



Sept 29, 2019
Courageous Love
**Courageous Love Toward Those
We Tend to Avoid**

WE TEND TO AVOID
THOSE WHO...

- Hate us / treat us with contempt
- Hurt us / mistreat us / offend us
- Malign us / slander us / curse us
- Oppose us / hold us back / slow us
- Embarrass us
- Disagree with us
- Are different from us

WE TEND TO AVOID
THOSE WHOM...

- We hate / treat with contempt
- We hurt / mistreat / offend
- We malign / slander / curse
- We oppose / hold back / slow
- We are embarrassed by
- We disagree with
- We are different from

More often than not, the person we intentionally try to avoid is one with whom we have issues, unresolved conflicts, judgements against, prejudices towards, or we don't want to be seen with—they are those who are against us, or those whom we are against. Look at Gerry's list above of the reasons why we tend to avoid people.

A. Is there a person / people in your life that you tend to avoid?

B. Considering the list above, why do you think you have a tendency to avoid that person / those people?



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Matthew 5:43-48 — Part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount Regarding Loving Your Enemies

You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **that you may be children of your Father in heaven.** He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, **what are you doing more than others?** Do not even pagans do that? **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

In the above verse, Jesus was confronting the teachers of the Law—who added to the teaching of loving your neighbours that you should also hate your enemies. However Jesus is setting an even deeper moral ethic, saying you should love your enemies, posing the question "what are you doing MORE than others?"

- A. We can see this kind of courageous love for our enemies being manifested in our lives because we are children of God. Knowing this, how can we respond to Jesus' question about what we are doing MORE than others / how we are loving DIFFERENT from others?
- B. Jesus calls us to be perfect, just as God is perfect—this is the goal of discipleship and the aim of our spiritual formation. Being "perfect" is to be complete and has three aspects:
1. Positional Perfection — we have been declared perfect / complete by God based on Christ's righteousness and sacrifice
 2. Experiential Perfection — we are in the process of being perfected (2 Corinthians 3:18)
 3. Eternal Perfection — we will be perfected in the new heaven & earth (1 John 3:2)

Considering these three aspects of perfection, and Jesus' command to "be perfect" just as God is, how can we begin to be perfect in loving those we want to avoid? How can we use our heavenly Father's example of perfection in loving others we find difficult to love?



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Jesus Commands Us to Express Courageous Love to Those we Tend to Avoid.

To express courageous love to my enemies...

1. I am to **greet** them, acknowledge them — not ignore them or hide from them
2. I am to **serve** them, lend them, give to them, aid them
3. I am to **bless** them, speak well of them, speak life into them
4. I am to **pray for** them (for their forgiveness / salvation) — not merely “precatory prayers” (for God’s judgement)
5. I am to **agapé** them, sacrificially and actively love them, seeking their good (1 Corinthians 13:4-7: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not board, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres)

When we express courageous love to those we tend to avoid, we bring honour to God, lifting Him up to those who see His character revealed in us; we are rewarded through His blessings and especially in eternity; we may impact the ones we tend to avoid, disarming them and making them consider why we’ve shown them this courageous love; and we begin to improve the world, changing the tone of a family, neighbourhood, workplace, community, country, and world! **Considering these results, the above ways we are to express courageous love to our enemies, and the promise that God will equip our heart, will, mind, spirit and community to do what He commands, take a moment to quiet your heart and enter into a time of prayer.**

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a person, people, organization, or that which you are at odds with. Then, as Gerry led us in on Sunday, pray this prayer in faith:

“God, I confess my avoidance of _____, and my antagonism. I cannot do this on my own, so I confess my sin of hatred and prejudice and neglect and judgement and _____. Please forgive me. I need you and the power of your Holy Spirit to fill my heart, to renew my mind, and to compel my will to let this go, or to make this right. Help me to love, greet, speak well of, pray for and bless _____. And if my heart, my emotions or my feelings are not there, I choose to obey you, and I pray that you will bring me to a place of release from these kinds of resentments and bitternesses and angers. Help me be a person who avoids no one, and who has no enemies. And help me to proactively love those who still linger, that we might be children of our Father in heaven. I pray this by faith because I know I can’t. In Jesus’ powerful name, Amen.”

In further reflection, jot down anything the Holy Spirit may have put on your heart, or spoke to you during your prayer time: