

Life of Christ

A study of the life and teachings of Jesus

Love Those Who Hate You

by Logan Dalton

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 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. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”—*Matthew 5:43-48*

I think we can all agree that it’s easier and much more comfortable to love the people who are most like ourselves. Chances are these people in your life like the same things as you, have the same hobbies, run in the same circle of friends, and whose lifestyle looks a lot like yours. In contrast, loving those most *unlike* myself is a real challenge to me.

About halfway through my senior year in high school, I decided to try to live out Jesus’ command in Matthew 5:44. Honestly, I didn’t have any other choice because my friends and I weren’t in the same classes together, so I couldn’t just stick with them like I usually did. So I forced myself to make new friends and love people who were different from me. It wasn’t easy! There were definitely many awkward moments and lulls in conversations because establishing a friendship with someone who isn’t exactly like you isn’t easy. But it was so worth it! I gained companions that I wouldn’t have had otherwise, and I could show my friends the love of Jesus.

I can easily forget that God doesn’t distinguish in His mercy for us. He doesn’t pick and choose who He gives grace to or who He blesses. Our Heavenly Father loves us all, so who are we—as imperfect beings—to decide who we show kindness to? Jesus’ ministry was radical because he loved and taught all people. Jesus ministered to and loved sinners, children, women, and Gentiles, whereas the Pharisees and religious leaders only taught those whom they deemed worthy.

Here is something to remember about this command: you probably won't receive any earthly reward or recognition for showing kindness. The person you show compassion to may not even treat you any better than before. But Jesus sees you. He sees your efforts and your heart. His heavenly reward for you is far greater than any perishable honor the world has to offer.

Question: What do you need to do today to be obedient to Jesus's words and love those who hate you?

Take Action: Think for a moment about a person in your life who you have a tough time with, maybe even they hate you! How can you get out of your comfort zone and love that person who is not like yourself?