

Enemies

BIG IDEA:

It's only natural for us to love those who are kind toward us. The transformed life is one that loves expansively, pursuing a loving relationship not only when I receive love in return, but also loving people that I would call my enemy.

I want to tell you it is a problem to hold on to Jesus right now. I am pleased that the president of the United States decided to drop food in addition to bombs, but I have to tell you this. It is about time we take seriously what the Scriptures say. If your enemy hungers, feed him. If your enemy is naked, clothe him. You return good for evil.

Does Jesus mean this for all places, all times, all peoples, all circumstances, or just when it is convenient? What does it really mean to follow the one who said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God"? We all want to be children of God, but we don't like the conditions. What do you do with a Senator McCain who says, "I hope God shows them some mercy, because they're not going to get any from us?"

Tony Campolo

In the sermon It's Friday, but Sunday's Comin'



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READ

Matthew 5:43-48

To understand this passage more clearly one needs to understand the context of how the word “love” is used in Matthew. There are multiple meanings of the word love in the English language – yet we still use the word “love” to convey each of the different meanings in our written language. That is not how words are used in the original text, in fact in the original text “love” has very specific meanings for very specific passages. Here, the word for “agape” love is used.

This kind of love is perhaps best expressed in Jesus Christ’s statement in John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” Jesus Himself perfectly exemplified this kind of love throughout His lifetime, continually giving of Himself and His time and energies to serve others and ultimately offering up His life as a sacrifice for all of humanity. This is the kind of love God wants each of us to exemplify in our lives. Agape love serves the needs of others, expecting nothing in return.

Prepare

What meaning of the word “love” in the phrase “love your neighbor . . . and love your enemies” do you think Matthew is referring to in 5:43 and 44?

What were your original thoughts about loving your enemies before you knew the correct “love” definition?

How do you “work” out your “love” to your enemies”?

Anyone can love your family, friends and people who love us, but how do you live out this kind of “love”... every day?

Where do we go from here?

Pause and pray. Ask God to help you to understand what He wants from each of His children. Ask God to help you understand the kind of “love in action” that reflects Christ to those we love and struggle to love. Confess to Him you can’t do it on your own – you can only do this with the Lord’s help.

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READ

Luke 6:34-36

It seems like God is calling us to grow up (spiritually)! Jesus calls us to go beyond the basics in our Christian walk. It's easy to love the lovable – but we are commanded to love the unlovable, including our enemies. By doing so, we conform to the image of Jesus Christ as He loved us – sinners bound for eternal punishment and now bound for eternity with Him. The love of which Jesus speaks is not a feeling in any sense of the word. It is a decision resulting in action. It is a choice you make that has nothing to do with how you are feeling, and often, occurs in spite of the opposite way you are “feeling”. This kind of love never judges a person but sees the needs of a person, and responds according to the need, not the “issues” of the person.

Prepare

What does a decision to love mean to me?

How do you decide to love the unlovable – or worse – my enemies?

Write down at least three specific things on how you can begin to show your love to the unlovable? To your enemies?

1.

2.

3.

Where do we go from here?

Pause and pray. Ask God to move you beyond yourself – to love those who don't love – even those who hate you and even want to harm you. Confess to him you can't do it on your own – you can only do this with the Lord's help.

Chapel Scripture

Thursday, December 2

MATTHEW 5:43-48 (NIV)

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.

Notes:

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READ

Romans 12

Continuing with the theme of “growing up spiritually”, just as it can take years and even decades to physically mature, growing up spiritually takes us into eternity. But realize, the Lord expects us to mature in our Christian walk each and every day we have a relationship with Him. We are called by God to move from infants to adults in the way we reflect Christ to an unsaved world. Have you ever considered perfection? The old story goes...perfect?.....nobody wants to be perfect, because you know what they did to the last guy that was perfect....they crucified him! Or have you used the phrase...”hey nobody’s perfect...” in a feeble attempt to cover your mistakes. In verse 48 of Matthew 5, it clearly and specifically states “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. I prefer the Message translation.”Grow up. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it.” And from Romans 12:2 – be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Reflect

What does growing up spiritually mean to me? Does this go hand in hand with transforming your mind?

Now that you are called kingdom subjects – how does your spirit of service, selflessness and humility show itself in being transformed by the renewing of your mind to others?

Can one be perfect? Spiritually perfect? Or how does our goal of honoring Christ 24/7 show our commitment to reflecting Christ and spiritual perfection?

Where are you at spiritually? Infant? Teenager? Adult? Do I need to grow up spiritually? Do I need to move to the next level spiritually?

Where do we go from here?

Pause and pray. Ask God help you understand what He wants to “perfect” in your life. Ask Him to show you where you are at in your spiritual walk and where you need to get to. Confess to Him you need a transforming and renewing of your mind and you can only do this with the Lord’s help.