

Attitude Adjustment: Enemies

Do you know that we all have enemies? Someone just got hyper spiritual and thought, “the only enemy is satan”! Yes, satan is our enemy, but I’m talking about people. An enemy is a person that is against you, one that opposes you and this includes feelings of hatred (strong dislike), and causing you some form of harm.

Sorry if you are a people pleaser....there is someone that does not like you. We live in a sinful world. I know you are wonderful and a delight to be around, but that might even be what someone doesn’t like. It’s just how it is. You have enemies. The question is, “How do you deal with them?”

A couple of times in the Proverbs it says “There is a way that seems right to a man but it’s end is the way of death”. Isn’t the way that seems right to a man the way of getting even? Payback? Two eyes for an eye? 32 teeth for a tooth?

I mean, when you think about what makes sense to a person, many think if someone treats you bad, treat them bad, and way worse if possible. They say something hurtful, you say something hurtful. They hit you, you hit them. That is what often seems right to a man.

How is it that something that seems right to a man is the same behavior of an immature child? Those are examples of what toddlers do as they are learning how to interact with others.

Unfortunately it’s even the kind of things that we are taught is the right behavior for adults today. People often feel justified in hating their enemies. They feel that it’s something they deserve. And people taught this back during Jesus’ ministry on the earth.

Matthew 5:43-48 (NKJV)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father 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. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

When you read that, it doesn’t make any sense. Why in the world would you want to do that?

You know, if you have enemies, it’s for a reason right? They are against you. Maybe they have caused you trouble, lied to you, lied about you, hurt you, betrayed you. They are hard to love!

It's much easier to hate them....for those who might claim they don't hate anyone, to hate means to dislike intensely or passionately. Almost everyone can think of a person that they feel that way about.....

Jesus says to love these people! When it comes to our enemies, we need an attitude adjustment. We need to make our attitude that of Christ Jesus. His attitude was not one of getting even, it was one of love. A choice to love....

God told Isaiah "my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways". God doesn't do things like we would do them. We have to remember that He thinks differently. He thinks not out of selfish motives but selfless motives.

His attitude toward enemies was always one of love and grace.

What do you think when you see your enemy struggling? Do you want to kick them while they are down. Do you just walk on by and smirk with a little satisfaction that they are getting what they deserve?

Isn't there something in a person that wishes bad things upon their enemies or at the very least hope that good things don't happen for them?

Exodus 23:4-5 (NKJV)

"If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. 5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.

This is the attitude of God toward enemies. How often would we actually HELP an enemy? What if they were broke down with a flat tire, would you stop and offer to help?

Proverbs 25:21-22 (NKJV)

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;
22 For so you will heap coals of fire on his head,
And the Lord will reward you.

If you are NT only person that wrongly thinks it has to be in the NT to apply to your life then you will be pleased to know this is repeated in Romans 12. This is how God felt about your enemies long ago and He still feels the same today.

Love them. Help them if they are in need. This is the best way to pay them back! Do you know that there is nothing you can give someone that is more valuable than showing them the image of Jesus? Showing them love when they have been evil toward you....this is the ultimate payback.

You pay them back 100 fold. You give them 100 times what they gave you because what you give is something so much more powerful and valuable and overpowering..... It's God's love.

When you do this, you heap coals of fire on their head. And NO you can't just skip to to coals.

I better not see you guys running around with a little skillet of hot coals looking for your enemies!

For the longest time, I thought what that meant was that it would really make them mad. I thought when you love on someone that is mean to you, it'll really tick them off. It's the best way to make them miserable. And in my sinfulness, that is what I want for those people, right?

But that's not it. You see there is an ancient Egyptian custom that is being referred to.... where a person who wanted to show sincere remorse in public, they would carry a pan of hot coals on their head. The hot coals represented the burning pain of their guilt and shame.

See when you love your enemies, when you are good to them regardless of how they are to you, it will bring guilt and shame to them for their hate and mistreatment of you. It's the greatest gift because it shows them that there is a better way and that the love of Jesus is more powerful than the hate of the devil!

And for this....the Lord will reward you!

Luke 6:35 (NKJV)

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

See if you can love your enemies, you will get a great reward but also you will be a son or daughter of the Most High. You will be displaying the characteristics of your Father in heaven.

This doesn't MAKE you a son or daughter, it is the evidence that you ARE a son or daughter! It's the proof that you a child of God! One who acts differently than how everyone else does. A child of the Almighty, who has made their mind that of Jesus Christ!

I think it's pretty important for the world to see that you belong to Jesus....

Do you know that if you don't belong to Jesus, it's because you still belong to satan? Everyone is either a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness.

Before you were Christ's, you belonged to the devil. You were a soldier for his army. You lived they way he lived. You acted the way he acted. You fought like he fought. You hated the way he hates.

Satan is a destroyer filled with hate. And when people retaliate with hate, they are working for him.

Jesus has called YOU out of that mindset. Jesus has called you to adjust your attitude from a place of hate and judgement to a place of love and forgiveness.

Galatians 5:19-21 (NKJV)

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Hatred is a sin. This is a good time to remember that hatred is intense or passionate dislike for someone or something. If that's how you feel about someone, you really need to talk to Jesus about it and get some help from the Holy Spirit. Have someone pray for you or with you!

Listen,....don't deny it, don't just beat yourself up about it, don't think you don't have to deal with it right now.....You can't afford to go on living like that. Jesus came to set you free from that.

Make your attitude toward your enemies like that of Jesus!

Sometimes we think that God just gives us these rules and they are so hard and He just doesn't understand. But He does....

Romans 5:10 (NKJV)

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

There was a time where we were all enemies against God. Until you choose to follow Jesus you are against Him. Living life according to our own desires. Pleasing your sinful nature, when you have a holy God that created us to fellowship with us. But you chose sin instead....

You were the enemy against God. You were the one that didn't deserve love, forgiveness, or grace. You were the guy with the flat tire who needed help and what you deserved was for God to just drive on by smiling because you got what you deserved.

Ephesians 2:3 (NKJV)

among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

That's what we deserve apart from Jesus.....wrath.

Romans 5:9 (NKJV)

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

If Jesus had not had the attitude of love toward us when we were against Him, we would all be hell bound....

Even those who are still against Him, He died for them too. He is still waiting for them, still will accept them into His family if they choose to follow Him.

Jesus who came and died for His enemies even provides His enemies with some of the same blessings He gives His people.....

the sun rises on both the good and the evil.....

the rains come to both the righteous and unrighteous.....

the eclipse is seen by the saint and the heathen.....

How would you treat your enemies? Personally, I think most days I might withhold the sunshine and rain from the evil and unrighteous. I might have temporarily blinded the heathen so they couldn't enjoy the eclipse. I might just let them suffer and feel cold and left out.

Jesus had a different attitude. He is love. He is the perfect example and our attitude needs adjusted to align with His.

2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Sometimes when people hate they want to play God. They want to crush their enemies and even may ask God to do so. But if you want to play God, choose love. Show grace. Try to see those people with compassion. Try to show them the same treatment you would show your fellow Christians.....

Ephesians 4:32 (NKJV)

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Jesus died on a cross to overcome hate. Jesus died on the cross to forgive all who would believe in Him. Jesus chose love for His enemies.

That includes you, and it includes YOUR enemies. And when you choose to hate, you choose to act upon that very sin that put Jesus on that cross.

It's not just that you intensely dislike a person, your enemy. It's that you chose to walk in an attitude that drove the nails right through the hands of the God who created you and loves you.

* **Children's church story - I read this story about a teacher who put a big target on the wall and brought a handful of darts. This teacher had the students draw a picture of someone they really disliked or someone that made them angry so they could throw darts at the person's picture.

- One girl drew a picture of another girl in her class
- One boy drew a picture of his little brother
- Another drew a picture of the teacher

They took turns hanging their picture on the target and launching the darts at it. It felt good. It was satisfying. Some wanted another turn. When they were all finished. The teacher took down the target and under it was a picture of Jesus.

He read this scripture to the class:

Matthew 25:40 (NIV)

.....Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

What do you chose for your enemy? Hate? Or Love?

Enemies are enemies because they hurt us. But God calls us to be different. Not to repay evil for evil. But if at all possible, as much as it depends on YOU, live peaceably with all men.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good!