

# Blog



## Enemies

How do treat our enemies?

“As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison.” (Nelson Mandela) Human relationships are not straight forward. In an ideal world we would all get along nicely. Yet in reality our world is full of relational angst. People fall out. Relationships are fractured. Emotions are wounded. Enemies are formed. Navigating a path through the complexities of human interaction is challenging.

Having enemies cannot be avoided. But how we respond to those who have hurt us is within our gift. The gospel makes a difference to our lives. We were enemies of God, yet he loved us and did good to us. Likewise, we have the power through the Holy Spirit to emulate this example by loving our enemies and doing good to them. Curiously, those enemies that would naturally make us bitter can, by the grace of God, make us better.

In addressing this issue head on, Jesus gave his disciples the following instructions.

*“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”* (Luke 6:27-28)

Here are four practical ways of responding to our enemies.

### **Love them** - *“Love your enemies”*

“In Jesus and for Him, enemies and friends alike are to be loved.” (Thomas a Kempis) Love is the basis of every healthy relationship. Of course anybody can love someone who is easy to love, or who loves them back. As Jesus pointed out, “If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?” (Matthew 5:46) The challenge is loving those we struggle with. That is what makes the Christian different. If we have enemies, love them. Jesus did it by loving those who crucified him. Countless Christian martyrs have done it as they suffered at the hand of their persecutors. We can do it too. Love your enemies.

### **Do good to them** - *“do good to those who hate you”*

“Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others.” (Booker T. Washington) Good works are part of the Christian life and ministry. Jesus said, “Let your light shine before

others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16 NIV) So far so good. But what about doing good to those who hate us? This is where the grace of God shines. Jesus served his betrayer. Believers through the centuries have been kind to their oppressors. We can do good things for those who despise us. Do good to your enemies.

**Bless them** - *“bless those who curse you”*

"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." (Mother Teresa) The mouth is powerful. What we speak can bring life or death. “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” (Proverbs 18:21) It is easy to grumble and complain about those we dislike. But the Christian way is to speak blessing over our enemies. Paul the apostle taught us, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.” (Romans 12:14) If someone has offended us, bless them. If someone has wounded us, bless them. If someone is seeking to destroy us, bless them. Bless your enemies.

**Pray for them** - *“pray for those who mistreat you.”*

“By praying for our enemies, we guard our own heart so that we do not become like them.” (Mark Driscoll) Some of the most profound prayers have been uttered in unexpected circumstances. From the cross Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34) Praying positively for our enemies is one of the best ways of drawing out the sting of bitterness from our own soul. If they have opposed us and made life unbearable for us, we pray for them, that God will truly bless them. Pray for your enemies.

“Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much.” (Oscar Wilde) The teaching of Jesus is certainly counter intuitive and counter cultural. But it is essential if we are to progress and thrive in life. Whoever our enemies may be, turn the negative into a positive by seeking to implement the wisdom of Christ. Love

your enemies. Do good to your enemies. Bless your enemies.  
Pray for your enemies.