



ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS -
THE SERMON ON THE
MOUNT 15

Love your enemies... (Mt 5:43-48)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour 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.”



Initial Questions

- Where does it say “hate your enemy?”
- What does it mean to “love your enemies”?
- Who is my enemy exactly?
- Being perfect?

What was being said...

**You have heard that it
was said, 'Love your
neighbour, and hate your
enemy.'
(Mt 5:43).**



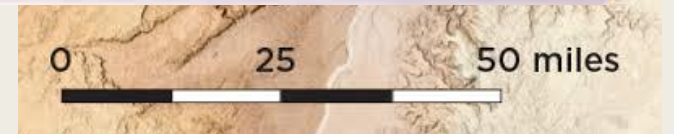
What was written

- But, ummm, it doesn't actually say that...
- Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. (Lev 19:18)
- If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him," ([Exodus 23:4-5](#))
- "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink," ([Proverbs 25:21](#)).

What was written

- **When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God. (Lev 19:9-10)**
- **'When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God. (Lev 19:33-34)**

Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls)



<https://www.jcstudies.store/who-taught-hate-your-enemy-and-why/>

- The Qumran sect noted that the instructions in Lev 19:17-18 involved "**your brother**", "**the sons of your people,**" and "**your neighbor.**" For them, brethren and neighbors were members of their **own community**. On the other hand, community members were not to correct or rebuke outsiders, including fellow Jews whom they saw as apostate. Harboring hatred in one's heart toward outsiders was permitted. Chapter 9 of the Community Rule specifies that the leader of the community "shall not rebuke the men of the Pit nor dispute with them." Later in the chapter comes the declaration, "Everlasting hatred in a spirit of secrecy for the men of perdition!"
- The sectarians arrived at their narrow interpretation of Lev 19:17-18 by comparing these verses with **Nahum 1:2**, which states that "**the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.**"³ **While it is wrong to hate or practice revenge against a brother, they reasoned, hatred against an enemy is endorsed by God's example, which they were called to follow (Lev 19:2).**

Recap: Threefold approach of Jesus

- **Traditional Righteousness = the traditional statement of the law/command/precept**
- **The Sinful pattern = the sinful violation, what it looks like.**
- **Transforming Initiative = what to do when you are actually in that situation.**

Transforming Initiative

Table 5.4. Threefold pattern in Matthew 5:43–48

Traditional Righteousness	Sinful Pattern	Transforming Initiative
<p>Matthew 5:43: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ”</p>	<p>Matthew 5:46–47: “For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”</p>	<p>Matthew 5:44–45: “But I say to you, <i>Love</i> your enemies and <i>pray</i> for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is 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.”</p>

Applying this approach...

Traditional
Righteousness –
love neighbour/hate
enemy

Sinful pattern –
just love your
own

Transforming
Initiative – Love
your enemy



- **Transforming Initiatives.**
- **Instead of “hating” your enemy or justifying lack of love to others**
- **Pray for your enemies and Intentionally love others.**

I CAN'T.



Now what?

What is needed to get from A to B, from loving your own only to loving your enemy?

He cause the sun to rise...

- 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. (Mt 5:45)
- What is the point being made here?
- What does universal sunlight and rain say about God?
- What would it mean to be a child of God in this context?
- So, why does Jesus make this appeal?



Greeting only your own people

- **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?**
- **Is greeting your own people the same thing as hating your enemy?**
- **What are ways we might just greet our own people?**
- **What do we have to do to be just like a first century tax collector?**



Transformation



- You seem to be saying I need to become a different person or something?
- Thoughts?

**Be Perfect, therefore as your Heavenly
Father is perfect. (Mt 5:48)**

How are we going being perfect then?

**The command “Be ye perfect” is not idealistic gas.
Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is
going to make us into creatures that can obey that
command.**

(C. S. LEWIS, MERE CHRISTIANITY)

What do you think about that?

Being perfect...

This love does **not** consist of **acts and projects** but **is** a **pervasive condition** of vision, joy, and love in which we habitually reside.

It is a love of the same quality as God's love (Matt. 5:45–48).

We are to be “perfect” or whole as our Father, the one in the heavens, is perfect and whole.

(Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*)

What do you think about that?

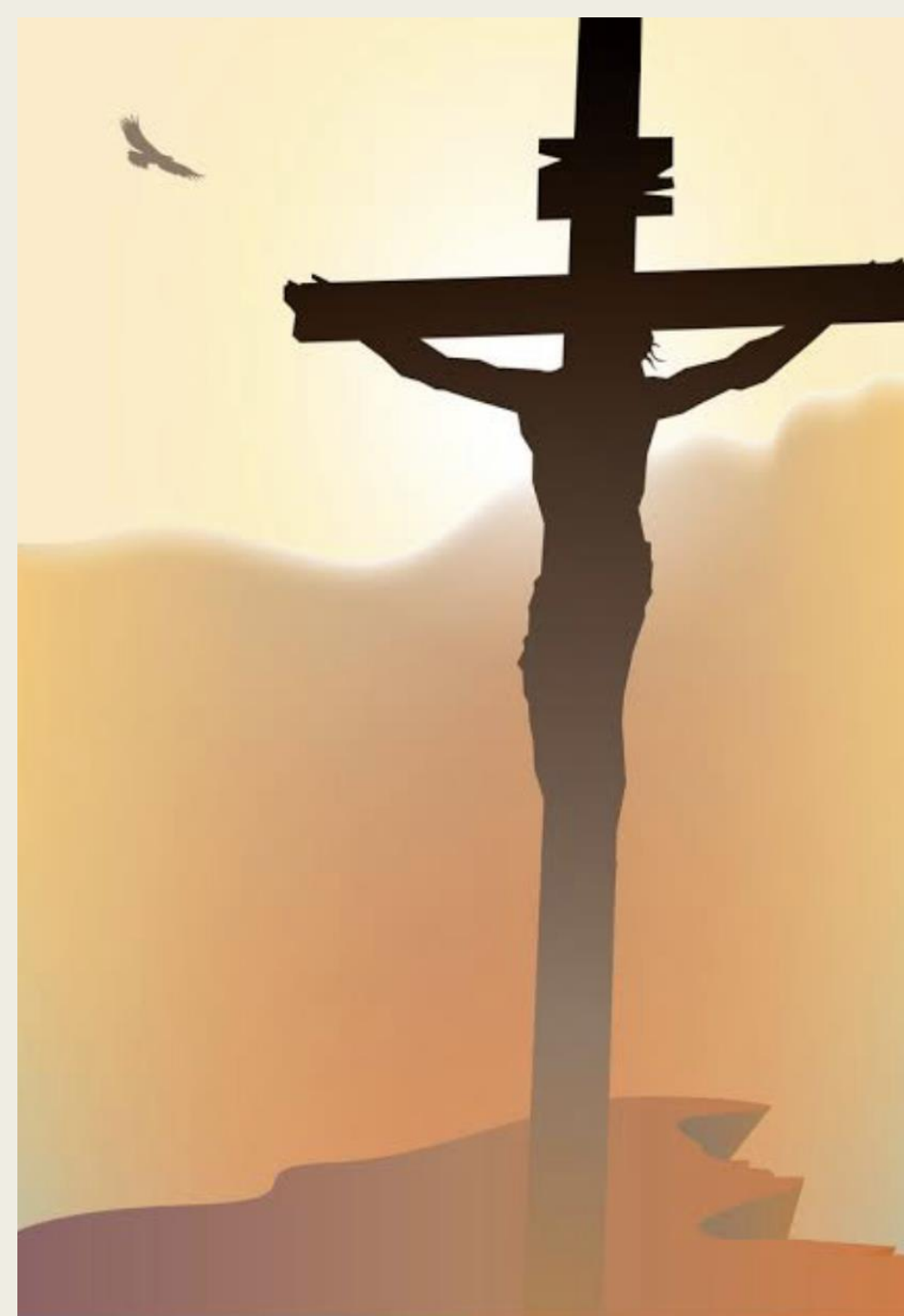
Heart surgery

- When we trace wrongdoing back to its roots in the human heart, we find that in the overwhelming number of cases it involves some form of **anger**. Close beside anger you will find its twin brother, **contempt**. Jesus' understanding of them and their role in life becomes the basis of his strategy for establishing kingdom goodness. It is the elimination of anger and contempt that he presents as the first and fundamental step toward the rightness of the kingdom heart.
- **If I am finding it hard to love others, unearth the anger and contempt that I have.**
- Does this resonate?



The gospel

- When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.** (Lk 23:33-34)
- And, speaking of loving your enemies...
- For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (Rom 5:10)





Reflection

- Do I have Jesus' attitude towards my enemies?
- Am I content with just being neutral?
- Do I have any anger or contempt lurking inside?
- Have my attitudes ever been radically transformed like this?