

Q. v21. By suffering for us, Christ left us an E_____ that we should F_____.

Q. v23. When Jesus was reviled (verbally abused) how did he *not* respond?

Q. v23. When Jesus suffered, how did he *not* respond?

Jesus showed the ultimate act of love toward His enemies by dying for them (Rom 5:6-10). The love, forgiveness, mercy and grace that He has extended toward us should cause us to do the same toward our enemies. Jesus did not respond to his enemies by becoming like his enemies, he responded to hatred with love and to abuse with mercy.

Q. v23. In both of the circumstances above , how *did* Jesus respond?

📖 Heb 10:30. Q. Who does vengeance belong to? _____.

Q. Who is the Judge? _____.

Each time Jesus was persecuted by his enemies, he did not respond in like manner. Instead, as our example, he committed his cause to God. God is the ultimate judge and we can be assured that when he *does* judge, he will do it righteously. When we fail to rely on God in dealing with our enemies, it is very likely that we will respond in emotion or wrath. By submitting to God as the righteous judge we protect ourselves from losing our testimony in a fit of retaliation. Our enemies expect retribution and confrontation. By submitting to God and responding in love, we immediately project character qualities that are different from what this world is used to. We create an opportunity for God to receive glory by our willingness to forgo our own glory. See also Rom 12:19

Stephen – Filled with the Spirit and Loving his Enemies

📖 Acts 7:54-60. Q. According to v58, what did the people do to Stephen?

Q. v60. What were Stephen's last words?

Q. v55. How is Stephen described here? F_____

Stephen was able to respond to his enemies the very same way that Jesus did. How was this possible? He was filled with the spirit of Christ. A mark of spirituality in the life of a Christian is his ability to bear and respond well to reproach, criticism, persecution and hatred from others. When we become embittered toward our enemies or lash out toward them, we are acting in the flesh and not in the spirit (Gal 5:19-25). We must love our enemies.

A Christian's Relationship with His Enemies

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Developing Renewed Relationships

In this week's study we come to what may be one of the most difficult relationships that the Christian must cope with – his relationship with his *enemies*. Everyone has enemies (whether they realize it or not!) and the Bible gives us very clear instruction in how God desires us to interact with them. Take a moment to consider folks in your life which you might classify as your enemies and think of them as you read through this study.

📖 Matt 5:43-48. Q. v43. What had the Jews of that day been taught concerning their enemies?

📖 Prov 25:21. Q. What are we told to do to our enemies?

📖 Ex 23:4,5. Q. How were the Jews told to respond to their enemies?

Q. The Jews in Jesus' day were teaching that one ought to love his neighbor but hate his enemies, considering the verses above, is this view consistent with the Old Testament scripture? _____.

The self-righteous, hypocritical leaders of the Jews perverted the scripture and taught that it was alright to hate you enemies. Yet this is not what the law taught. Jesus came proclaiming the *spirit* of the law, teaching that outward compliance to tradition was not enough, but that God required an inward submission to his holy character and the *principles* of the law.

📖 Matt 5:44. Q. Jesus said to _____ our _____.

Q. Jesus said to _____ them that _____.

Q. Jesus said to _____ to them that _____.

Q. Jesus said to _____ for them that _____.

Jesus preached an ethic that is completely foreign to this world. It is unheard of to love you enemies, to bless them that curse you, to do good to them that hate you and to pray for those that use you. This world teaches that we ought to respond to our enemies with wrath, to answer cursing with cursing, to become embittered against those that hate us, and to wish ill on those that use us.

Jesus' teaching is so radically different from what this world teaches that when we as Christians submit to it, and practice it, we stand out as men and women of distinction. We produce clear evidence that we possess a nature that is foreign to this world. Properly responding to our enemies will glorify God and produce opportunities to witness as others seek to discover what is different about us. (Matt 5:16)

The assumption that is made in Christ's teaching regarding our enemies is that we are hated or despised undeservedly (1Pet 4:15,16; Matt 5:11). That is, we are being persecuted for our faith, for his sake, and not for anything that deserves such a response. Before we attempt to apply the following principles to our relationships we should search our hearts and ensure that we have not created enemies by doing wrong. If it is possible that we have offended others and are ourselves guilty, then we should first seek their forgiveness. That being said, let's look at the proper attitude toward our enemies.

Bless them that Curse You

📖 Job 31:29-30. In this passage, Job is protesting at his friend's assertion that he is guilty of sin. **Q.** What three things did Job say he was innocent of?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Job did not rejoice when his enemies suffered destruction. A mark of godly character is to rejoice with those that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep (Rom 12:15). This extends even to our enemies. God said that those who are glad when they see calamities (disaster or trouble) will not go unpunished! (Prov 17:5)

📖 Write out and discuss Prov 24:17 _____

📖 Rom 12:14 **Q.** How should we respond to those that persecute us?

Our reactions to our enemies should go past the superficial and affect our heart attitude towards them. To bless someone is to actually wish them well. We are to wish our enemies well and to mourn when they suffer personal distress.

Do Good to Them That Hate You

📖 Rom 12:19-21. **Q.** What two things are we told to do for our enemies?

The principle here is that of being willing to satisfy the needs of our enemies. When we extend goodness in this way, the Bible says it will be like *heaping coals of fire on his head*. The idea here is that by doing good to our enemies they will be confronted with their own sin. Our uncommon and unexpected response, in the love of Christ, will serve as a reproof and a rebuke to them. Or as verse 21 indicates – we will overcome evil with good.

Pray for Them that Despitefully Use You

In the following passage we will see how David responded to his enemies. These were men who rose up with false accusations against David.

📖 Psalm 35:11-14. **Q.** v13. How did David respond when he heard his enemies were sick?

Q. v14. David responded to his enemy as if he was his _____.

Q. He mourned for his enemy like he was his _____.

Although David's enemies brought false accusations against him, rejected his goodness and responded with evil, David did not respond likewise. He mourned when his enemies were sick, he humbled himself and even prayed for them. At the same time that David was praying for his enemies, in the same passage, he was also praying that God would judge them! (v23) Is this a contradiction? Let's examine the passage more closely.

📖 Psalm 35:24. **Q.** After David asked God to judge his enemies, who else did he ask to be judged?

📖 Psalm 35:27. **Q.** Who did David want to rejoice? To be magnified?

📖 Psalm 35:28. **Q.** What did David indicate would be the end result of God's judgment on these false witnesses?

David was not willing to rise up against his enemies himself. He brought his cause to the Lord. He personally prayed for these men and their well being, while knowing at the same time that they needed to be judged by God. By accusing David falsely, they were actually doing damage to the name of God, in whom David trusted. David desired that these men would be judged so that God's name could be cleared. As a result, his friends would magnify the Lord and David could speak of the righteousness and praise of God *all the day long*.

Jesus – Our Divine Example

If anyone can be said to have had enemies it is the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not long into his public ministry that we read *therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him (John 5:16)*. Jesus constantly interacted with those that hated Him. It will serve us well to observe His example and to emulate it.

📖 Luke 23:34. **Q.** How did Jesus respond to those that crucified Him?

📖 1 Pet 2:20-24. **Q.** v20. What is considered "acceptable with God"?