

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

LUKE 6

In 1891, James Naismith invented the game of basketball. He was a professor at Kansas University, and he wanted an activity to preoccupy his athletes in the winter - between football and baseball seasons.

When Naismith invented basketball, he compiled a list of just 13 rules. Today the official basketball rule book contains 50 articles - each with multiple sub-points. The International rule book is 81 pages long [[Motion on click](#)].

The expansion of the rules of basketball is a testimony to the human tendency to complicate whatever we touch. We're experts at turning the simple into complex. We add rules, restrictions, explanations.

And this is especially true with religion. Take for example the fourth commandment, "[Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...](#)" The Law God gave to Moses provided broad, general instructions to observe one day in seven as a day of rest and worship.

God made work off-limits on the Sabbath, yet the Jews felt compelled to define what constituted work.

You couldn't wear dentures, or strap on a wooden leg, or lift a child - or you would be carrying a load, and that would be work... Or you could spit on the Sabbath, but if you scuffed your spit with your shoe - you'd be watering and cultivating the soil - which would be work.

In reality, **one man's work is another man's leisure**. Some folks view gardening or yard work as therapeutic. It's a healthy diversion, *a way to unwind...*

I personally would rather have a root canal than pull weeds from my yard... And yet, this is why God gave a general Sabbath command - that left the details of observance up to each person's own conscience.

Tragically though, the Jews couldn't leave it that...

They went to great effort to define what constituted work. Page, after page, after page in the Mishnah and Talmud - Jewish commentaries on the Law - were devoted to the subject of Sabbath observance.

It's been said of the American legal system, **"We have thirty-five million laws trying to enforce ten commandments."** This also rightly describes Judaism.

Yet Jesus came to **simplify**. The Jews smothered the intent of God's Law under a blanket of their own interpretations. Jesus wanted to restore the spirit of the Law. That's what He does in the first half of Chapter 6.

Verse 1, **"Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands."** They were self-milling.

"And some of the Pharisees said to them, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?"

According to the legalistic Jews, the Pharisees, there were four things you couldn't do with grain on the Sabbath: *harvest*

it, thresh it, winnow it, or cook it - no plucking, no shucking, no separating, and no eating.

Thus, when the disciples rubbed the grain between their hands, blew off the chaff, and ate the dry cereal they were guilty of all four forbidden practices. We've been told our whole lives we better eat our Wheaties! Can you believe the Jews *considered doing so a sin?*

It's interesting the traditions of the Pharisees also prohibited a Jew from traveling more than 3000 feet from his own home on the Sabbath. Makes you wonder what these cats were doing out in a field, scrutinizing the breakfast habits of Jesus and His disciples?

It was so hypocritical - to catch Jesus breaking the rules, they had to violate their own rules themselves.

Verse 3 tells us, "But Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?"

Of course, David was the Jewish champion. All Jews respected David's heart for God. Yet when David fled from Saul, he stopped by the sanctuary on his way out of dodge. He and his men were tired and famished...

The priest wanted to strengthen David's troops, but the only food on hand was *the sacred shewbread*.

According to God's Law, only the priest could eat this bread. Yet David didn't hesitate to make an exception. Like Jesus'

disciples on the Sabbath Day, David also ate his **Wheaties**. It was **“the breakfast of champions.”**

Understand, both David and Jesus broke a ceremonial law to keep a higher, moral law...

Normally, 80 mph violates the traffic laws, unless you're rushing a person in critical condition to the hospital. *The higher law supersedes the lower law...*

Jesus was showcasing a basic principle the Jews had failed to recognize. **“Human need takes precedence over religious ritual.”** In God's eyes, *compassion toward people* is more important than *keeping traditions*. At times, the *letter of the law* should be violated in order to keep the *spirit of the law*.

And Jesus adds a kicker, **“The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”** Jesus is the Lawgiver. He was the divine presence on Mount Sinai - the voice from the burning bush. Jesus is Lord of the Law. And if He gave it - He can change it or suspend it - at His prerogative.

In other words, the Son of God isn't bound by His own Law... *and oh, how this infuriated the Pharisees!*

And this controversy over the Sabbath continued...

Verse 6, **“Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered. So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him.”** Another Jewish prohibition on the Sabbath was healing. You could

stop a person from dying, but if you improved their condition it was work.

By this time everyone knew Jesus loved people, and if there was a needy man in the house, Jesus would no doubt heal him. The Pharisees may've planted the fellow with the arthritic hand in the room to trap Jesus.

Verse 8, "But (Jesus) knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, "Arise and stand here." And he arose and stood." Jesus is about to teach a lesson. "Then Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?" Jesus springs His own trap. *How can a good deed be unlawful? What's more important, maintaining a tradition or saving a life?*

"And when He had looked around at them all..." The tension is mounting. Mark 3:5 adds, he looked "with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts..."

Then "He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other." When she was alive my aunt had a withered hand. She kept it in her lap - like a club - just curled up in an arthritic ball. She couldn't stretch her fingers.

This man had the same situation, yet Jesus gives him an impossible command. "*Stretch out your hand.*"

Realize that all faith is the willingness to act on an impossible command. We all were born in sin - born with a withered part. There's nothing we can do about our dead

spirit. Yet Romans 6:11 tells you, “Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God.”

The word “reckon” means “to consider it so.” Thus, the moment you believe, and act on God’s Word as true, that truth becomes active in your life! This is what happened here. The instant this man’s faith was exercised, God enabled him to stretch out his hand.

And this is how faith in God works... He calls me to *be this* or *that* - to be what I’m not - yet if I act as if it’s true - and provide God the willingness - then He works a miracle and makes me able. Jesus told this crippled man, “*stretch out your hand,*” and amazingly he did.

And the Jews rejoiced and praised God - *whoops, no they didn’t!* “*They were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.*” *The Pharisees could tell everyone what to do on the Sabbath, except God.* He didn’t keep their commands.

We say the Pharisees rejected Jesus because He claimed to be God, and that’s true... But the opposite is also true, they weren’t ready for the true God, so they rejected Jesus... They worshipped a god they could control - who bowed to their terms and played by their rules. That was never going to be the Lord Jesus.

The true God, Jesus, is wild and wooly. He blows up our traditions. He does what He pleases and expects us to follow Him. *Are you ready for the true God?*

Verse 12, “*Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer*

to God.” At the time Jesus was on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, near Capernaum.

South of Capernaum there’s a majestic mountain that towers over the lake. Its steep face rises out of the water. It’s known as *Mount Arbel*. And a trip to Israel isn’t complete without a climb to the top of the Arbel.

The view from there is panoramic. It’s remote and quiet - a perfect spot for prayer and meditation. And it may’ve been there that Jesus spent this night in prayer.

“And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles...” *“Disciple”* means *“learner or follower.”* *“Apostle”* means *“one who is sent out, an ambassador.”* The terms combined form a progression.

Christians begin as learners. Then learners become followers, and Jesus has marching orders for us all.

The time comes to act on what we’ve learned.

The apostles were to be the men who would take the Gospel to the world, and established the church.

Choosing them was extremely important. This is why it’s no surprise Jesus spent the night before in prayer.

And if it was important for Jesus to pray before making strategic decisions how much more important should it be for us. Taking a few minutes to pray can save you hours trying to straighten out a bad decision.

In the next verses, Luke lists the men Jesus chose. *“Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James*

and John (a second set of brothers); Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot...”

The zealots were Jewish freedom fighters, a paramilitary unit bent on using violence to drive the Romans out of Judea... Whereas tax-collectors were the opposite - Jewish sell-outs who collaborated with Rome. Imagine Matthew and Simon on the same team.

Not to mention an *impulsive Peter* and a *cautious Thomas*. This was a diverse band of personalities and priorities. Obviously, Jesus wanted to show the world that allegiance to Him can transcend all differences.

He finishes the list in verse 16, “Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.”

Here’s a provocative point, if Jesus prayed all night; then Judas Iscariot was an answer to His prayer. You’d think God would’ve weeded out the troublemakers and betrayers. But God’s ways are not our ways.

Sometimes God has a purpose for putting difficult people in our lives. He can *use them* to help *shape us*.

“And (Jesus) came down with them and stood on a level place...” Arbel’s eastern slope is a sheer drop. But west of the summit is a plateau or level ground.

Perhaps it was here that Jesus met “with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were

healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all." "ALL" were healed. No one went home that day untouched by God's love!

Verse 20, "Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said..." The rest of Luke 6 is similar to Matthew 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount. And there are scholars who are quick to point out their discrepancies.

They assume that Luke 6 and Matthew 5 are the same sermon. *I don't think so.* The address in Matthew was delivered on a mountainside. Here the people assemble in "a level place." There's no discrepancy. It was a different sermon, at a different time, in a different place, to different people. There are some repetitive content and similar structure, but it was two sermons.

Call Matthew 5-7, "The Sermon On The Mount." And refer to Luke 6 as "The Sermon On The Plain."

Jesus begins His sermon, verse 20, "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh." A mistake we often make is to assume that wealth, health, and happiness are indicators of God's blessing. Whereas poverty, sickness, and sorrow are signs of His curse.

This was the source of Job's confusion. You recall the story, Job was innocent of any wrongdoing, yet calamity still struck. Job's troubles threw a wrench in the gears of the prevailing theology of his time.

Jesus rebuffed this kind of kindergarten theology. He taught that a person's physical status has nothing to do with his

spiritual stature. A rich man is not necessarily blessed, and a poor man is not necessarily cursed.

In fact, Jesus says, “*blessed*” or “*happy*” are those who “*hunger now*” and who “*weep now*” since God will see to it that they’ll eventually laugh and be full.

According to Jesus the Kingdom of God is not about the here and now. The tables will be turned in eternity.

“*The haves*” on Earth will be Eternity’s “*have nots,*” and today’s “*have nots*” will be Heaven’s “*haves.*”

“*Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake.*” Jesus promised, “*In the world, you will have tribulation.*”

God's kingdom and the world's system are locked in mortal combat. Live for Jesus and you’ll inevitably draw fire from folks who embrace the values of this world.

It reminds me of the guy in heaven who was asked by an angel if he’d done a kind deed on Earth. He said, “*Sure, once a Hell's Angel jumped off his bike and started picking on a little old lady. I grabbed the guy, kicked him in the shins, and told the lady to run for help.*” The angel marveled, “*Wow, how brave! When did this occur?*” He said, “*Oh, about 30 seconds ago!*”

There may come a time when Christians are subject to physical violence, but here Jesus is talking about social persecution... like “*hate,*” “*slander,*” “*exclusion.*”

When you're mistreated, or slighted, or canceled. When it happens, "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets." When you're treated unfairly for Jesus' sake by an employer, or co-worker, or friend on Twitter - consider yourself blessed.

And it appears to be happening more often, not less. But this is the proof that your life is pleasing to God.

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation..." This is the rich man who pursued this world's riches and didn't have time to lay up treasure in heaven. He's been extremely shortsighted.

"Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep."

Jesus is saying, waste your life partying, and you'll cry forever. Live for a full stomach or above all else for a fat bank account, and you'll lack forever. Life is more than fun and games. Serious issues are at stake.

"Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets..." Try to be everybody's friend, and you won't be God's friend. We all offend somebody. *Will you offend men or God?*

"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you."

It's hard enough to love those who love us. *It's impossible* to love an enemy! Like the man with the withered hand, this is an impossible command, "*love your enemies...*" This kind of

love, I don't have in me, but give God the willingness, and He makes us able.

CS Lewis said, "Don't waste time bothering about whether you love your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you love someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. But if you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less." God works His miracle in us.

Always remember, *God loved His enemies*. And God doesn't ask us to do what He hasn't done Himself.

And who are God's enemies? Romans 5:10 tells us, "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son." When God loves **us**, He's loving His enemies... *And we should do likewise*.

And notice how Jesus tells us to love our enemies, **pray for them**. You can't pray for someone without looking at them through the eyes of Jesus, and once we see them as He sees them love will begin to grow.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once said, "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all our hostilities." Pray for your enemy...

And then Jesus says, verse 29, "To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also." A slap on the cheek was an insult, not a physical assault.

Jesus isn't teaching nonviolence or pacifism. You can't infer from this passage that war is always wrong, or the death

penalty doesn't have a place. There are occasions when the loving act is to forcibly stop a person from inflicting harm on myself or on society at large. If a guy breaks into my house to harm me and my family, there is nothing wrong with me brandishing my shotgun, pulling the trigger, and defending myself.

*If I'm **insulted** I should absorb it, slough it off, turn the cheek... but if I'm **assaulted** that's another matter.*

“And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.”

Again, Jesus isn't telling us to be a doormat - a victim. He's talking about our priorities and rights. *My priority should be to love people not demand my rights.* Jesus is challenging us, *“Am I willing to give up my rights, in order to show another person love?”*

My right to dignity - you can slap me, but your insult won't stop my love. *My right to possessions* - take my coat, but your soul means more to me than my shirt...

Jesus is teaching us to make a radical commitment. Let's repay hatred with love. Fight back, but overcome evil with good. Abraham Lincoln once said, *“The best way to destroy your enemy is by making him your friend.”* This should be the Christian's goal in the world.

We can passionately debate issues, but Christians should never forget our goal is to win souls, not just arguments. Ultimately, the world will know that we're of God by how we treat people - *do we love others?*

We need to remember we can hold all the right political positions - and check off all the evangelical and conservative boxes - but you betray the cause you say you support if you're ugly toward your adversaries.

Verse 31 is called "The Golden Rule." And it strikes at the heart of the matter. "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise." Jesus was not the first to utter this ideal for human relationships...

The Jewish Talmud stated, "What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man." The Buddha said, "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." Confucius put it, "What you do not want done to yourself do not do to others." Socrates said, "What stirs your anger when done to you, that do not to others."

Yet here's the difference, everyone else phrased it in the negative, but Jesus put this in the positive.

It's not enough to avoid doing harm, Jesus wants us to look for ways to do good. True morality goes on the offensive. It doesn't just dodge sin, but it shows love.

Verse 32, "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will

be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.” *What a verse!* God is still kind to ingrates and rebels. And when you show the same kindness, you’re acting like a son of the Most High.

J Oswald Sanders once wrote, “The Master expects from His disciples such conduct as can be explained only in terms of the supernatural.” And this is true here.

Anyone can love a person who loves them. But the kind of love Jesus describes is impossible. It takes a miracle to love the unlovable. It’s been said, “To injure an enemy puts you below him. To take revenge on an enemy makes you even. It’s only when you forgive your enemy that you rise above him.” Jesus calls on His followers to aspire to a higher standard.

Verse 36, “Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” I like what Martin Luther King Jr. said, “I have decided to stick to love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.” Hatred can quickly turn to bitterness.

We could rationalize the first half of this verse, “*be merciful,*” and probably still justify harshness toward some people - *if it were not for the phrase, “As your Father also is merciful.”* God is the Father of all mercy. And it’s the mercy *we know* that’s the mercy *we show*.

Then Jesus says in verse 37, “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

The word Jesus uses, “*judge*” means “to judge with the intent to condemn.” *A doctor judges to heal. A friend judges to help. A parent judges to protect.* But never judge to condemn. I love the adage, “You have a right to censure, only if you have a heart to help.”

As Christians, there are times when we’re required to make biblical judgments. *For me to call homosexuality sinful, or Mormonism heretical, or Allah a false god* is not my judgment. I’m just echoing what the Bible has already determined. What Jesus prohibits are arbitrary judgments not grounded in Scripture. *Generalizations, stereotypes, superficial conclusions, judgments based on appearance or partial info* are the unfair judgments in which we shouldn’t participate. *And the reason,* lest we want others to make unfair assumptions about us.

Verse 38, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

The phrase “*put into your bosom*” makes sense only after you’ve seen an ancient Hebrew tunic. It had a fold at the waste that served as a pocket. Jesus says *give* and God will fill your pockets! *You can't out-give God.*

“And He spoke a parable to them: “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?”

A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.”

In other words, *be careful who you follow!* You can follow the wrong person straight to hell. I advise, **never follow anybody until you know who they're following.**

“And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye?”

It seems to me Jesus intended for this to be comical. He paints a funny picture. A hypocrite makes a big deal out of the tiny toothpick protruding from your eye **while ignoring the huge 2x4 sticking out of his own eye.**

A common eye infection people get is **“pink eye.”** Here, Jesus diagnoses a disease He calls **“plank eye.”** *Do you have plank eye? Do you see the other guy's faults with 20-20 vision, while you're blind to your own.*

Once, a lady was critical of her neighbor. She looked out the window at her laundry on the clothesline, and sneered, *“My neighbor is such a sloppy housekeeper. Look at the streaks in her wash.”* Her friend responded, **“Pardon me, but those streaks aren't in her wash, they're on your window.”** A hypocrite focuses on the other guy's *minor problems*, while he has *major issues*.

“Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye?”

Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye.” Speck removal is a delicate procedure. Why would I allow you to touch my eye, if there's a 2x4 sticking out

of your own? Clear out your own plank first, then you can see to remove my speck.

"For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush."

Jesus condemns *hypocritical* judgments, *but not all judging is bad*. At times, when we need to size a person up, but when it's necessary, don't look at the outward appearance. You never judge a tree by its leaves. You look deeper, to its fruit. The same is true with a person.

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." In winter a tree grows bare, yet you don't write it off as *dead* until the spring. After it's had a chance for the sap to rise.

Likewise, don't judge a person until you get to know their heart. Take time to listen. What's on the inside will eventually rise to the surface. Out of the heart, the mouth speaks. To judge a person consider their heart.

This is what Jesus does in verse 46 "**But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?**" People can put on a righteous show and hide behind a religious facade. They can say all the right things. They can *talk the talk*, but not *walk the walk*.

A person can *profess* a loyalty, they don't *possess*.

Jesus continues, “Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.”

Note, the man with a solid foundation isn't just a hearer of Jesus' sayings, he's a **doer**. He applies. He hears and does... “But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.” Foundations aren't seen from street level. For a time, no one knew the difference between these two houses. Until the floods came and assaulted them. *And so it is in life.* Foundations aren't detectable until storms come.

It's the hard times that expose a person's foundation. They reveal our true allegiances and character. I like the old adage, “Christians are like tea bags. You don't know what's inside until you put them in hot water.”

And so the question we end with this morning is this... *Is your life built on the rock, or on shallow dirt?*

Are you trusting in God's timeless truths? Or do you live according to this world's fickle opinions and self-serving wisdom? **We may not know until the storms come**, but you know. I pray you'll be honest, and build a solid foundation by hearing and doing God's Word!