

LOVE YOUR ENEMY

*A 30-Day Guide to
Compelling Expressions of Faith*

marcus young

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INTRODUCTION

Are there things about the church that make her feel glorious to you? If you looked at her through a stranger's eyes, would this church capture your imagination and awe, or would she offer only a faint shadow of spiritual attractiveness?

This booklet is a pathway into the depths of God's love beyond imagination—through loving enemies. Praying for, blessing and loving enemies is massively beneficial to us personally! If the church could embrace this lifestyle, it would become an expanding firework display of who God is, bursting like thousands of candle lights from a mountain in the darkness. Loving enemies is the glory of God beautifying his church, the depths of his intimate love.

It may be helpful to ask, "What is an enemy?" An enemy is, in simplest terms, an estranged son or daughter of our Father. We may not like them, they may be evil or unworthy, but God has declared enemies "good!" by the peace of his cross.

Engaging our enemies in love may be one of Jesus' most powerful strategies he offers for demonstrating God's kingdom. See Matthew 5 and Luke 6. This enemy love is the litmus test that we are true sons and daughters of a heavenly Papa. It is a lifestyle that perfectly and mercifully expresses his heart.

This booklet will guide you on a 30-day journey of loving both your personal enemies and the enemies of the church at large. It will open your eyes to the spiritual treasure buried in actively loving enemies and guide you in how to love your enemies the way Jesus did.

This booklet was written to help serve the countercultural justice movement. One that knows justice is demonstrated by sparking fires of love and mercy for perpetrators of evil all over the planet.

You may not finish this journey in exactly 30 days, but remain encouraged and committed to chase these 30 entries all the way to the beautiful finish line. It will give you a substantially freer place to live from and light up the skies with Jesus' fame.

FOREWARD

We traveled to a rebel army village on the side of a steep, forested mountain in Mindanao, Philippines. Military lookouts were hidden in the leafy canopy above us. Over a lunch of mountain rice and grilled chicken, I sat on the porch with the head commander of the Maoist rebel movement in the region.

The commander was a handsome woman, dressed in plain clothing suited to the area. She had a kind face. Perhaps the face of a mother? I wondered. I could also see the deep creases marking years of determination and struggle.

I glanced at her over a bite of chicken. “What do you think of prayer, Commander?”

She tilted her head back and looked hard at the ceiling, her lips a thin line. “I haven’t prayed in 30 years.”

“Can I have your permission to get some churches to pray for you?” I queried.

She looked at me with flat eyes. “The church will not pray for me. They don’t like our New People’s Army even a little.”

A pain lanced through my heart at her words. Why do our Philippine churches have this reputation?

I persisted, “I could get 10 or so churches to pray for you. Can I have your permission? I would like to do this.”

The commander offered a slight shrug and smiled. “It would take a miracle for the church to pray for me...but okay.”

This woman grew up in the church and rejected it in her early 20’s as providing any hope for her people. Her people have suffered injustice, mostly from the wealthy and the systems of monetary interest which keep them in servitude similar to the black sharecroppers of the rural south after the American Civil War.

Most of the global church sides with the greater Filipino population in feeling that when a Communist movement begins picking up arms, too many innocent people suffer. The very injustice that these rebels rise up to fight forms them into its own tools inflicting pain. War always has a negative impact on the local populous. Because of this suffering, rebel leaders become less human and more evil in our eyes. Often the church is scared of these leaders. Would Jesus be?

The commander went on to expose her heart and needs for prayer with me. This included prayers that her two sons would understand the many days and months she couldn’t be home because of her service to the country as a Marxist. I left feeling deeply convicted to make sure she and all those others who are viewed as enemies of the church around the world know that we, God’s people, love them.

I am accepting the challenge. Will you?

day 1

DEFINE YOUR ENEMIES

“My innocence is near. Who will go to judgment with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my enemy? Let him come near to me.”

Isaiah 50:8, The Aramaic Bible: The Isaiah Targum

All of us have enemies, whether we are aware of it or not. These may be people who have deeply wounded us or hurt those we love. Often, they are people who have rejected us. Perhaps they threatened a certain part of our lives, something sacred to us or something essential to our wellbeing.

Think deeply on this. Does a name or face come to mind? Is it a challenging family member, a cutthroat competitor, your boss, a colleague, a former leader, a soldier, a terrorist or a political figure?

The Brilliance, a liturgical soft rock band, published a song that begins with the lyrics, **“When I look into the face of my enemy, I see my brother.”** How do you see the face of your enemy?

Consider a time when your enemy hurt you. What did you feel about them then? Did you feel any bitterness, anger, sadness, rebellion, revenge or hatred toward them? And what about now, how do you feel about them at this moment?

How do you see this enemy? Jesus asks that we view our enemies as people already purchased by him and who are, or may one day be, brothers and sisters in Christ.

Reflective Actions

Let these prayers be meditative. Pause when you have a thought or a feeling rise up. Take a long moment to reflect on it and see if God leads you into a deeper prayer experience.

Prayer | “Spirit of Truth, fill me. Come into the hidden parts of my soul, into the nooks and crannies. Help me identify my enemies.”

Ask Your Father | “Where is my pain? Who is the cause of this pain?”

Meditation | “Today I consider God is with me on this journey and even if I do not feel it, I forgive this enemy because God forgives my enemy.”

Breakthrough | “I bring my feelings to you, Father; every wound that pains and every scar that constricts and knots. Even if I only feel pain and numbness, I choose to imagine your love like heavenly breaker waves sweeping over me, knocking down old walls. I open the door of my heart wide to this powerful love!”

day 2

YOU TOO HAVE BEEN AN ENEMY

“While we were still enemies, Christ reconciled us to the Father by his death.”

Romans 5:10¹

Remember where you came from as a newly born-again believer—you came out from enemy territory waving a white flag of surrender.

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the Garden of Eden, we sided with the serpent in his rebellion against our Creator. We tried to make a small theft of a huge thing: the Creator’s Spirit of Wisdom to judge good and evil, to divide, to judge between things as he did in creation...dividing light from darkness, times and seasons, the earth and the waters, woman from man, rest and work. But judgement is God’s work. This includes judging good people and evil enemies.

Through the ages we have plundered the earth’s resources instead of stewarding them as a good gift that speaks daily of God like an expressive book or a beautiful painting. We have shed rivers of innocent blood into her soil building our inspiring monuments and magnificent empires—blood that speaks of a spotless Lamb’s cost to redeem his created world. We, the caretakers of planet earth, have taken lives that reflect the Imago Dei, God’s image.

Humanity is a race of enemies. Without the mercy of the cross, our good becomes evil and our evil works change for good, and we create a tangle of God’s good creation². We cannot consistently live to our aspirations, even the best and kindest of us.

But Jesus cherished me, even when I was his enemy and he is the way back to the good Father that every heart longs for. He is my good. I may fail many times over, but God has a grand purpose in Jesus that supersedes all injustice in the world today and forever. Come, Lord Jesus!

Reflective Actions

Prayer | “Jesus, kill my incriminating nature. Resurrect my heart to receive your Love. Thank you.”

Ask Your Father | “What did I have in common with my enemy before I was reconciled to you? Show me who I am now that I am in you! Doesn’t your love always pursue me? Aren’t you a true father who always runs to his child?”

Meditation | “For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son” (Romans 5:10, NLT). Put this in your own words and ponder it throughout the day.

Breakthrough | “I am hidden in you, the Christ Himself. I am freed from any slavery to the domain of sin. I am unbound from death, unshackled from sin. I am no longer your enemy. Wonder of wonders! The enormity of this gift! I can worship with abandon. So, I come now with a bold and carefree child’s hearts to a great throne bubbling over with grace and kindness where my Papa sits with open arms.”

¹ Translation by Marcus Young

² For example, often our choices to serve, give and love enable dependencies in others. Consequentially, present evil can become good because what some people in one generation win by exploitation, others in a subsequent generation may use for charity.

day 3

CHOOSE AN ENEMY

“At that time Jesus went up a hill to pray and spent the whole night there praying to God. When day came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he named apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter) and his brother Andrew; James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon (who was called the Patriot), Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became the traitor.”

Luke 6:12–16, The Good News Translation

If you don't feel you have an enemy, you need one; not an enemy to hate, but one to love.

This may be difficult to believe. However, Jesus prayed all night before choosing his inner circle of 12 men and one of his chosen few was his enemy, the one who would betray him. As you venture out with us on this amazing journey of praying for enemies, you too will see the wonders to be discovered by loving enemies.

Jesus' example was to choose a traitor to mentor—his personal traitor. This enemy didn't learn from him very well. This traitor even set him up for betrayal and a Roman criminal's cross. Why was this enemy so necessary for our Messiah? Is this a model teaching us not to fear our enemies, even those in our own close circle? Maybe it is even a model for us to work with our enemies and give them a chance, even if the forecast doesn't look redemptive.

Reflective Actions

Prayer | “Father, it is my desire to love like you love. I ask that you remove my blinders and clear my eyes so that I can see my enemies, who they are and who they are destined to be. I confess my need for your help to pray for these traitors—my enemies. It's difficult for me, God, so difficult. Help me with the pain.”

Ask Your Father | “Who are the enemies of my calling and my internal peace?” Speak their names before God. “What did my enemies do to me or to those I love?” God knows your thoughts intimately, but honesty about all your feelings in prayer brings them undeniably into his healing presence.

Meditation | Following Jesus' example is not just important, it is critical. Why? He is our highest example of knowing and experiencing the Father abundantly. If you are still struggling with forgiveness, it's okay. Keep speaking your desire to forgive your enemy every day as you read this guide. The miracle will come.

Breakthrough | All of heaven is backing you on this daily journey. Do you know that God has great hope for your heart to expand its capacity to live in his love?

“Papa God, I receive the grace of your Spirit and the washing of your Word. I release _____ and speak forgiveness over them. I accept that the Father loves them right now and that Jesus died for them too.”



*"Keep speaking your desire to
forgive your enemy every day..."*

day 4

DROWNING IN ENEMIES

“All day long I feel humiliated and am overwhelmed with shame, before the vindictive enemy who ridicules and insults me.”

Psalms 44:15-16, NET Bible

Maybe you feel this enemy experiment isn't going very well? For one thing, you simply don't have time to deal with enemies. For another, you may feel the shame of failure because your emotional capacity when dealing with certain enemies is too limited. It seems best to stay numb and keep moving.

At surface value, it appears Jesus made a big mistake when he chose a betrayer to be part of his core team...and for only 30 pieces of silver. Jesus could have found that in a fish! It was a devastating mistake. His leaders in training all scattered. He was captured by jealous and outraged religious leaders.

I hope you can see a different kingdom at work here. We don't know why Judas Iscariot was disappointed in Jesus' leadership. Was it the hope of riches that he hung on Jesus' rise to power? Did Judas finally see that Jesus didn't have that kind of political ambition? Jesus viewed life from a different perspective, just like you can.

At the last supper, after Judas took the morsel Jesus offered, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly” (John 13:27³). *This is one of the clearest pictures we have that enemies can be a direct tool of the chief enemy, Satan. But even when Satan moves, there is a greater purpose at work, a God-sized purpose.* It was this purpose in God that Jesus was submitted to. All the while tasting, sensing and looking towards the Joy of his Father's love.

“Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). Like Jesus when he faced the cross, you also are here with a God-sized purpose...a purpose even at work when enemies rage like they did at Jesus. Those moments are often your most important ones.

Reflective Actions

Prayer | “God, show me the bigger purpose and give me meaningful hope so that I am not drowning in the cruelty of my enemies. I don't want to die of bitterness of soul so protect me from harboring offense. Make your love and grace a refuge for my heart as I learn to love my enemies.”

Ask Your Father | God is love. His purposes will follow love. “What is your purpose for me?”

Listen and write down what he says. Allow his torrent of joy to soak deep into your soul!

Meditation | Truth: Even my enemies must serve the glory of God's good purposes in me today.

Breakthrough | “Let the Niagara Falls of Heaven's will crash down into me. I open myself wide to you. I see now that what Satan uses to kill and steal and destroy, you can use to bring reconciliation, eternal life and glory!”

³ Unless otherwise noted, all Bible verses are from the English Standard Version (ESV)

day 5

A HUMILIATED ENEMY

“Rather you have saved us from our enemies, and have humiliated those who hate us.”

Psalms 44:7, ESV Translation

How does God save us from our enemies? He calls them his friends. *Really?!* Yes, he reconciled them to their heavenly Father (who is also our Father). But how can naming them “friend” magically turn them into friends? It’s true, they may still hate God and hate his church. However, if Jesus has reconciled them, now it is our work as the church to declare the good news of reconciliation to them. Loving enemies is a work of the Holy Spirit. It is activated in faith. We look beyond the temporary facts of someone’s sin and broken choices to the eternal truth and grace of God’s work in Jesus.

How does an enemy get humiliated (Psalms 44:7)? It’s simple really; it comes from the amazing love of Jesus that radiates from you when you are hated, abused and ill-treated. For a hater, this is humiliation, about as easy to swallow as a handful of vitamins and only a teaspoon of water! But for a lover, persecution can plunge us into joyful abandonment to God and intimate friendship with him.

Your love for your enemies is confrontational. It is a great, offensive weapon. How did God humiliate the Jews? He sent Jesus as a babe into the virgin womb, causing a religious scandal. Jesus entered the fray not as a political Messiah but as a spiritual rabbi to confront Rome with his Father’s heart. Frankly it offends most of the world that a Creator would name us enemies and then become a creature who could die for love of his enemies to remake us into friends and family. Love confronts. Love calls us to something higher, something God-like. That is why we need the Holy Spirit to help us live on this heavenly plane.

Reflective Actions

Prayer | “God, help me bless my enemy. Help me to love them, to see them as you see them, and to bless them to walk in their destiny as a child of God! Reveal the places inside of me that are still a home to bitterness towards others.” Finding this hard? “Help me, God” prayers are always okay here.

Ask Your Father | If you need to, take a few minutes to let your heart move into worship. Listen to a song. Get quiet.

“Am I still holding any bitterness towards my enemy?”

“Do I feel as though it is impossible to truly and fully forgive them?”

“What is one thing I can do today to actively show love to my enemy?”

Meditation | As you follow what Holy Spirit⁴ showed you to do to actively love your enemy, be thoughtful and learn. Action brings more understanding. Have your actions shifted anything in your own perspective about enemies? If they have, jot those down—don’t lose the moment!

Breakthrough | “I choose today to partner with your Spirit and purposes, even if I don’t feel it. I believe that as I meditate on who you are and confess your truth that I will be transformed by the renewing of my mind! So, Father, I forgive _____.” Take whatever the Holy Spirit says and make it a priority to do it today or tomorrow.

⁴ Holy Spirit is a person of the Godhead, therefore, in this book, we often remove “the” from “the Holy Spirit.”

day 6

A SOARING FAITH

“But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.”

Luke 6:27-28, New Living Translation

Do we have faith to hear what Jesus said? According to Romans 5:10⁵ we were enemies ourselves, but by Jesus’ cross every enemy, all of us, were reconciled even before we said yes. Now even our own enemy stands in that same accepted position before the Father. All that remains is their choice to follow the way of Jesus. So now, we need to pray for their salvation by His life. By salvation, we mean that the universal kingdom rule of God would collide with their little kingdom—their family and friends, their wealth, favor, influence—and that in every way, the purposes of heaven, the designs of heaven, would inundate even the cracks and crevices of their world like flood waters.

Loving all our enemies is a supernatural work. That is why it is first a work of the cross. Only the cross is powerful enough to break strongholds of hatred. Jesus modeled love on his cross by forgiving us as his enemies and by giving us a direct connection to heaven and our Papa God once again.

Do we believe in a God that is powerful enough and good enough to save the most vile of people? Is our faith in that kind of God strong? We are on a journey of loving enemies, and we need faith to believe that God can truly redeem anyone we consider vile and harmful.

Reflective Actions

Prayer | Let’s ask for a big faith to believe in a God who is happy to redeem anyone: “Jesus, increase my faith in your goodness, a goodness that can and will overtake

even my enemies. May reconciliation fill the church like praise songs! Align us to Heaven’s heart! Conform us to the forgiveness of the cross. Give us courage to know you in the invigorating challenge of loving enemies. Father,

use this alignment to your heart and our declarative prayers as your people to unleash resurrection life into our enemies’ lives. Cascade expressions of beautiful salvation all around them!”

Ask Your Father | Consider the example of Paul the Apostle. He wept when he spoke of enemies in the third chapter of his letter to the Philippians.

“When I speak of my enemies, can I cry for them?”

“How can I experience the same compassion that your Son did regarding Jerusalem’s leaders killing his prophets in Luke 13? ‘How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!’ (NASB)”

Quiet your soul. Allow Holy Spirit to minister to you and reveal how he feels regarding enemies. Record what he says.

Meditation | God embraced me while I was still an enemy and wants to do the same for those around me.

Breakthrough | “Oh, Father! Break my heart for my enemies!” (You can name them here too.) “Help me weep the tears of your heart and comprehend the radical mercies of a God who embraced me while I was still an enemy!”

⁵ For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, by much more, having been reconciled, we will be saved through his life. (Romans 5:10 LEB)

day 7

WHY PRAY FOR ENEMIES?

PART 1

“Then my enemies will retreat, turning back in the day when I pray.”

Psalms 56:10, The Aramaic Bible

In the Kingdom of God, we operate very differently than what makes sense to the world. This can be called a “paradox.” A paradox operates counterintuitively to how we naturally logic something out. Jesus may ask us to do things that are not the norm, but it causes us to operate in spiritual strength rather than our natural abilities. This is especially true in praying for our enemies.

The Holy Spirit empowers us when we choose to pray for our enemies. Take Paul's famous words for example, “when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). How does this paradox make sense? When we allow God to work in our lives rather than us taking control, he is able to display HIS mighty glory through us and enable us to do and be things we cannot in our weakness.

Paradox is a powerful implement for rapidly deconstructing spiritual strongholds. This holds true both in our personal lives and also in spheres of influence. This counterintuitive truth forces us into a divine exchange. This exchange will confront darkness and bring light in the blink of an eye. We can think of this exchange as a paradigm shift that can broadly impact our mind, will, emotions and spirit.

Because the wounds received from our enemies evoke powerful emotion for us as individuals, the paradox of loving and praying for someone who we perceive did something hateful is often one of the most paradigm-shifting encounters with his heart that Jesus offers us as his followers.

Reflective Actions

Prayer | “Father, today I choose to depend on your strength and not on my own. I choose your love and your peace that is beyond my comprehension. I lay down my shield and my weapons used in warfare against my human enemy. You are my protection, my shield and my hope! Yet again, I release any negative or bitter thoughts and emotions towards my enemy to you. Wash me clean like a mountain spring! I trust you to fight on my behalf. With you I fear no evil. With you, I am safe.”

Ask Your Father | Can you see how small an enemy's meanness is from God's perspective, like dust mites in the wind?

“How else do you see enemies, Papa God? What is your heart for them?”

Meditation | Putting down my weapons allows God to be my protector and deliverer. “I lean not on my own understanding, love not from my own love. Where I am weak, God's strength is perfected in me. I can love my enemy because God's love in me is perfect!”

Breakthrough | “Holy Spirit, bless my enemy today! Bless their health, their minds, their thoughts, their emotions, their joy, and their hopes. Help them to somehow touch you in prayer. Help them to find you, the amazing One. Bless those they love too: their families, their friends, their companions. Have mercy on them, Jesus.”

Click here to get the full 30 Day Guide: https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08376VMWT/ref=cm_sw_em_r_mt_dp_U_eT6XEbN8JJBAN