

LOVING THE UNGODLY

By Jon Crocker

TWO MAIN GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

1. To exhort and prepare us regarding our own personal ministry to unsaved people.
2. To provide help in discipling others to love the ungodly *in their own personal context*.

I. THE MEANING OF *LOVING THE UNGODLY*

A. Ungodly

- In general: All people without Christ are referred to in Scripture as ungodly (1 Peter 4:17–18).
- Specific instances:
 - Some ungodly people use the grace of God to excuse licentiousness (Jude 4).
 - Some ungodly people are “grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage” (Jude 15–16).¹
 - The world before the Flood (2 Peter 2:5) and Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Peter 2:6) are given as examples of the word *ungodly*.
 - The explanation in Romans 1:18–32 of “all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” includes this sequence: rejection of God, then idolatry, then being given over by God to impurity, then homosexuality, then every kind of senseless, death-deserving unrighteousness (“*being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful*”).

B. Love

- The person who loves gives of himself without taking into account the cost to serve the other for his good.
- Loving ungodly people requires serving them sacrificially for their benefit. True expressions of real love seek to meet the *need* of the one loved (Luke 10:25–37).
- What do the ungodly need?
 - They need Christ.
 - They need someone to tell them. They need someone who will love them enough to tell them the truth regarding sin and redemption. They need someone who will appropriately befriend them and spend time with them and reflect the love of Christ. “Truth without love will usually be ignored, but love without truth is not even real love” (Carl F. H. Henry).²
 - Sometimes this is comparatively easy.
 - But this is especially difficult in certain cases.
 - ⇒ Certain addictions make it difficult to maintain a stable friendship.
 - ⇒ Certain sins frustrate and anger us, and we are tempted to display that anger with a vengeful spirit.
 - ⇒ Certain types of ungodliness manifest themselves in a belligerent, in-your-face way.

II. THE MOTIVES FOR *LOVING THE UNGODLY*

- Other motivations exist.
- These two are from Scriptural passages that mention *love* and the *ungodly*.

¹ Scripture quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation), 1995.

² George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 161.

A. To display our sonship (Matthew 5:43–48, Luke 6:27–36)

B. To rescue the perishing (Romans 1:18; 2 Peter 3:7; Romans 5:6–8, 4:5; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11)

III. THE PRACTICE OF *LOVING THE UNGODLY*

A. Recognize the image of God in every human being (James 3:8–9).

B. Remember your own ungodliness apart from Christ (1 Corinthians 15:9–10).

“Precious Redeemer, dying Lamb of God, were my sins adding to your sorrow? Have I looked down on unbelievers, and all the while forgetting that every sin of mine became more painful to your soul than the cross, or the thorns, or the soldier’s spear that pierced your heart?”³

C. Prioritize the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 9:19–23).

D. Open doors with genuine kindness (Matthew 11:28–30).

“Once become satisfied that a man loves you, and you will listen gladly to anything he has to say” (J. C. Ryle). “When the people see that you love them without pretense, then they will hear anything you tell them, and they will bear anything you lay upon them” (Richard Baxter).⁴

E. Keep yourself unspotted (Jude 23, James 1:27).

F. Patiently persevere (2 Corinthians 4:1–2).

G. Display and preach true blessedness (Psalm 1, Matthew 5:3–12).

H. Pray in faith (1 Thessalonians 1:5, Acts 16:14).

I. Think of the glorious end (Ephesians 5:27, 1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

³ Robert Hawker, in *Piercing Heaven: Prayers of the Puritans*, compiled and edited by Robert Elmer (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 275.

⁴ Quoted in Ted Christman, “Love Your Flock,” in *Dear Timothy: Letters on Pastoral Ministry*, ed. Thomas K. Ascol, Revised Edition (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2016), 75.