow God to work in your heart. "Father, I ask that you would bless _____ in some unexpected way. Bring your healing into my heart and help me love them as you do. Amen."

Day 3 [Matthew 5:44-45](#) | God's Mercy

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. Matthew 5:45

Jesus wants the people on the hillside to encounter God's bottomless mercy. He teaches that as they live out mercy by praying for their enemies, they reflect the likeness of their Heavenly Father. Their Father sends rain and sunshine to provide crops for the righteous and unrighteous. But Jesus is God's greatest display of mercy. He sent his own Son to die for all people's sins. This display of mercy restores undeserving people to friendship with God through their faith in Jesus.

We, too, need to see ourselves as receivers of God's mercy. God's mercy is like fresh morning dew—ever-present to refresh and restore us to God. God demonstrated his love for us through Jesus's death. He died for us while we were still God's enemies (Romans 5:8). It's because of his great love and rich mercy that we are made alive through Jesus even when we were dead in our sins ([Ephesians 2:4-5](#)). We could never earn or deserve God's mercy. God's deep love and mercy are a wonder that takes our breath away. When we encounter his mercy, our lives are never the same.

TODAY: If you have never received God's love and mercy through Jesus's death and resurrection, you can do so now. Pray to God and accept Jesus's death on your behalf. Take time to worship God for the love shown to you through Jesus. Join Ada Bible Worship as they sing "[There is a Savior](#)." Praise God that "There is a Healer there is a friend. There is a mercy that never ends."

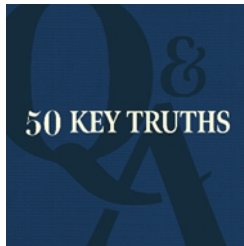
Day 4 [Matthew 5:46-48](#) | Abnormal Living

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? Matthew 5:46-47

Jesus challenges his listeners with powerful questions. He calls for behavior that goes beyond the ordinary because even the unrighteous love those who love them back. In Luke's account, Jesus says to do good to those who hate them, give to all who ask and "do to others as you would have them do to you" ([Luke 6:27-31](#)). The crowd likely sat in shock, mouths hanging open. This behavior was unheard of and may have felt unreasonable.

It's easy to write off the coworker who takes credit for our work, the family member who undermines our parenting or to simply dismiss a spiteful neighbor. We can even ignore small group members who rub us the wrong way. But Jesus calls us to abnormal living that treats people we do not like with his loving kindness. Loving behavior may mean bringing coffee for the coworker or choosing kind words for the hurtful family member. It includes being kind to the neighbor and serving joyfully alongside people who annoy us. These acts may feel like swimming against the current. But we're called to reflect our Heavenly Father and not contribute to the brokenness of the world. We swim upstream through God's power. Abnormal living doesn't mean we condone sinful behavior or dismiss wrongs. Rather, we live out of God's love regardless of another person's behavior.

TODAY: Identify the relationships you struggle with the most. Ask God to show you what act of kindness or blessing you could give to those people this week. Ask God to help you take that action.



Day 5 [Titus 3:4-6](#) | Question 29: What is regeneration?

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Answer: Regeneration is the Holy Spirit giving us new spiritual life when we trust in Christ.

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. Titus 3:5-6

Paul reminds believers of their new lives in Christ. When God's kindness and love appeared, he saved them from their foolish, disobedient enslavement to sin. Paul describes a "rebirth" to echo what Jesus referred to as being "born again" ([John 3:3](#)). Just as they had all been born physically, they also needed to be born spiritually. Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Spirit was involved in the original creation, the Spirit recreates believers, giving them what they could never produce on their own—spiritual life.

Regeneration transforms our understanding of our spiritual condition. The moment we come to faith, the Spirit gives us new life. We are reborn. We are new creatures before God. This new life is not only eternal life someday after we die. It's a new life today. We are "new creations" where the old life has gone and the new has come ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). We no longer live by our power or for our purpose, but Christ lives in us through his Spirit. This regeneration is God's work alone. He regenerates, revives and resuscitates those who repent and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.

TODAY: Thank God for giving you a new spiritual life. Reflect on being a "new creation" in Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you live from this new life rather than your old patterns. Celebrate that you are no longer spiritually dead but alive in Christ. Learn more about regeneration and the Holy Spirit's work in our [We Believe document](#).