

Spiritual Growth Lessons

LESSON 13 of 32

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES!

In the year of 1979, our church received a wonderful baptism of agape love. After this beautiful event, with the leading of the Lord we began a cell ministry, which we called "house fellowships." The chief purpose for these house fellowships was to bring spiritual growth to our church. In fact, many of the lessons in this book were given to me by the Lord during those important days.

Every week I would gather 12 to 14 men together and teach them a lesson that I felt God had given me. My practice was to first apply the lesson to my own life before teaching it to them. After I taught the lesson to my house leaders, it was their responsibility to put the lesson into personal practice before teaching it to their house fellowships.

One day when I was praying for a new lesson, the Lord spoke plainly to me, and said, "Love your enemies!" Wow! Up to that moment I really did not think that I, nor our church, had any problem loving anybody. We had already taught several lessons concerning the importance of loving God, and loving one another. We had taught concerning having a burden and love for people who do not know God. I felt that the subject of "love" had been covered quite thoroughly--until I heard the Voice!

As I was studying for the lesson, I asked myself, "Do I have an enemy I do not love?" The answer was immediate. "Yes, I do have an enemy, and I don't love him." I knew I could not teach that lesson until God did something inside of me so that I could love my enemy.

At that time we were holding our services in chapels in our district. A head chaplain in charge of all the chapels had just been appointed in that area. Another civilian man, who was jealous of our growing congregation, lied to him concerning our church. The head chaplain believed the lie, and wanted to put us out of the chapel system.

I reacted in a way that I realized later was not Christ-like. I called the church together for a three-day fast, had them sign a petition saying they wanted to continue to use the chapel system, and marched into head chaplain's office, armed with the petition. When I left his office, I had permission to use an even larger chapel--but I had an enemy! I later discovered this, when I met another chaplain, who greeted me with these words, "Oh, you're the rascal the head chaplain told me about!"

When I faced that fact that I did have an enemy, and Jesus required me to love him, I took immediate action. I called the head chaplain's office and made an appointment to meet with him the next day. When I walked into his office, he stiffened, expecting further confrontation. Instead, he met a man who had been changed, because of a proper understanding concerning the love of God!

I began the conversation by apologizing for my previous behavior. I told him that God had been teaching me many things about loving others, and that I wanted to work with the chaplain system. This man almost wept as he heard my testimony. When I finished, he said, "Listen, any way that I can help you, I would be so glad to do so. If you want to have a church dinner, we will take the funds out of the chaplain system. Just whatever we can do to help you."

I walked into the office with an enemy, but I left with a friend. The head chaplain did indeed help me on at least two occasions, proving that he was my friend.

After that experience, I was ready to teach my lesson to the fellowship leaders with greater confidence. The following is a brief summary of that lesson:

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

1. Love required by the law:

- a. Love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).
- b. Love your neighbor (Leviticus 19:18).
- c. No requirements to love your enemy: (Deuteronomy 23:6; Psalm 41:10; Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:19; and Deuteronomy 19:21).

2. Love in the kingdom of God:

- a. Love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Luke 10:25-27).
- b. *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it"* (Ephesians 5:25).
- c. *". . . love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"* (John 13:34).
- d. *"Love your enemies . . ."* (Luke 6:27, 35).

3. Who is my enemy?

Definition: a person who possesses negative thoughts and feelings toward another person, and may or may not act upon these thoughts or feelings.

4. What should be my attitude and behavior toward my enemies? References: Matthew 5:41; Luke 6:22-38; Romans 12:14-20; and I Peter 4:12-16.

- a. Love your enemies.
- b. Do good to people who hate you.
- c. Bless those who curse you.
- d. Pray for those who spitefully use you.
- e. Don't render evil for evil.
- f. Be merciful as your Father is merciful.
- g. Judge not, and you will not be judged.
- h. Condemn not, and you will not be condemned.
- i. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.
- j. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
- k. If your enemy hungers, give him food; if he thirsts, give him drink.
- l. As much as is possible, live peacefully with all men.

5. When my enemies treat me wrong and speak evil of me, what should I do?

- a. Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven (Luke 6:22-23).
- b. Rejoice, because you are partakers of Christ's sufferings (I Peter 4:13-14).



c. ". . . if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (verse 16).

When Jesus said, "Love your enemies," the Greek word used was "agape." Agape love is divine love that comes from Jesus alone. It is not normal for people to love their enemies. That is one of the reasons that God gives us His precious Holy Spirit:

". . .the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:5). ds

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