

CHRIST-FOLLOWERS LOVE THEIR ENEMIES

Matthew 5:43–48

John 14:15–16 – If you love Me, keep My commands. Jesus promised another Helper who would be with us forever.

The Holy Spirit is Our Helper

“Helper” – someone who comes alongside to help.

We do not have to carry the burden of living the Christian life on our own.

If we love Jesus, we will keep His commands.

There are many commands throughout Scripture, but Jesus told us which were the greatest.

Matthew 22:37–39

- Love God.
- Love your neighbor as yourself.

To love our neighbor means:

- Treating others with the same love and compassion we show ourselves.
- Forgiving others as God has forgiven us.
- Seeking what is best for others, not simply what is best for ourselves.

Christ-Followers Love Their Enemies

Matthew 5:43–48

The principles of God's Kingdom often seem completely backward from the principles of our world.

The world says, **“Love those who love you.”**

Jesus says, **“Love your enemies.”**

The world says, **“Get even.”**

Jesus says, **“Pray for those who persecute you.”**

Loving our enemies does not come naturally.

We Were Enemies of God

Sin separates us from God and places us in opposition to Him.

Romans 5:10

Colossians 1:21–22

James 4:4

Romans 8:7

At one time or another, every one of us has been hostile toward God.

Yet despite everything we have done or said, **God had already provided the solution.**

God Loved His Enemies

John 3:16–17

God loved a world that was hostile toward Him enough to send His only Son.

He did not send His Son to condemn His enemies but to save them.

Romans 5:8 – While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Think of it this way:

While we were still His enemies, Christ died for us.

Jesus is our example.

No matter how hostile we were toward Him...

No matter how badly we had sinned...

No matter how much we had rejected Him...

He loved us.

He came for us.

He died for us.

Now He commands us to show that same kind of love toward people who have been hostile toward us.

Love Must Be Sincere

Romans 12:9-21

Sincere love is more than simply saying we love someone.

Love is:

- Patient.
- Kind.
- Not envious.
- Not boastful.
- Keeps no record of wrongs.
- Protects.
- Trusts.
- Hopes.
- Perseveres.

We are also commanded to:

Hate what is evil and cling to what is good.

Jesus demonstrated this throughout His life and ministry.

Everything Jesus did was aimed at defeating the evil that held people captive.

Fight the Evil — Not the Person

Our natural response is to fight the person who has hurt us.

But Scripture reminds us that the person is not our ultimate enemy.

Ephesians 6:11-12

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood.

The enemy uses people who are:

- Hurt.
- Angry.

- Addicted.
- Bitter.
- Deceived.
- Trapped in sin.

When we focus only on the person, bitterness and resentment begin building within **us**.

If we are going to love our enemies, we must learn to recognize the real battle.

See the Person Who Is Trapped

Galatians 6:1

Think about the word **“caught”** as being caught in a trap.

A person trapped in sin can begin believing:

“This is just the way my life is.”

“I’ll never get out of this.”

“This is who I am.”

Instead of only seeing what that person has done to us, we need to become concerned about **their spiritual condition**.

We must also watch ourselves.

While responding to someone else's sin, we can become trapped ourselves through:

- Bitterness.
- Anger.
- Hatred.
- Unforgiveness.
- Revenge.

Someone else's sin does not give us permission to sin.

Put Others Before Yourself

Philippians 2:3–5

One of the greatest enemies of Christianity is **selfishness**.

Our culture asks:

What can someone do for me?

That attitude can creep into the Church.

Instead of:

“What can I do for the church?”

we ask:

“What can the church do for me?”

Instead of:

“What can I do for God?”

we ask:

“What can God do for me?”

We become controlled by the **“I feels.”**

- I feel worship should be this way.
- I feel the pastor should do this.
- I feel things should happen this way.
- I feel I cannot forgive that person.

But our feelings do not have greater authority than God's Word.

If God commands us to forgive and we say, **“I can't forgive,”** we are placing our feelings above His command.

Christ-followers should look different.

We should act different.

We should talk different.

We should be different.

Jesus Set the Example

Jesus had all the glory of Heaven, yet He humbled Himself and came to earth as a servant.

He came to serve people who would hate Him.

He came knowing they would reject Him.

He came knowing they would kill Him.

And He came anyway.

Why?

He was concerned about their spiritual condition.

Jesus acted for our greatest benefit while we were still His enemies.

That is what love looks like.

Bless — Don't Curse

Romans 12:14

Bless those who persecute you.

Bless and do not curse.

When someone lashes out at us and we lash back, we respond from the same place they are responding from.

Christ-followers are called to respond differently.

Romans 12:17

Do not repay anyone evil for evil.

We have the Holy Spirit—the Helper, Counselor, and One who comes alongside us.

God has given us what we need to live a godly life.

Pursue Peace

Romans 12:18

As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Everyone includes:

- People we like.
- People we don't like.
- People who have loved us.
- People who have harmed us.

We cannot control how another person responds.

But we are responsible for **our response**.

Refuse Revenge

Romans 12:19-21

Do not take revenge.

If your enemy is hungry — **feed them**.

If your enemy is thirsty — **give them something to drink**.

Doing good to our enemy is not about secretly hoping God will “get them.”

The burning coals are not about our revenge.

They point toward the possibility of **conviction, purification, and repentance**.

Our response may become something God uses to reach the person who has hurt us.

Overcome Evil With Good

Jesus did not overcome His enemies by becoming like them.

He overcame evil through love.

He loved us while we were His enemies.

Now He commands us to do the same.

Christ-Followers Love Their Enemies

- **Recognize that we were once God's enemies.**
- **Remember how Christ loved us.**
- **Fight the real enemy, not people.**
- **Be concerned about people's spiritual condition.**
- **Bless instead of curse.**
- **Pursue peace.**
- **Refuse revenge.**
- **Overcome evil with good.**

We cannot do this in our own strength.

That's why Jesus gave us a Helper.