

Pray for my enemies?

LEFC—Nov. 18, 2018

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Intro

- Review
 - Nov. 4 (Nick)—Listening prayer
 - Nov. 11 (Tony)—Praying in Jesus' name (spiritual warfare)
 - The POWER in Jesus' name
- Preview: Praying for my enemy?
- Preview:
 - Who is my enemy?
 - Why should I pray for my enemy?
 - How should I pray for my enemy?
- RT Kendall's *Total Forgiveness*
- Beth's e-mail (part 1—email filled with anger)
- Matthew 5:43-48, esp. 44
 - ⁴³"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor[□] and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ **But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,** ⁴⁵**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. 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 own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Who is my enemy?

- Just as Jesus answered the question, "Who is my neighbor?" so we need to answer the question, Who is my enemy?
- Kendall: "What is an enemy? It is a person who either wants to harm you or who would say something about you so as to call your credibility or integrity into question. They would rejoice at your downfall or lack of success. They would not pray that God would bless you and prosper you, but instead they would sincerely hope that God would bring you down. An enemy is a person who hates you although they would never admit to the word *hate*.... And enemy is also a person who will take unfair advantage of you; they will 'despitefully use you.'... An enemy will often persecute you.... Enemies will pursue you, because they are obsessed with you." (168-169)
- "They may even feel that they are an instrument God will use to put you in your place." (173)
- Sometimes it's harder to forgive those who hurt those we love than it is to forgive those who hurt us.
- In your mind right now, you probably have at least one person in mind. Keep that person there as we seek God's word about why and how to forgive.

Why should I pray for my enemy?

- Because I've been forgiven by God
 - Rom. 5:6-8
 - ⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: **While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**
 - We were His enemies. Through Christ, *shalom* (relational peace) has been restored.
 - Col. 3:12-14
 - ¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³**Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.** ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
 - "as the Lord forgave you"—How has He forgiven me and you?
 - Through an act of HIS love
 - For HIS glory
- Because it's an act of forgiveness in your own heart.
 - Total forgiveness means your bitterness doesn't rise up when you think of that person.
 - Eph. 4:31-32
 - ³¹Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³²Be kind and compassionate to one another, **forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**
 - "Release them, and you will be set free." (4)
 - Forgiveness is a heart issue, a choice that is made—or not
 - 3 types of forgiveness
 - "Detached forgiveness—there is a reduction in negative feelings toward the offender, but no reconciliation takes place.
 - Limited forgiveness—there is a reduction in negative feelings toward the offender, and the relationship is partially restored, though there is a decrease in the emotional intensity of the relationship.
 - Full (total) forgiveness—there is a total cessation of negative feelings toward the offender, and the relationship is fully restored." (10)
 - Forgiving is more than just mercy (removal of penalty)
 - Also seeks to their blessing (an act of loving grace)
 - Rom. 12:9-21

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⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. ¹⁴ **Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.** ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ **Live in harmony with one another.** Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.^[c] Do not be conceited. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ **If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.** ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"^[d] says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."^[e]

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, **but overcome evil with good.**

- "In as much as is possible, ..." No guaranties that it will go well.
- "Heap burning coals upon their heads"—seek their blessing
- Have you received forgiveness?
 - Can you forgive others?
 - WILL you?
 - An inner work
 - Absence of bitterness
- Because it helps to become more like Jesus
 - Gary Thomas' book *Sacred Marriage: What if God Designed Marriage to Make us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy?*
 - Likewise, what if God is trying to use an enemy to help us to become more like Him, to grow in love and mercy?
 - How will we learn about God's mercy and how to extend it if we never have an opportunity to forgive and to pray for our enemies?
 - **Don't do it ONLY to feel better. Do it to GLORIFY GOD!**

How should I pray for my enemy?

- In what power?
 - Eph. 5:18—PUI, Praying Under the Influence of the HS
 - “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,”
 - One under the influence of alcohol does things that he would not naturally do.
 - So, too, when we are under the influence of the Holy Spirit.
 - It is not natural to pray for our enemies
 - We need God’s power to forgive others.
 - We need to come to God (in prayer) to accept and to grant forgiveness.
 - The power to forgive leads to freedom from anger.
- In what manner?
 - Asking God for help
 - “The ultimate proof of total forgiveness takes place when we sincerely petition the Father to let those who have hurt us off the hook—even if they have hurt not only us but also those close to us.” (16)
 - Talking to God, not to others
 - “If you must tell another person what happened—because you can’t contain the pain—tell only one, and choose someone who won’t repeat it.” (21)
 - “So why do we tell other people? ... But the real reason we usually tell is to *punish*. And one weapon at our disposal to accomplish this is our tongue. We tell everyone else what we know in order to make our offender look bad!” (59)
 - Trusting God for what HE is doing
 - “Sometimes we say, in effect, ‘I forgive you for what you did, but I hope you feel bad about it.’... But God has a way of making bad things *become* good. This, then, is total forgiveness: not wanting our offenders to feel guilty or upset with themselves for what they did, and showing them that there is a reason God let it happen.” (64-65)
 - “Total forgiveness involves an additional element: praying for God’s blessings to rain on the lives of your offenders. When you do this as Jesus intends it, you are being set free indeed.” (74)
 - Three things to pray (Joe Carter article, TGC, Aug. 14, 2014)
 - Pray for their conversion
 - Pray the evil they do may be restrained
 - Pray they will receive divine justice
 - (And Pray that God will bless them by drawing them closer to Himself.)

Conclusion

- Review
 - Who is my enemy?
 - Why should I pray for my enemy?
 - How should I pray for my enemy?
- Beth (part 2)
 - Acknowledge her anger
 - To her, I was her enemy
 - She quickly became an enemy to me!
 - Keep the relationship in mind, even in how you respond.
 - Seek reconciliation and God's glory
- Questions:
 - Are **you** able to sit in God's grace and mercy?
 - Can you trust God do deal with your enemy?
 - Will you seek HIS glory even in this?
- Challenge
 - Make a list of those you need to forgive?
 - Maybe the first one on the list needs to be yourself
 - Next to each name, write down how you can pray for that person.
 - Pray through that list 3 times this week.
 - After the 3rd time, sit with God and listen to Him. Allow Him to speak to you about each person on your list.
 - Thank God for freedom through forgiveness.