

Message Study Guide

(Scriptures & quotes from this week's message are available on [thorncreek.church/live](http://thorncreek.church/live))

**Warming up**

1. Define an enemy. Define hate. Do you have any enemies in your life? Do you hate anyone? (Most likely the answer will be, "no").
  
2. Let's ask another question...how many people have you "Unfriended", "Unfollowed", in your life? How many people would you be okay with if they fell off the edge of the earth!

**Digging Deeper & Application**

Take your time reading the scripture given. If possible look up the verses in different versions and pause at each verse and discuss it.

3. Read Matthew 5:43-47.
  - a. What are your first thoughts?
  
  - b. What is God showing you?
  
4. When Jesus taught this, we need to remember, Jesus and His audience lived under an oppressive occupying Roman government. The Romans employed torture and murder to keep people in line. The Israelites way of life was determined by the Romans.
  - a. Do you think it would have been hard for the Israelites to hear this teaching?
  
5. Read Leviticus 19:18.
  - a. The Israelites did something that we do...they put a "But" at the end of verse. "You should love your neighbor...love your people...love your friends...BUT you can hate the Romans."
  
  - b. Finish this sentence, "God wants me to love my neighbor, BUT \_\_\_\_\_"
  
6. The Old Testament Israelites believed love and hate could coexist. Read Deut 23:3-6.
  - a. Are we much different from that thinking?
  
  - b. In what ways do we love and hate?

- c. Compare with this quote from G K Chesterton, "The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people."
  
7. Pastor Ruben shared three (3) things about loving your enemies. Talk about them!
  - 1) Your enemy is part of your story.
  - 2) You don't have to straighten out your enemy.
  - 3) It's not about your enemy.
  
8. Compare with John 13:35; 15:9, Quote from Corrie Ten Boom, "You never so touch the ocean of God's love as when you forgive and love your enemies."

### **Application**

Below are some of the points shared in the message. Discuss how they apply to your life.

- The Dead Sea community in Qumran went even further. They taught their followers to... "Love all the sons of light ... and hate all the sons of darkness," understanding the sons of light as members of their own sect and sons of darkness to be other Jews outside of their sect.
  
- The love that Jesus was talking about was known as, "Agapao". One bible scholar described this love like this, "Agapao speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. It springs from an apprehension of the preciousness of an object. It is a love of esteem and approbation. The quality of this love is determined by the character of the one who loves, and that of the object loved." (Wuest).
  
- To love your enemies (whether they are "lovable" or not) requires a self-denial. In other words, agape is a selfless love that thinks of others before it thinks of self. It follows that the only way one can truly love. Jesus is saying, "if you want to be a follower of Christ. If you consider yourself a Christian. If you want to be a FRIEND OF GOD...than LOVE YOUR ENEMIES...and much more than that...PRAY FOR YOUR ENEMIES.