



**Bible Study, February 1, 2023**

**Series: The Discipleship Training of Jesus Christ | A Study of Matthew 5-7**

**Lesson 4: Displaying a Higher Love**

---

**Pastor Reginald Rogers, Facilitator**

**Introduction**

When you hear the word enemy, what stirs within you? An enemy usually means a threat. Most times an enemy brings back to memory hostility with an arch-rival. Words like adversary, antagonist, attacker, and foe makes the blood boil, especially if it is a bitter enemy. Most times an enemy reminds us of someone we hated. In today's lesson our Lord raises the standard for engaging our enemies. He teaches His disciples about a radical love that is a must to follow and obey. I call this a next level kind of love meaning that this is a higher commandment to love by His disciples.

**The Scripture Reading | Matthew 5:43-48**

<sup>43</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

<sup>44</sup> But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

<sup>45</sup> 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.

<sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

<sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

**Examining the Text**

When Jesus said to His disciples that their righteousness must surpass the righteousness of the Teachers of the Law and Pharisees (CF: *Matthew 5:20*). He gave them many examples to consider. These examples are listed beginning in *Matthew 5:21* all the way through to *Matthew 7:27*. If you remember I ask you to review six of the examples in our previous lesson. Tonight, let us explore one specific example to learn how to distinguish how the righteousness of the disciple surpasses the righteousness of the Pharisee. Let us pay close attention to the things that Jesus commanded.

<sup>43</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

***Love is for All People***

This example along with the other examples given to the disciples is a lesson of action and not a lesson of just hearing (CF: *James 1:22*). They must measure up to this test and we must measure up too. What was the disciples understanding of the phrase, "Love your neighbor?" Were they aware of the Law of Moses on this subject? The Law of Moses emphasized the following about love and hate: "*Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.* [Leviticus 19:17-18] These words were spoken directly from the LORD GOD as a commandment to the people of Israel. GOD expected them to practice this high standard of love throughout all of Israel.



**Bible Study, February 1, 2023**

**Series: The Discipleship Training of Jesus Christ | A Study of Matthew 5-7**

**Lesson 4: Displaying a Higher Love**

**Pastor Reginald Rogers, Facilitator**

Did this kind of love become the norm among them? I would say no because all of Israel was under the rule of the religious leaders well before Jesus appeared there. When Jesus was confronted by a teacher of the Law who asked Him what must I do to inherit eternal life? The Lord replied by asking him what is written in the Law? He answered Jesus by quoting the "Great Commandment" about loving GOD and loving your neighbor. Jesus told him to practice these and he would have eternal life. But the teacher pushed back asking Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" (CF: *Luke 10:25-29*) Was this an indicator that Jews were inconsistent in keeping the commandment to love your neighbor?

The proof would be in their response after Jesus shared the parable about the Good Samaritan. After all, the Jews hated the Samaritan people and it would have been very difficult for them to accept Samaritans as their neighbor. However, the teacher answered Jesus' question about which of the three people was a neighbor to the one that was rescued by saying the one who showed mercy who was the Samaritan in the parable (CF: *Luke 10:30-37*). The point here is that there was a narrow viewpoint on loving your neighbor in Israel. Gentile people, as well as, enemies were not included. Jesus wanted His disciples to expand their viewpoint about loving all people. This commandment to love your neighbor includes the church too.

**1. Why is it important as the body of Christ to love all people?**

---

---

---

<sup>44</sup> But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> 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.

***Love for Your Enemies***

Dislike for non-Jewish people known as Gentiles was practiced throughout Israel during the time when Jesus taught this commandment about loving your enemies. The religious leaders were instructing the Jews to love among themselves and to hate the Gentiles, as well as, their enemies. How do we know this fact? Their teaching opposed the teaching of the Lord. Let us review the verses that follow: *Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are.* [Matthew 22:15-16] This is proof that they did not like the things that Jesus taught.



## Bible Study, February 1, 2023

### Series: The Discipleship Training of Jesus Christ | A Study of Matthew 5-7

#### Lesson 4: Displaying a Higher Love

---

Pastor Reginald Rogers, Facilitator

Jesus told His disciples to love their enemies and pray for them. By doing these they would be children of the heavenly Father. What does that statement mean? Jesus was telling His disciples that by praying for their enemy or persecutor that they would come to glorify GOD as the heavenly Father. So, if the disciples were to love their neighbor, then they must love their enemies too. As disciples today, how does this teaching make you feel? Is there any hidden resentment towards an enemy? Any pardons to be made? Any debts owed you to be forgiven? I want you to ask yourself, "Am I still harboring hate against my enemy? Do you recall these words in the following: *If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.* [Proverbs 25:21-22] Being kind to your enemy is a biblical command. Jesus reminded His disciples that it is the heavenly Father who causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good. He added, He sends the rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Why does the heavenly Father do this? It is because He is just, fair, slow to anger and ready to forgive the sin of anybody that needs His compassion, grace, and mercy. Also, GOD is impartial in all that He does and this includes His divine providence and care for creation.

#### 2. Tell how you would you fulfill this commandment to make peace with and love your enemy?

---

---

---

<sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? <sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

#### **Love Has a Benefit from GOD**

As Jesus continued to teach His disciples, He reinforced their thoughts by getting them to look at favoritism, as well as, choosing the privilege few over their enemies. We all know about this kind of preference that is made when people look at others who are different from them. Whether it is race, language, nationality, social and such as these, people show partiality. Jesus would not allow His disciples to practice partiality among themselves. He asks them what was the reward if they showed this unfairness?



## Bible Study, February 1, 2023

### Series: The Discipleship Training of Jesus Christ | A Study of Matthew 5-7

#### Lesson 4: Displaying a Higher Love

---

Pastor Reginald Rogers, Facilitator

Consider His teaching in the following: "*And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.* [Matthew 6:5-6] It is the heavenly Father who makes a note of the actions of the disciples. If it is not glorifying and pleasing to Him there is no reward from Him. However, if He is pleased, then He will reward and do so according to His will.

When Jesus spoke about the tax collectors and pagans being partial, He wanted His disciples to understand that being partial was a common practice with them. He was not judging the tax collectors or the pagans. Why? Because these were the very people that He came to seek and save (CF: Luke 19:10). Lastly, Jesus instructed His disciples to be perfect like their heavenly Father who is perfect. Again, He was not telling them to measure up to a specific standard of attainment. But to develop a single-minded and whole-hearted commitment of doing the will of the Father. GOD is undivided in His will and the disciples must willingly follow the will of the Father just as Jesus follows the Father's will. When the disciples do this, they become spiritually mature just like the heavenly Father. This is what being perfect is all about for believers.

#### 3. Make a list of the heavenly rewards found in the New Testament that the Father will bestow upon His believers. [Hint: The headwear for a king]

---

---

---

#### Endnotes

1. Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture is taken from *The Holy Bible, New International Version®*, NIV®, Copyright©1973, 1978, 1984. 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Biblica, Inc.® All rights reserved worldwide.