

# Authentic Christians

Lesson 18 – Matthew 5:43-6:1

## 1. Structure of Passage

*How would you define an “enemy”?*

(Are they “real” or “perceived”? The word refers to one in hostile opposition to another, Jesus categorizes an enemy into three categories: personally vindictive, verbally abusive, consistently malicious, note the reference to tax collectors and Gentiles)

*What should be our response to the “enemies of God”?*

(Is there justification for hostility directed toward those who are openly/discreetly hostile to the things of God? What is our interpretation of Ps. 15:4 [MacArthur Study Bible: “Whom God rejects, the psalmist rejects; whom God loves, he loves.”] in light of Jesus’ words? Is there a difference between “your enemy” and “God’s enemy”?)

*“... People are our cherished idols. We worship them, hoping they will take care of us, hoping they will give us what we feel we need. What we really need are biblical shapes and identities for other people.” (Welch, When People Are Big and God Is Small, pg. 182) If this is true, how do our enemies control us and how does that control play out in our lives? (fear, capitulation, improper attitude [antagonism] toward them, lack of [absent] motivation to love them, etc.)*

- Jesus returns again to the theme of vv. 38-42 ... how much value do we place on ourselves?

*“It [vv. 43-47] is a definition of what the attitude of the Christian should be towards other people. In the previous paragraph we had that in a negative form, here we have it positively. There the position was that of a Christian man subjected to the insults of others. They come and strike him a blow, and inflict other kinds of injury upon him. And all our Lord says in the previous paragraph is that you must not hit back ... Here, however, our Lord leaves that and goes on to the positive and it is, of course, the very climax of Christian living. Here He leads us on to one of the greatest and most glorious things that are to be found even in His own teaching ... the vital thing is that a man should be dead to himself, dead to self-interest, dead to a concern about self.” (Lloyd-Jones, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, pg. 267)*

- **PRINCIPLE:** Our response to others must NEVER be governed by who/what they are or even what they have done to us ... it must ALWAYS be governed by God’s view of them, especially with their spiritual condition in mind.
- After plainly stating that loving our enemies evidences a redemptive relationship with God, Jesus appeals to God’s “common grace” as a model for our response.

*What is “common grace”*

(in contrast to efficacious grace it is the “kindly providence” of God or “the unmerited

favor of God toward all men displayed in His general care for them” [Charles Ryrie]

*How inspiring or challenging is the model of God’s “common grace”? Does it encourage or discourage a proper response to our enemies?*

## 2. **APPLICATION**

- Parents need to model godly responses and teach their children how to properly respond to their “enemies”. (See Psalm 55:12-14, Rom. 5:8-10 & Rom. 12:17-21)

*How do you handle the verbal abuse of your child’s peers that is directed at your child? What do you teach your child so that they respond biblically?*

*“When we know that God’s power is greater than that of our enemies, when we know that he is just, and when we know that he loved us while we were his enemies, then we are free to be simple servants who imitate and obey the Father ... to love in this way, we need both power and discernment.” (Welch, When People Are Big, pg. 189)*

- Loving our enemies requires a totally “disinterested love” that is not patterned after the norms of society – kingdom love demands the giving of ourselves (spiritually, emotionally, practically) for the benefit of others despite their condition, status, or actions toward us.

*In what ways are we controlled by our “enemies”?*

*“... until a man is detached from himself he will never be detached from what others do to that self. As long as a man is living for himself, he is sensitive, watchful, and jealous; he is envious and is therefore always reacting immediately to what others do ... the only way to detach yourself from what others do to you is that you first of all detach yourself from yourself.” (Lloyd-Jones, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, pg. 268-269)*

*“If certain people are carefully ignored, and only those close to us receive our sincere good wishes, how do we differ from pagans? In other words, the follower of Jesus must not stoop to the low standards of his society. He is, rather, to pattern himself after his heavenly Father.” (Carson, Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, pg. 57)*

- “Making enemies” as the result of a righteous lifestyle is to be expected (2 Tim. 3:12), but forging a combative relationship with others is NEVER an acceptable pattern of behavior for the believer (Rom. 12:18).

*How does “prejudice” fit into this category of “making enemies”? What should be our response to prejudicial statements, actions, and attitudes?*

*In what ways do we or others tend to make “enemies”, either deliberately or innocently?*

*Does 1 Tim. 3:1-6 apply exclusively to the pastor? Why or why not? (Specifically, is it only pastors who are not to be “violent” and/or “quarrelsome”?)*

- The response to our enemies reveals our character and, quite possibly, our relationship to God.

*“We all have friends, and I guess we all have enemies. We all have people who love to be with us and people who love to attack us. The test of our Christian character is not how we treat our friends, it's how we treat our enemies; that's the bottom line. You can really tell all there is to know about a man's true spirituality by what he does when people attack him, what he does when people despise, hate, persecute, stand against, or criticize him. That will be the revelation of the reality of his life. If he is a creature of love, made so by the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ, he will love that person just as much as he will love his dearest friend, because it will be his character to love and have little to do with the person involved.” (MacArthur in Sermon “Loving Your Enemies – Part 3”, 9/30/79)*