



**Matthew: Alive to God's Desire**

## **Week #11: November 20, 2011**

### **Matthew 5: 43-48**

#### **Matthew 5:43-48 (New International Version)**

<sup>43</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'<sup>44</sup> But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?<sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

#### **Start It**

- List a few people or groups Christians consider enemies.
- Describe our natural attitude (and actions!) toward an enemy. Use descriptive language!
- How have these attitudes and actions been formed? How do we justify them?

#### **Study It**

- Read passage.
- Look up Leviticus 19:18. How had the scribes of Jesus' day altered God's command?
- It can become easy to say we love our enemies without understanding what actions would characterize that love. Read Romans 12:17-21. List the practical actions that give "feet" to our love and prayers for our enemies.

#### **Live It**

- In this passage Jesus teaches radical righteousness that will have both personal and societal results. What are the personal results described in verse 48? (The Amplified Version states it this way: *You, therefore, must be perfect [growing into complete maturity of godliness in mind and character, having reached the proper height of virtue and integrity], as your heavenly Father is perfect.*)
- Discuss how our growth toward spiritual maturity is stunted by not taking Jesus' words seriously.
- Read 1 Peter 3:8-15. What will be the effects upon society if we live toward our enemies as Jesus taught?

#### **Pray It:**

- Ask God to reveal our heart attitude toward those we describe as enemies. Be ready to receive His answers!