

LOVING THE UNLOVABLE

I. The Scripture: An "Eye for an Eye" and "Love Your Enemies"

38"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' 39But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

43"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45that you may be sons 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. 46If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Matthew 5:38-48

II. Looking at the Scripture

1. A New Understanding of Revenge - Matthew 5:39-42

Read Leviticus 24:17-20.

How might a primarily Jewish crowd with an understanding of Leviticus and the Law react to hearing Jesus preach this part of the Sermon on the Mount?

What do you think Jesus is saying in verses 38-42?

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Why is it difficult to do as Proverbs 20:22 says when you feel like you have been wronged?

What positive steps can you take to become a person who follows the teaching recorded in Matthew 5:39-42?

2. Love Your Enemies-Matthew 5:43-48

What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "Love your enemies"?

Read Acts 7:59, 60.

What did Stephen do when he was being stoned by the religious leaders?

According to Acts 8:1, who was present at Stephen's death?

Read Matthew 5:44.

How do you see Stephen living out this Scripture? Do you think Stephen's prayer affected Saul (Paul)?

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Read 1Corinthians 4:12,13.

How did Paul apply the words of Jesus from Matthew 5:44?

Why is it logical for "Love your enemies" [v. 44] and "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect" [v.48] to be together in the same paragraph?

III. The Scripture and You

1. Turning the Other Cheek

Complete the following sentences.

To me, "Turn the other cheek" means . . .

The most difficult part of turning the other cheek is . . .

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2. Loving the Unlovable

The words of Jesus in Matthew 5:44-48 are some of the Bible's most profound and radical. They are also among the most difficult words to live out.

William Barclay, a Scottish Bible scholar, wrote about this section of Scripture: "There is no other passage of the New Testament which contains such a concentrated expression of the Christian ethic of personal relations."¹¹

1. William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible*, vol. 1, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 172.

How do you feel when you hear the words of Jesus, "Love your enemies"? Circle the response that best applies to you.

- a. Enemies-What enemies?
- b. Overwhelmed
- c. Excited
- d. Challenged
- e. Guilty
- f. Impossible
- g. Encouraged

Who do you think of when you hear the words of Jesus, "Love your enemies"?

Take a step of courage and list the name(s) below. (Use initials if this information is too personal.)

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Now take a moment to look back over your list of enemies and pray for each person. Ask God to soften your heart toward them and their hearts toward you and God. Don't be surprised to see major changes in your relationship with your enemy!

Here's a very interesting story about a World War II soldier named Angus McGillivray.

Angus was a Scottish prisoner in one of the camps filled with Americans, Australians and Britons who had helped build the Bridge over the River Kwai. The camp had become an ugly situation. A dog-eat-dog mentality had set in. Allies would literally steal from each other and cheat each other; men would sleep on their packs and yet have them stolen from under their heads. Survival was everything. The law of the jungle prevailed . . . until the news of Angus McGillivray's death spread throughout the camp. Rumors spread in the wake of his death. No one could believe big Angus had succumbed. He was strong: one of those whom they had expected to be the last to die. Actually it wasn't the fact of his death that shocked the men, but the reason he died. Finally they pieced together the true story.

The Scottish soldiers took their buddy system very seriously. Their buddy was called their "mucker," and these soldiers believed that it was literally up to each of them to make sure their "mucker" survived. Angus' mucker, though, was dying, and everyone had given up on him, everyone, of course, but Angus. He had made up his mind that his friend would not die. Someone had stolen his mucker's blanket. So Angus gave him his own, telling his mucker that he had "just come across an extra one." Likewise every mealtime, Angus would get his rations and take them to his friend, stand over him and force him to eat them, and again stating that he was able to get "extra food." Angus was going to do anything and everything to see that his buddy got what he needed to recover.

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But as Angus' mucker began to recover, Angus collapsed, slumped over and died. The doctors discovered that he had died of starvation complicated by exhaustion. He had been giving of his own food and shelter. He had given everything he had—even his own life. The ramifications of his acts of love and unselfishness had a startling impact on the compound. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12).

As word circulated of the reason for Angus McGillivray's death, the feel of the camp began to change. Suddenly, men began to focus on their mates, their friends, the humanity of living beyond survival, of giving oneself away. They began to pool their talents—one was a violin maker, another, an orchestra leader, another, a cabinet maker, another, a professor. Soon the camp had an orchestra full of homemade instruments and a church called "Church Without Walls" that was so powerful, so compelling, that even the Japanese guards attended. The men began a university, a hospital, and a library system. The place was transformed; an all but smothered love revived all because one man named Angus gave all he had for his friend. For many of those men this turnaround meant survival. What happened is an awesome illustration of the potential unleashed when one person actually gives it all away.²

2. Tim Hansel, *Holy Sweat* (Waco: Word Books, 1987), pp. 146,147.

How could your commitment to living out God's love transform your world?

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