

"Love your enemies"

FROM THE CHAPLAIN

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:43-44

One of the hardest teachings of Jesus in the Bible is to 'love your enemies'. Most of us are on board with the message to 'love your neighbour' if the neighbour in question is someone we actually like! But what if it is that annoying folk over the fence, the fool of a family member, the weird co-worker, or selfish sports teammate?

The religious people in Jesus' day tried to find the loophole and say, "yep, got this one covered, Jesus". But he basically says to them, you need to love the jerks of the world, not just your besties.

This is the radical, counter-cultural love which exemplified the early Christian church and is what is desperately needed to be lived out today.

You might say, "Jesus, if you had the enemies that I have, you wouldn't ask such a thing of me." But Jesus loved those who were his enemies, he loved those who rejected him, he loves you and me. Where's the proof? "While we were sinners, Christ died for us."

So, who are the 'enemies' in life? We might think the best we can reach is the status of 'frenemy'. A frenemy is a person with whom you are friendly despite having a fundamental dislike or rivalry. But Jesus calls us to more, to actually love them with the love God has for us. This is the challenge before us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. But, where do we start?

Here are a few things to consider in going from enemy to frenemy to really loving your

enemy, from Fervr <https://fervr.net/teen-life/love-your-worst-enemies>

Pray for them. Ask God to intervene and open opportunities to love your 'enemy' in practical everyday acts of kindness.

Ask God to help you forgive them when they hurt you, to have your heart healed and changed.

Don't provoke other people to anger. Don't stir the dormant volcano.

Don't retaliate. We become just like our enemies when we sink to their level. Jesus says we need to be the better person.

Ask for help. If you are being bullied or teased and finding it hard, get some help. Often, bullies have lots of troubles of their own & they are acting out because they can't cope with their own problems. By seeking help from a teacher, parent or other professional, the bully can be spoken to. This could lead to them getting the help they need.

Be patient. People do change over time, and if you continue to show a godly attitude, you will earn the respect of others.

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