

""You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Mat 5:43-48 (NKJV)

FIRST OF ALL WHO IS AN ENEMY / RECALL HOW WE DEFINED LOVE? – 5 MINS

An enemy is not someone who you hate!

An enemy is someone who has not responded or is not responding appropriately to your show of love!

Not someone you do not like or hate. We are never allowed to hate because hate murder in seed form. A hater is a murderer.

What is love?

- **“To love is to make a decision not to judge; to raise someone above laws, and rules and expectations and say to this person – I will value you; I will care for you; I will treasure you”.**
- It is to give someone a **judgment free place** – a place where it can be okay for them to not be okay as they work on being okay. A place where they can be naked and not ashamed.
- The greatest gift you can give someone is a place where they can be naked and not ashamed. Where they can be free to be who they really are and yet not be ashamed.

Our Father has called us to create such a place for people – it is in this place that we can be truly intimate with one another and then be able to flourish and reach our highest potential.

BUT HOW CAN I LOVE SOMEONE WHO ABUSES THIS LOVE OR RESPONDS WRONGLY I.E. AN ENEMY? - 15 MINS

Let's break this into 3 Categories:

Someone or people who just hate you – they are out to hurt you, deliberately. They use whatever powers they have – professional, financial, political, spiritual to hurt you.

1. **(LUKE 23:34)** Pray for them like Jesus prayed – “Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing”. Lord do not hold this against them. Help them to come to see that they have been forgiven in Christ. **Sis. Willie thought us actually pray for their forgiveness as if we are the ones who sinned.**
2. **(ROM 12:17-21)** Look for every and any opportunity to do good to them. When you hear they are not feeling fine. Send them a greeting. Their birthday, send them a birthday greeting. Show them the same grace God showed you when you were God's enemy.
3. It is important to do this without an expectation of a positive response from them. This is your response to their response – not to hate back, but to love
4. What you cannot do is do back to them what they do to you. Hate them because they hate. Don't greet them because they don't greet you etc.

Someone who takes advantage of your love and begins to misbehave. Begins to abuse and despise that love.

1. **Matt 18:15 -20** First note that Jesus puts this person in the category of “the most important in the kingdom” – a vulnerable brother or sister whom you are about to lose and God is about to lose
2. **[Aside: God is trading in human beings – he is on a rescue mission and we are here to partner with him on that mission]**
3. In love and out of concern for that person, confront that person – get the person to own the problem.
4. **Unless the problem has an owner it cannot be solved.**
5. Put it in the person’s court to 1) identify the issue 2) own the issue and 3) make a commitment to resolve the issue
6. Paul said “what effort, what determination” - to clear yourself – **1 Cor. 7:8 - 12**
7. If this person does not – move the person to the category of someone who has determined to hurt you – agonize in prayer for the person and keep looking for opportunity to do good to the person – yet do not expect positive response i.e. “keep the offer open”
8. Example of someone who began to fail in his job because of “love” he was being shown – **“I could keep be close and friendly with you and you get fired or you could take your job seriously and I keep loving you. Your choice.”**

Someone who no matter what you do does not seem to get along with you.

Often this is a peer, a colleague, a fellow leader or someone in your sub-group. This is something you find in marriages. You find it in leadership teams. It is the passive aggressive reaction to you. It could also be a scenario where you just do not have a connection with someone. This is the bigger challenge – you do not hate this person – but they just rub you off the wrong way! What do you do?

There was an example in the church of Philippi – **Philippians 4:2 – 3** two women who had exactly the same problem. These were not small sisters. They were filled with the Holy Spirit – Paul called them co-laborers – without them that church could not have been planted.

They were not getting along. The solution Paul says is for you to adopt the mind of the Lord when it comes to that person. Now if both of you adopt the mind of the Lord - you will achieve something that is beautiful it is only in the Trinity you can find it.

But for both of you to get there – you have to adopt the mind of the Lord.

What is that mind of the Lord? - Philippians 2: 1 – 11 – this issue was probably on Paul’s mind as he was writing this,.

*"If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care— then do me a favor: **Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends.** Don't **push your way to the front**; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. **Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead.** Don't be **obsessed with getting your own advantage.** Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand. Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had **equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what.** Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that: a crucifixion. Because of that obedience, **God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.**" Php 2:1-11 (MSG)*

WHY? - 10 MINS

- Hate creates hate which creates hate – endless cycle. Love terminates that cycle. Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction. So Jesus says “Love your enemies,” – why? So you can have dominion, and take authority and seize control to terminate the endless cycle of wickedness.
- Hate is CONTRARY to our nature. Hate distorts and it is injurious! It injures the person who is hated – but injures you who hates. If you walk in dislike and hate – you are living contrary to your nature. Hate will make you call good evil and evil good. Hatred, bitterness and anger will make you call what is beautiful ugly and call what is ugly beautiful. It will blind you! This is why not walking in love hurts you. Soon begins to affect your health. You begin to gain weight. Look stressed – for what? Just love!

You do not have it in you. It’s not there – and then when you try faking it, you start getting hurt. Be who you are. **It’s like sin – as Christians, sin does not take us to hell. It brings hell into our lives!**

- Finally it is the only way to defeat evil. God defeated evil through love! The supreme act of love was how God defeated evil. You do not use evil to defeat evil - you use love! When God asked us to have dominion in the earth - he was asking us to love! God’s version of dominion and rule - is not the way we think - it is love. When John heard that the lion of Judah had prevailed - when he looked he saw the lamb that was slain. **It is the kindness and goodness of God - not his severity that changes people. Romans 2:4**

Story of Abraham Lincoln and Stanton – “he belongs to the ages”

- Used every ounce of his energy to degrade him in public. Called him names. Belittled him. Used unkind words to describe his physical appearance and constantly sought to embarrass him.
- Lincoln – chose him for the most important cabinet position Secretary of War – “I have looked all across the country and he is the best man
- If Lincoln had returned hate for hate, both men would have gone to their graves as bitter enemies. But through love – Lincoln turned an enemy into a friend.
- In the midst of the war, when bitterness abound in the North towards the South – Lincoln was known for always saying kind words about the people of the South. One day a shocked bystander asked him how he could do this and he said “Madam, do I not destroy my enemies by making them my friends”?

So we need to learn how to respond when people do not respnd correctly.

If they hate you – love them. If the despitefully use you – confront them in love, to win them. And if they do not get along with you – put them ahead of yourselves

And see the power of his love work in you, for you and through you! In Jesus Name.