

## WHEN ENEMIES ARE HARD TO LOVE

### PRECEPT

#### Matthew 5:43-48

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. <sup>44</sup> But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! <sup>45</sup> In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. <sup>46</sup> If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. <sup>47</sup> If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. <sup>48</sup> But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

### PROMISE

We all have people we don't like, people who annoy us, hurt us, or people who seem very hard to love. Someone becomes our enemy when there's a wound inside our hearts, you stop talking to each other, and then the distance grows. Eventually, you start to think negatively about this person. Do you find it easier to love someone who loves you back or those who make life difficult for you?

When enemies are hard to love, pray. When you start praying for them, your pride melts, your compassion grows. God works behind the scenes; your prayer may not change that person, but your prayer will always change your heart. Love your enemies, Jesus commanded us, even when it hurts. Loving our enemies is a choice; it shouldn't be based on our feelings or when our anger fades. He loved us at our worst, when we were still His enemies by our actions. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Jesus didn't wait for us to change—He loved us first. When your friends or family give you feedback, don't think that they are your enemies; but praise God, we have friends and family who can give us feedback so we can be aware of our blind spots. They love us enough to talk to us, helping us to improve because the real enemy comes to steal, kill, and destroy. There is nothing to prove, but everything to improve.

When we feel like life is unfair, it is never in our place to avenge. God is not blind, and He allows things to happen for a bigger purpose. Jesus Christ loved us so much that, although we were all His enemies and opposed to Him, He still loved us. Corrie Ten Boom tells, “You never so touch the ocean of God's love as when you forgive and love your enemies.” Meaning you haven't truly practiced God's love when you only love those who love you.

### PRACTICE

1. **Love.** How does humility help you love people you see as enemies?
2. **In action.** Who are you struggling to love? And how can we pray/encourage you regarding this?

### PRAYER

#### I. Church

- May each of us desire to seek God and extend His love to our family and communities.

#### II. Trust

- When we face uncertainty, may we be reminded of His love and faithfulness.

#### III. Justice

- Pray for justice and redemption for those who are oppressed and marginalized.

#### IV. Provision

- May God guide us in stewarding what we have wisely and generously.

#### V. Retreat

- Pray for a meaningful retreat.

#### VI. Marriages

- Pray for selflessness and love in marriages.

#### VII. Healing

- Pray for comfort and healing.