

LOVING YOUR ENEMIES

Matthew 5:43-45 NIV – "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children 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.

DESCRIPTION

While we were enemies of God and totally hostile to Him in our thoughts and actions, Christ died for us and forgave us completely. Now, as His followers, He calls upon us to love our enemies the way that He loved us when we were His enemies. Although we may not be nailed to a cross literally, it might require taking up our cross to suffer in order to release our enemies to freedom. This is the mercy that God desires for each of His children to have in our hearts.

Practicing participation in Loving Your Enemies is about working towards deep and genuine forgiveness and blessing in our hearts, even for those who have hurt us badly.

MEDITATION

Use these to reflect on God's mercy to you:

God does not make me earn His love. It is a free gift.

While I was ungodly and an enemy of God, He loved me enough to die for me.

God loves me without expecting anything in return.

God does not hold a grudge against me and He remembers my sins no more.

Jesus died to set me free from the things that kept me in bondage and hostile to Him.

Nothing and no one can separate me from God's love for me or thwart God's plan for my life.

When people do things to hurt or offend me, I reckon that part of me dead in Christ so I am free to love them without reservation.



PURPOSE:

To reveal God's nature in us by loving our enemies.

To love, bless, and pray for those who have treated us shamefully.

To forgive as Christ has forgiven us.

SPIRITUAL FRUIT:

Godliness. Mercy. Forgiveness.

Freedom from bitterness, resentment, accusations against others.

Growing in genuine love for others without partiality.

PRAYER

Father, thank you that you sent your Son Jesus to die for me when I was your enemy. Help me now to be like you by blessing, praying for, and loving my enemies. In Jesus' name, Amen.



PRACTICE

1. Write a list of the people who have hurt you or who you would consider to be your "enemies."
 - Those who cursed or slandered you, denigrated, abused, or humiliated you, misunderstood or wounded you through their words or actions, etc.
2. Consider the ways that your enemy's treatment of you triggered unloving, unforgiving, or ungodly reactions in you.
 - Does it spike in you offense, anger, pride, self-defensiveness; jealousy, competition, selfish ambition; revenge, withdrawal, or wanting their downfall, etc.
3. By faith, take up your cross and reckon that part of you dead in Christ. (See Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:11.)
 - You are dead to yourself by faith. Dead people aren't offended or angry; competitive or vengeful, etc.
4. One enemy at a time, ask the Holy Spirit to work in your heart towards genuine and total forgiveness and blessing. Use the following as a guide:
 - Father God, in Jesus' name, I pray for _____.
 - Father, thank you that you love _____ and sent Jesus to die for _____ to forgive all their sins, as you did mine.
 - Father, in Jesus' name, I forgive _____ and release them totally from the harm they have done to me.
 - Father, in Jesus' name, I ask you to bless and prosper _____'s life, family, health, and the work of their hands.
 - Father, in Jesus' name, show me how to love _____ in word and in deed the way that you love me.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES:

Romans 5:6-10

Colossians 1:21-23

Leviticus 19:18

Matthew 18:23-35

1 John 4:21

Matthew 5:21-22

Romans 12:19-20

Luke 23:34

Matthew 9:13

NOTES: _____
