

8: Love

Matthew 5:43-48

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

It is natural for us to treat our friends better than our enemies. Yet, Jesus challenges those who call themselves Christians to stand out in a strange way. In Jesus’ time the religious teachers added things to God’s commands. We are to love our neighbor, it says that directly in Leviticus 19:18, but nowhere does scripture tell us to hate our enemies. In reality, scripture tells us, “If your enemies are hungry, give them food to eat. If they are thirsty, give them water to drink.” (Proverbs 25:21)

Christians are commanded to love their enemies. Jesus tells us to pray for our enemies. In Luke 6:27, Jesus tells us to bless our enemies and do good to them. Pray, bless, and do good to our enemies. But why?

In verse 45, we see that God lets the sun rise on good and evil people. He also sends rain on both of them. So why should we treat evil, bad, enemies with love? Because God does too. We are to be like our Father in heaven, literally children of our Father, we need to act like our Father. Loving all people is what our “family” should be about (see verse 45).

For those who are against us, we are called to do not the ordinary, but the extraordinary, just as Jesus Christ was willing to die for the worst of us. People should be able to notice that Christians are different, and one way is in the way we treat our enemies, in the way we treat “evil” people.

Certainly no one can be perfect in this life. 1 John 1:8 says that, “If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth”. But that doesn’t mean that we can go around hating people we don’t like or even those who have hurt us. We are to take our aim on being “perfect” and nothing less, while accepting the love and forgiveness that God gives us each step of the way. It is only our faith and daily trust in Jesus that can help us to live like Jesus.

1. Who is your “neighbor”?

Name a neighbor (past or present): _____

2. Who is your “enemy”?

Name an enemy (past or present): _____

3. Have you ever hated anyone? How come?

4. Why are Christians instructed to love our “enemies”?

5. Explain some specific ways someone could pray, bless or do good for an enemy.

6. How can we muster up the courage or heart to change the way we treat our enemies?

7. Do you think we can become “perfect”? If not, should we not even try?

Live Like This:

(One word that sums it up for you)