

A DEEPER DIVE

August 23, 2026

Matthew 5: 43-48

Prayer Focus— Each day this week as you meet with your savior, lift up in prayer the places in the world where there is war, destruction, and little hope. Also pray for the missionaries that you know of and support. Pray for our nation and our leaders, and also your local church and community. Pray daily for our Pastors and Elders. Finally, follow the instruction in Philippians 4:4-7 make your prayer personal. Remember 1 Peter 5:7.

Monday: Reading – Matthew 5:43–48; Luke 23.

Consider this – Christlikeness.

In Mere Christianity, Lewis wrote this. “Christ says, Give me ALL. I don’t want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want YOU...No half measures are any good. I don’t want to cut off a branch here and a branch there. I want the whole tree down...Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours.”

The concept of “loving an enemy” is not just a platitude or something to embroider on a pillow. Read Luke 23, and pay particular attention to verse 34. How should this verse define how we live as followers of Christ?

Tuesday: Reading – Matthew 5:43–48;

Consider this – Not the love of power, but the power of love

Another thing Lewis wrote in Mere Christianity is this. “Nobody can always have devout feelings: and even if we could, feelings are not what God principally cares about. Christian love, either towards God or towards man, is an affair of the will. If we are trying to do His will we are obeying the commandment, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.’ He will give us feelings of love if He pleases...Our feelings come and go, His love for us does not.” In life we will find people who rub us the wrong way, and who are not lovable. Maybe they believe things or do things that we find offensive, or they have done us wrong. In these cases, our feelings can come into conflict with what Jesus calls us to do. How can we show these people the love of Christ?

Wednesday: Reading – Matthew 5:43–48; Matthew 5:38-42; 1 Peter 2:21; Romans 8.

Consider this – In case you missed it.

In the previous few verses, Jesus calls on his followers “to suffer rather than call others to suffer” (Wiersbe). Jesus reinforces his previous statements. In these verses he tells us that we must not only love, but also pray for our enemies. Why does Jesus tell us that we must do this? What is his rationale? Jesus does not call us to act like everyone else; he doesn’t want his followers to act like everyone else. What contrasts does Jesus make in these verses?

Thursday: Reading – Matthew 5:43–48; 2 Peter 1; Galatians 5: 22-23.

Consider this – Be perfect, verse 48.

I have read and heard a lot about what this verse means. It can be very confusing. Sometimes people feel guilty, sometimes they water this verse down, sometimes they gloss over it. How do you interpret this verse?

Jesus uses the word “therefore” to conclude this section with this verse. So, in what way are we supposed to be perfect? How

does this verse tie together with the previous verses which call us to a life reflecting God's love?

Friday: Reading – Matthew 5:43–48; Romans 12-13.

Consider this – It's radical

Remind yourself how radical Jesus' teaching is by reading the Romans chapters mentioned above.

One aspect of these verses and the idea of loving the enemy is that by doing so we are modeling Christ, not just to our enemies, but also to those who are watching us. If you publicly show love for your enemy, but when you drive away or get home you "let loose" with your "real feelings" what is the danger—to yourself, and to those who are watching/listening?

Sometimes we have to will ourselves to do what Christ followers are called to do. But how sweet is it when our response to someone who intends to harm or insult us reflects the love of Christ—without us thinking about it? It's as if our natural sin nature has been superseded by Christ's nature. Pray that you will see this happening more and more in your life. John Stott says that "On the cross...God displayed and demonstrated his holy love; the holy love of the cross should characterize our response to evil-doers today."

Saturday: Reading – Matthew 5:43–48; John 15:18-25

Consider this – Make an enemy a neighbor.

I like Scot McKnight's statement about making an enemy into a neighbor. How do we do this?

But this is not a panacea for all the bad things that can happen to you. Some people will not respond positively to you, even when you try to show them love. Read the verses in John listed above. How are these verses helpful when you are in a situation with an "enemy"?

N.T. Wright asks, "If we follow Jesus' commands, how will we surprise our enemies?" Wright goes further and asks, "Whatever situation you are in, you need to think it through for yourself. Despite pressure and provocation, despite your own anger and frustration, what would it mean for you to reflect God's generous love? Consider specific people and situations."

From the Henri Nouwen Society—

In this world when you are chosen, you know that somebody else is not chosen. When you are the best, you know that somebody is not the best. When you win and receive a prize, you know there is somebody who lost. But this is not so in the heart of God. If you are chosen in the heart of God, you have eyes to see the chosenness of others. If the Love of God blesses you, you have eyes to see the blessedness of others.

How will it change the way you look at people around you when you remember that they have also been chosen and loved by God?

Sunday - Go to church with the anticipation of hearing from the Lord.

Questions? Comments? Email me, Steve Callaway, at stvc13@gmail.com.