

Introduction:

- We all know this, right? Yeah yeah, Christianity 101, I know I know. But do we really practice it? When the rubber meets the road, do we actually do it?
- Are we just going through the motions but actually still holding a grudge?
- Someone could very easily rub us the wrong way, say something that pushes our buttons (should we have pushable buttons?) and the immediate knee jerk reaction is maybe not great, but then the Holy Spirit quickly reminds us that we are to love our enemies and so we do.
- But are we ok with that? That person just wronged me, and maybe they even did it on purpose! And maybe thats not the first time they did that! Now I'm going to look at them through that lens.

I. Why should we love our enemies?

- A. The Bible says to, but seriously, He says to do that because that is who He is. His character is exactly that. He is love. If we want to be like Jesus, we need to step up our love game to the next level!
1. **Matthew 5:43-48, MSG** *"You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that. "In a word, what I'm saying is, Grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you."*
- B. Our love for people has to be non-discriminate. God does not play favoritism games, neither should we. We are quick to qualify and disqualify people from being loved, but that habit needs to be broken as we then want to classify the "lovableness" of people when no-one should ever be in the "unlovable class".
- C. I believe this is often overlooked in our prayer life. How often do we pray for our pastors, leaders, family, friends, co-workers, maybe even pets? Do we regularly include the people who have wronged us? The people who are not our first choice for dinner company?
- D. Jesus was known for keeping company with some "bad people". Or as Jesus would call them, "people". Sure, they were people who did not know or follow Him, and lived their life accordingly, but nevertheless, Jesus still kept company with these people

because of His love for them.

1. **Mark 2:15-17, MSG** *"Later Jesus and his disciples were at home having supper with a collection of disreputable guests. Unlikely as it seems, more than a few of them had become followers. The religion scholars and Pharisees saw him keeping this kind of company and lit into his disciples: "What kind of example is this, acting cozy with the riff-raff?" Jesus, overhearing, shot back, "Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? I'm here inviting the sin-sick, not the spiritually-fit."*
 2. Why do you think sinners became followers of Jesus? Was it because they knew they were receiving love when they were not worthy of it? Were they being shunned and condemned by the religious crowd, did anyone attempt to show them love before Jesus did?
 3. **Deuteronomy 32:35, MSG** *"I'm in charge of vengeance and payback, just waiting for them to slip up; And the day of their doom is just around the corner, sudden and swift and sure."*
 4. **Romans 12:17-19, MSG** *"Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it." Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness."*
- E. Vengeance is His, not ours. Don't spoil the opportunity, let Him do His work and be patient and pray for them. Wait, wait, wait, what if they get saved and God doesn't pour out wrath on them! Is that such a bad thing? Are we hoping for their destruction over them getting to know Jesus? Yes, there are consequences for sin, but we are not in charge of choosing them. However God chooses to have vengeance is none of our business. Vengeance for me is thinking of something that is already past and because I was hurt, I need to hurt those who hurt me. Remember, hurt people hurt people. If we have these feelings we need to examine our own heart and ask Holy Spirit to work on us. (Ie. I had a business partner that did me wrong and I had to walk through this.)
- F. We need to practice loving our enemies so unforgiveness does not get soil to grow in. After all, we don't want to poison ourselves do we?
- G. We need to realize that Jesus died for them just as much as us, He is no respecter of persons. We need to delete the filters we create to see people through and remember that Jesus sees us all the same. #nofilter
- H. Shawn Bolz had a great quote that reads, *"You will never have any authority over what you do not love."*

II. How did Jesus do that?

- A. He went to the cross! Even for the people that took him there! And beat Him!
- B. He does this ALL the time, He never rejects us, even when we hate (or ignore) Him.

- C. Judas. He knew Judas was going to stab him in the back, and yet, he held back on not only calling down legions of angels, but even calling him out publicly or privately!
 - 1. Sometimes we need to love people by keeping our mouths closed. Information can be a powerful tempter, but we always have to ask Holy Spirit who needs to know what.
- D. Jesus fixed the ear of the soldier who was (wrongfully) arresting him.
- E. Luke 23:34, MSG** *"Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing. Dividing up his clothes, they threw dice for them."*
- F. Even on the cross in His last moments He asks forgiveness to the ones who were killing him because they did not really know what they were doing.

III. How do we love our enemies?

- A. We love people no matter what. We are given grace for what we cannot do by ourselves. If you are willing, the Holy Spirit will show you how to love when it is hard to do, when standing alone. This is not the same for every person! This is why it is imperative for us to continually ask Holy Spirit for help with loving people. Today's method may be different than yesterday's method, even with the same person, this is why we need to always be listening.
- B. We let people know we love them. When someone has wronged us, we don't pretend they have amnesia, preaching a sermon to them they probably already know. We love them, bless them, honor them.
- C. We don't try to fix everybody, Jesus has that covered, we pray for and love on them.
 - 1. We be nice to people (I.e. the lady this morning ...)
 - 2. We choose when to ignore things. We don't have to have the last word. Sometimes the best response is no response.
 - 3. Just be kind. Practice by loving on random people, buy a stranger's coffee, pay for the person behind you in the drive through, say hello and smile at people, it might make their day or even open up a conversation.

IV. Who is our enemy?

- A. It doesn't really matter does it? Don't put people in a class like our society does.
- B. Good Samaritan.
 - 1. Luke 10:25-37 - MSG** *Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. "Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?" He answered, "What's written in God's Law? How do you interpret it?" He said, "That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself." Good answer!" said Jesus. "Do it and you'll live." Looking for a loophole, he asked, "And just how would you define 'neighbor'?" Jesus answered by telling a story. "There was once a man traveling*

from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man. "A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I'll pay you on my way back.' "What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?" "The one who treated him kindly," the religion scholar responded. Jesus said, "Go and do the same."

- B. The question was raised, "Who is my neighbor?" This question was asked to find out how much they could get away with, who can I avoid loving. In other words, "What is the path of least resistance?" I love how Jesus saw the agenda behind that question and flipped their narrative upside down with His answer!
- C. In 1 John 4:7-9, God clearly states that we are to love one another just as He loves us.
1. **1 John 4:7-9, MSG** *"My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God is love—so you can't know him if you don't love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him."*

Closing:

- I want to challenge you all to examine your heart and see who you can show love to. If you encounter resistance and you think you might grow a button to be pushed, overcome resistance with love, it's not always easy, but Holy Spirit will help you!