



## [Matthew 5:44](#)

(44) But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

*King James Version*

We might think for a moment, "Who are our enemies?" Many of us believe we have no enemies. However, an enemy might be someone we thought was a friend, a family member with a long-held grudge, or even a brother or sister in Christ. An enemy can be someone we feel does not like us and has hurt or mistreated us. Whether we consider them enemies or not, there is no denying their hostility. In the same verse, [Jesus](#) goes on to expand His list of hostiles: "Bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

We have probably all been through this particular trial and test as we grow to [love](#) one another as brethren. The church is just like a big family, where people can be hurt or feel mistreated in one way or another. Conflicts, misunderstandings, and slights—real or imagined—occur in every group of human beings, Christian or not.

It is very difficult to "love," "bless," "do good," and "pray" for a person who has hurt us deeply. It goes against our human nature to behave positively toward someone we feel deserves shame, censure, and punishment! Putting this principle into practice is a high hurdle for any Christian to clear.

Yet, as Christians, we know that [forgiveness](#) is one of the keys that Jesus taught for [healing](#). Not only is it a teaching—it is also a command. Christ admonishes us to keep this charge in His model [prayer](#) in [Matthew 6:12](#): "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Alternatively, it could be said, "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who have sinned against us" (see [Luke 11:4](#)).

Jesus comments further on this in [Matthew 6:14-15](#): "For if you forgive men their

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trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

In [Matthew 18:21-22](#), we find another example: "Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother [sin](#) against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." In other words, we must always be willing to forgive a brother.

— Staff

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