

LIFEGROUP NOTES: MATTHEW 5:43-48

As ever, please use (or discard!) these ideas as is most suitable for your group. Don't feel you have to use everything.

Preparing for God's Word

1. How do people naturally behave towards their enemies? How have you responded to enemies in the past?

Read Mt 5:43-48

2. See v.44. How does Jesus want His followers to respond to enemies? Why is praying for those who oppose us such a wonderful expression of love for them?
3. See v.45. What does Jesus put forward as our supreme motivation for loving our enemies? What is our heavenly Father's love like? How does the cross reveal the depth of God's love (see Romans 5:6-8,10)?
4. See v.47. Clearly Jesus expects us to "greet" our enemies – nicely! This may seem insignificant compared to praying for them, but it is very practical because one of our commonest responses to enemies is to avoid speaking to them. Where in your life are you challenged by what Jesus says here? How are you going to respond?
5. How does preaching the gospel to ourselves change our attitude to our enemies so that we respond to their hatred with friendship?
6. See v.48. How do you react to Jesus' words? As C S Lewis points out in "Mere Christianity", when we take up the cross to follow Jesus, we are in for the full treatment. God will not settle for cosmetic changes in our life; He is going to bring us to perfection, and that is the goal we must move towards even now. We cannot settle for a minimum of holiness! How do you feel about this? Do you ever wish God would keep His work in your life to a few minor adjustments and then leave you in peace? How does the gospel assure us that God's goal is our lasting happiness, not our hurt?

Responding in Prayer

- Thank God for His love for us in Christ even while we were His enemies. Pray for any who are enemies to you at the present time. Pray for God to soften your own heart towards them through the gospel, and ask God to show you ways of loving them.

Eddie Larkman, March 2017