

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

Phil O. Waldo
Lead Pastor



1224 Hancock Drive
Boone, Iowa 50036

Phone: 515 432-3329

Website: www.booneopenbible.com
E-mail: office@booneopenbible.com
pastor@booneopenbible.com

SERMON TITLE If You Love the Lord, part 3

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE Matthew 5:33-48

SYNOPSIS If you really love the Lord, you will go the extra mile.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ If You Love the Lord

John 14:15

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Love is more than just an emotion. True, real love, will be demonstrated and, to demonstrate your love for the Lord, you will obey him. So far, we've talked about the Lord's command to repent and follow Christ, letting your light shine. And, last week was all about reconciliation – working on restoring broken relationships.

☞ Today, we will start in **Matthew 5:33:**

33 "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' 34 But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

☞ **Keep your word**

Jesus is not saying that we should never make promises or never sign a promissory note. The kind of swearing he refers to here is the kind which tries to impress others with your words. "If I'm not ☞ telling the truth, let God strike me down." Instead, just become so **reliable and trustworthy** that all you need to say is "yes" and people know that your word is your bond.

In fact, I have often found that those who go over the top with their promises are often the least reliable. "I proooooomise." "Cross my heart and hope to die." Those kinds of statements typically make me question the person's truthfulness. In fact, the more they try to impress me with their sincerity, the less likely they are to come through. Proverbs 10:19 says, "when words are many, sin is not absent." So, don't go on and on about how reliable you are, just show me.

If you say you will do something, then do it. And, be so consistent about it, that over time people will never wonder whether you will follow through or not. In fact, James makes a similar statement regarding "yesses" and "no's" and his main emphasis is on perseverance. In other words, do whatever it takes to keep your promises, even if that includes hardship or suffering.

☞ **Always follow through.**



Another modern adage is, “put up or shut up,” meaning, “quit talking about it and just do it.” Jesus is sort of saying, “just do it.” No need to promise heaven and earth, just do what you say you will do.

– *Bill Bouknight... Cal Ripkin, Jr. of the Baltimore Orioles baseball team broke Lou Gehrig's seemingly insurmountable record of 2,130 consecutive games played. Gehrig never missed a game for over 15 seasons. He played despite a broken toe, a broken rib, a broken thumb, a twisted back, several attacks of lumbago, and numerous bouts with colds and the flu. Gehrig and Ripkin remind us of the importance of dependability. Where would we be without those low-key, self-effacing individuals who just do their thing day after day?*

--*Lou Nicholes, Missionary/Author... I wonder what would happen if we applied the same standards of loyalty to our Christian activities that we expect from other areas of our lives? If your car starts once every three tries, is it reliable? If the postman skipped delivery every Monday and Thursday, is he trustworthy? If you don't go to work once or twice a month, are you a reliable employee? If your fridge stops working for a day or two every now and then, do you say, "Oh well, it works most of the time."? If your water heater provides an icy cold shower every now and then, is it dependable? If you fail to worship God one or two Sundays a month, would you expect to be called a faithful Christian? We expect loyalty and reliability from things and other people - isn't it reasonable then that God just might expect the same from us?*

So, keep your word, persevere and be reliable. After all, that's what God is looking for on the day of judgement... “well done, good and faithful servant.” Matthew 25:23. Jesus says we should keep our word and then he adds this...

Matthew 5:38-42 NLT

38 "You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. 40 If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. 41 If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. 42 Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.

☞ **So, not only should you keep your word, you should go above and beyond.** Be reliable and then take it a step further, doing even more than promised. This reminds me of the phrase “under promise, over deliver.” Car salesmen are notorious for doing exactly the opposite of this by over promising and under delivering. They tell you how great this car will be and then you find out it's not nearly as wonderful as they led you to believe. Don't do that. Only promise what you are sure you can do, and then try to do even more than that.



But Jesus goes even further here. Sometimes, it's not what you promised to do, but rather what you are being forced to do.

We've all been dragged into situations we didn't want to be in and doing things we didn't want to do. But Jesus says, even in those situations, we should be reliable and do more than what is expected. Sometimes at work you may be required to do tasks you don't really enjoy, but do them anyway and do them well.

And, then, Jesus ups the ante even more. Not only are there times you make a promise and have to follow through, or times that you are forced into a situation, but there are times when you are just plain being mistreated. Even then, he says to go above and beyond.

Turn the other cheek. Now, in context, he's not talking about allowing someone to physically beat you up, but rather he's talking about being insulted or hurt by someone's words. It's very natural for us to return insult for insult or hurt for hurt, but Jesus doesn't ask us to do what comes naturally. He is asking us to go above and beyond. Turn the other cheek – **don't retaliate**. This one goes back to last week regarding reconciliation... don't be so easily offended, learn to put up with each other. You don't have to react every time someone rubs you wrong or even hurts you. Jesus sets a higher standard – go above and beyond. In fact, he raises the standard even higher, yet...

☞ **Love and pray for your enemies.** “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” (Matthew 5:44–46).

If there is a point at which Christianity diverges from almost every other belief system in the world, and even the default position of the human heart, then this is it. Jesus tells us to love our enemies. He even has the gall to tell us to pray for them (perhaps because it is more difficult to hate someone if you're praying for them!)

Just like last week, we see God as the ultimate example. He forgives us much more than we ever need to forgive others. And, here he shows his love and concern for even those who hate him. The sun still rises and the rains still come, even for the enemies of God.



Romans 5:8 says, “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Then, just a few verses later it talks about how we were God’s enemies, but were reconciled to him through the death of Christ.

I’ve stated before that God doesn’t always do what we would consider the right thing. Sometimes, he goes beyond what is right and shows mercy and grace instead. Christ didn’t deserve to die. God had every right to defend his son and spare the cross, but he went above and beyond so that we might be saved.

Now, he asks us to go above and beyond. Turn the other cheek. Pray for your enemies. These are hard things, but if we love the Lord, we will want to obey even these commands.

So, keep your word and go above and beyond. Then, Jesus finally seals the deal with this:

☞ “Therefore, you are to **be perfect**, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48). What?...

☞ Some will say that this means to be **mature** or grow to **completion**, which is true. But, it also means to be **without defect**... or “perfect.” After all this, Jesus sets the ultimate, definitive standard: perfection. I think we’ve been set up...

Keep your word, no matter what. In truth, that is not always possible. It’s a very high standard.

Then he says, “**Go above and beyond.**” You and I can’t always do that either. Let alone resist the urge to retaliate when someone insults or hurts us; much less show love and pray for our enemies. His standards are getting awfully high.

And now, he says, **be perfect**. Impossible! ...I think maybe that’s the whole point.

None of this is possible apart from the Lord. But with him all things become possible... Big things like healings and miracles, but also day to day things like keeping promises, doing more than expected and even loving the unlovable. All of these are things to shoot for, but we must realize ☞ that we have to **rely upon the Lord** for it all. And every time we fail, we should make note that we haven’t arrived yet and run back to him for mercy and grace.

Without Him, I could do nothing; Without Him, I'd surely fail; Without Him, I would be drifting; Like a ship without a sail.

☞ **If you love the Lord, keep his commands. Run to him and keep running after him.**