



The Principle of Love

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- Focus** The Principle of Love is threaded through the Old and New Testament. Just as God loves us, we are to love others. Just as Christ forgave us, we are to forgive others. When we forgive those who have offended us, we stay well away from any traps and snares Satan has prepared for us.
- Fun** Think of a favorite summer activity you loved to do as a child and share it with the group.
- Review** Key Scripture: Luke 7
- 1. Hate precedes murder.**
Joseph became the object of his brothers' hate because of their father's favoritism toward him. This festered in their hearts and they conspired to kill Joseph (Genesis 37).
 - 2. Anger precedes hate.**
Hate can develop when anger is not dealt with. Anger-related "blow ups" can cause a great deal of damage to relationships (Genesis 4:3–5, 8).
 - 3. An offense precedes anger.**
Perceived offense can lead to anger, betrayal, and eventually wrath (Matthew 24:10; Mark 6:2–3; Luke 4:28–29).
 - 4. Unfulfilled expectations precede offenses.** When our expectations are not met, we take offense sometimes. This can cause us to stumble into a trap or snare laid for us by Satan (Luke 7:22–23; Romans 9:33).
 - 5. Forgiveness precedes love.** By God's grace, we are forgiven. Because He has forgiven us, we need to forgive each other—even our enemies.

Group Dynamics Idea Keeping today's topic in mind, list ways you can demonstrate love to a spouse, family member, friend, or neighbor this week.

Discuss

1. What is the difference between an individual committing murder and an authority, such as, a judge, jury, or military rendering justice (Exodus 20:13)?
2. Read Genesis 4:8. Have you ever been so angry that you have "blown up" over a situation? Discuss ways that we can handle unresolved anger.
3. Do you think pride was at the heart of the individuals who took offense with Jesus in Mark 6:2–3 and Luke 4:28–29? What part does pride play when we hold on to an offense?
4. Read Luke 7:18–19, 22–23. During the time Jesus was ministering freely among the people, John the Baptist was being held in prison. What expectations did he have of Jesus? What expectations have you had of Jesus?
5. Explain this statement: "Jesus is either a stone that you stumble over or a rock that you build on." (Romans 9:33)
6. How does an unforgiving heart bring the danger of a trap or snare set against us? Who is behind this? What promise does God give us in Psalm 91:3?
7. Quietly reflect on the blessing of God's grace. He forgives us for our mistakes; He calls us back to Him when we wander off the path. Take this time to ask Him if there is anyone you need to forgive. If someone comes to your mind, forgive that person. Just as Jesus showed grace to us, we must show grace to others.

Take Home As we conclude, remember the following:

- Hate and unforgiveness are destructive.
- Unresolved anger often turns to hate.
- Our response to an offense is important.
- Offense can arise from unfulfilled expectations.
- Love enables us to forgive.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for forgiving me when I have offended You and others. Help me when anger threatens to overwhelm me. Show me how to give grace to others as You have given grace to me. Help me to love as You have loved me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

New Leader Tip When people feel welcomed to your group, they will feel more comfortable being there, and when people feel more comfortable, they will be more open to sharing. When people begin to share what is in their hearts, the Holy Spirit can speak to the hearts of those who are present.