



The band “Dogwood,” has a song that tells us to

“Remember whose child you are
 Oh remember if your one of the children
 You have a name wherever you are
 Oh remember, please remember,
 Remember whose child you are.

Jesus tells us to remember whose child we are. As dutiful children, we are to reflect the character, values, and desires of our heavenly Father. We have to remember what our Heavenly Father and our Savior are like and act accordingly.



Our Heavenly Father has done all things possible to create and maintain **relationships** with wayward, sinful people. God has initiated relationships with us, stuck with us despite our rebellious idolatrous actions, and continues to patiently work with us. God loved us so much that while we were yet still sinful people, God took on flesh and lived among us, endured all kinds of humiliation and suffering, died for us, forgave us, put the Holy Spirit within us, promised to never forsake or leave us, and is preparing a place for us to live with him

forever. In summary, as Exodus, Nehemiah, Joel, Jonah, and four psalms say, our Heavenly Father is “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, [and] abounding in love and faithfulness.”¹

In short, as 1 John 4:8 and 16 says, “God is love.” And God loves is not sporadic, stingy, or sparse; it is love for the whole world that does not abate. God acts lovingly to the good and bad, the just and the unjust, the rich and poor, Gentiles and Jews.

God sends rain and sunshine to all. God maintains the laws of nature for all. Yet God seems to gain very little back for his gracious, patient love. God’s love seems overly generous, extravagant, and wasteful.

Our Savior Jesus

Humble Meek and mild
 Associated with sinners
 Enhanced life
 Enjoyed life and people
Loved his enemies



Extravagant wasteful love

We find the same thing in Jesus. **Jesus is God in the flesh**; Jesus perfectly reflected the character of God, not by living a strict, holy, worrisome, fearful, ascetic life, but by living a joyful life with all the sinners around him. Jesus left the glories, honor, prestige, and power of heaven in order to take up a humble life, full of humiliation, so that he could lift up and improve the lives of all those around him.

He was a friend of tax-collectors, prostitutes, the lame, blind, sick, and possessed. He gave people hope, and healed them of diseases, sicknesses, infirmities, and evil spirits. He ate with the upstanding citizens, and the notoriously sinful. He did not withdraw from unruly children or harsh critics; he associated with and touched the unclean. When mobs tried to kill him, he quietly left. When verbally challenged, he gave quizzical stories. When mocked, he remained quiet. When struck, he did not strike back. When unjustly arrested, he did not defend himself. When crucified, he prayed for his murderers. He had an overly generous, abundant, wasteful love for all people, even for those who were apathetic to him, and those who hated him enough to murder him.

Get rid of revenge
Establish & maintain relationships
Act lovingly

Problem	Threat to
Slap	Dignity and honor
Suit	Property
Service	Liberty
Support	Security
Sectarianism	Identity

Extravagant wasteful love

So for **us** to reflect the character, values, and ways of our Father, we also must have extravagant wasteful love, and our text says we do that by getting rid of the ideas of revenge and retaliation; establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships; and always acting lovingly toward others.. In order to get us to understand how that works out in our lives, Jesus tells us how to respond to five different relational problems.

The **first problem** is getting **slapped** in the face. Now, in that culture this was not a threat to bodily injury, but rather was a deep and cutting **insult**. To be slapped was a threat to one's dignity and honor.

In response, Jesus says do not slap back; do not start trading insults. Instead, stand there with dignity and offer your other cheek. Stand there; make the other person see you as a person. Stand there and indicate you have so much worth and esteem the slap means little to you. Stand there and demonstrate you are ready to work the problem out, and that you want to mend the broken relationship. Stand there and take the unjustified insults with dignity, so that perhaps the abuser will feel guilt and shame, and come to respect you.

When Boston Red Sox player Wade Boggs played third base at Yankee Stadium, one of the Yankee fans made it a personal mission to harass him. The man had a box seat close to the field and would torment Boggs with obscenities and insults for the duration of every game.

Finally, Boggs decided he'd had enough. As the man began his typical insult routine at the next game, Boggs walked directly over to the man, who was sitting with a group of friends. "Are you the guy who's always yelling at me?" Boggs asked.

“Yeah, it’s me. Whatcha gonna do about it?” responded the man belligerently.

Wade took a new baseball out of his pocket, autographed it, tossed it to the man, and went back to the field to continue his pre-game routine. The man became one of Wade’s biggest fans at Yankee Stadium.

The **second problem** Jesus mentions is when someone **sues** you and threatens to reduce you to nothing. Jesus says give him everything you owe and much more. Become naked before him in court; thus demonstrating to all what his actions entail. Then the one suing will garner guilt and shame. Property is not worth breaking a relationship over.

An old widow whom everybody called “Aunt Jamie” wasn’t sued for her property; instead she faced a robber in her home. She had just returned from buying groceries on Friday evening, when the robber demanded all of her money.

“Honey” (all people were “honey” to her) “Honey, all my money is right here in this bag. It’s a week’s worth of food. “What’s got you so riled up you have to steal people’s money?”

Thus began a relationship between the robber and Aunt Jamie. He explained how he had lost his job, been thrown out of his apartment, and had nothing but what he had on his back. In response, she sat him down at the table, explaining “I don’t have money, but I can feed ya’. I can also pray for ya’.”

So as she cooked, he talked. She prayed long and hard before they ate, and she had an impression that the man was to stay awhile. After dinner, she convinced her would-be robber to spend the night. She had a guest room all ready for him, as well as her deceased husband’s old clothes which would fit him. She also had friends who could pray, and who might know of a job opening. So while he was in the shower, she made phone calls and prayed. Then when he had showered and dressed, she convinced him to stay and go to church with her on Sunday.

At church, she introduced him to a business owner, who could use a laborer loading and unloading trucks. And since Aunt Jamie said he was a good man, the man hired her would-be robber. The man kept that job, gave his life to Christ, joined the church, and stayed with Aunt Jamie. He became the son, she never had.

The **third** problem Jesus mentions is being forced into **service**. Jesus says when a soldier forces you to walk a mile, walk two. Here one’s **liberty** is being threatened; but instead of arguing, complaining, and giving poor service, Jesus says give extravagant extraordinary service, go two miles. Do what is required of you cheerfully and generously. Demonstrate God’s extravagant wasteful love in your life.

All of us are burdened by duty. We cannot escape chores, dues, taxes, reports, meetings jury duty, and such. Every job has some part within it that one does not like to do. Just think how great the world would be if that instead of resentment, half-heartedness, and complaints, people gave cheerful excel-

lent service. Instead of running from service and volunteer programs, gladly join in and help. Sometimes managers and owners take notice, and gives raises, bonuses, and advancement.

The **fourth** problem is responding to a person **begging** for **money** or a **loan**. By giving away some money, one's risks losing savings, and it threatens one's sense of **security**. Jesus says don't worry about protecting your property and security. Instead worry about the needs of the other person. Be more concerned about the person in need, and establishing a relationship with them. So Jesus says, "Give."

Now Jesus does **not** say **what** to give. Neither does he command to give exactly what was requested. He just says give something. Acknowledge the need, and help as able, if not with money, then directions to a shelter, food pantry, or lending institution, or give a kind word and prayer.

I read about an inner-city pastor of a large city, whose walk from the subway to church passed him through a group of homeless and prostitutes, who always begged for money. "Hey pastor, how about some change?" He never gave them money; they knew he wouldn't, but always asked anyway.

Yet the pastor didn't ignore them, he didn't divert his eyes away from them, or hurriedly scurry through them. Instead he calls them by name, because he spent time learning their names and stories. He reminds them that he is there to help them, not give them money for cigarettes, drugs, and alcohol.

He will occasionally stop and put his hands on a shoulder, and pray. He gives them respect, a sympathetic ear, and prayers; his church and the agencies working out of the church, will feed, shelter, and give them job training.

The **fifth interpersonal problem** Jesus addresses deals with not being **sectarian**. Being sectarian means watching out for just one's own group, and to distrust and disparage others. Nationalism, racism, and cults are sectarian in nature.

Jesus says we should not divide people into "**us**" and "**them**" categories. We are **all** people made in God's image, all of us are sinners in need of God's forgiving grace, and if we accept Jesus as our Savior, we become part of the one international, multi-cultural family. Thus we are **not to hate** our **enemies** or **persecutors**; instead we are to show respect to them, pray for them, and horror of all horrors, "**love them.**"

Many years ago, one of my colleagues was dealing with protestors around his church on Sunday's mornings. Gays and lesbians were expressing their disdain at his church for not allowing gays and lesbians to be elders. After the first Sunday's antics and disruption of the service, he got an injunction against the group, so that they could not enter and disrupted the worship service, and had to stay across the street.

But he wanted to get rid of the distraction, and he wanted to honor Jesus, so he instructed his elders and deacons to be kind, smile, and go talk to the protestors. They were to tell the protestors they could use the church facilities, if they needed, as long as they did not disrupt the services, and then invite them to come inside to worship with the Church.

So on the third Sunday of the protests, the deacons and elders brought donuts, coffee, and ice-water out to the protestors. Inviting them to come inside, for worship, and said that they had trained nurses available if anyone got injured or ill.

After that Sunday, there were no more protestors. The church's leaders were no longer terrible bad strangers, and had proven to have genuine care and love. They still disagreed with one another, but they could no longer carry hate against the church.



Before we leave Jesus' demand for extravagant wasteful love let me point out all of these verses deal with **interpersonal relationships**. They are not **directly** applicable to governments, militaries, and law enforcement, because they have a legitimate duty to maintain safety and security through force.

Jesus is not telling us to passively stand by and do nothing when someone **else'** cheek is **slapped**, when someone **else** is **rob** or **exploited**, or when our nation is being invaded. Love of neighbor must step in and stop abuse and demand justice. Although lethal force may be used, creative nonviolent solutions are preferred. Killing someone in defense of another, whether as civilians or as a law-enforcer officer should be the last resort, not the first response.



God and Jesus demonstrated **extravagant wasteful love**, and since we are the children of God and followers of Christ, we also will practice extravagant, extra-ordinary wasteful love upon all peoples. We will not seek revenge or retaliation; we will work out interpersonal relationships, show respect and care for all, work for justice and social righteousness, and always **act lovingly** toward others as best we can. Amen.

¹ Ex 34:6; Neh 9:17; Ps 77:9; 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2.