

Active Love

WARM-UP

- Name an interesting rivalry you've experienced (e.g. in school or in your culture). What was the rivalry based on?
- Tell us about one thing that usually gets on your nerves. What do you do when that happens?
- How do you express your love to the people you love the most? Briefly explain.

WORD

⁴³"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is 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."

MATTHEW 5:43-45

Loving our enemies is one of the most challenging commands of Jesus. It is easy to love people who treat you kindly and return the love you give them. On the other hand, loving those who take advantage of you, wrong you, and hurt you is difficult. Our natural tendency is to go against our enemies and get even. Jesus challenged this belief and raised the standard by commanding us to love our enemies as the Father loved us. Here are the radical responses Jesus presented.

1 Pray to the Father for them.

"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you . . ." **MATTHEW 5:44**

When we pray for our enemies, we involve the Father in our relationship with them. It is an act of surrendering the matter of justice into God's hands instead of taking it into our own. Jesus Himself demonstrated this. When He was crucified, He asked the Father to forgive those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34). In spite of the injustice He experienced, He cared about His enemies and asked God to be merciful toward them. In light of this, we are called to express the same kind of love to our enemies by praying for them. How have you learned to pray for your enemies? What do you pray for?

2 Love like the Father loves them.

“ . . . For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” **MATTHEW 5:45**

Our Father loves differently from the world. He gives favor and blessings to us even if we are undeserving. If God treated us according to what we deserve, we would all perish. Instead of basing His actions on the way we treat Him, He chooses to be gracious to us. His love is selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional. We are called to love in the same manner. Why is our love for others an overflow of God's love for us? How have you learned to love as you have been loved by God?

APPLICATION

- How can you pray for your enemies this week?
- How can you demonstrate the selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional love of God to your enemies? What will you do differently?
- Have you forgiven your enemies? What will you do to obey Jesus' command to forgive those who have hurt or offended you?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional love. Thank Him for demonstrating how it is to love enemies by loving you.
- Ask God to give you the grace to demonstrate love and forgiveness to others, especially your enemies.
- Pray that God's love will be so evident in your life that even your enemies will come to know Christ through you.

NOTES



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