

# Rossville Church of Christ Doorpost Devo



March 19, 2023



## Encouragement from God's Word

### Matthew 5:38-48 Disciples Love Enemies

Every disciple knows that we are called by Jesus to be lights in the world. All of us realize the urgent need for this, as it is no secret that the world is exceedingly dark. So how are we to be lights in the world? What will penetrate the darkness of selfishness, hatred, bitterness, and evil? It seems that many Christians have a well-meaning but misguided notion that being light in the world simply means being nice, pleasant, and performing random acts of kindness throughout our lives. While we ought not underestimate the power of simple kindness and decency, such niceness is not distinctly Christian.

Cont. on pg. 3 and 4

## Scripture Plan: Read

Mon, Tues, Wed.:

Acts 13:1-5 Each Night

Thurs., Fri., Sat.:

Acts 13:6-12 Each Night

## Devo Plan

1. Mon.--Read and Pray Together
2. Tues.--Read, Pray, Ask Questions, and Discuss
3. Wed.--Read, Pray, and Think about how to Apply
4. Thurs.-Sat.--Repeat steps 1-3 with New Passage
5. Sunday--Pray and Reflect on What was Learned in Worship and Class

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## Discussion Questions

Acts 13:1-5

Discussion Question #1: How was the church in Antioch blessed? What gifts did they have? How should we respond to God blessing us with gifts and talents?

Discussion #2: Why were the disciples gathered? What happened when they gathered for worship, prayer, and fasting? Why are these things so important?

Discussion #3: What does the laying on of hands represent? How do we see unity here? In what ways can we be unified in fulfilling God's mission?

Acts 13:6-12

Discussion #1: What challenges do Saul and Barnabas face on their mission? What challenges do we sometimes face when we seek to make disciples?

Discussion #2: Why is Saul so harsh in his words to Elymas? When might it be necessary to use bold and harsh language?

## Apply and Obey

To obey what God says, this upcoming week I will...

I will share what I learned with...

## Prayer Points

- Lord, Thank You--For being so gracious and worthy of our worship
- Lord, We Praise You--That you allow us to be a part of your mission
- Lord, Help Us--to follow wherever you lead and do whatever needs to be done to make your mission our mission

Many people do random acts of kindness, are generous, and are typically pleasant to be around, yet they do not know Jesus and are utterly lost in darkness. So how will the world see light in us as disciples? How will Jesus be evident in our lives? One way that distinguishes Jesus and his followers from every group, moral code, and world religion is the call to radical enemy love. Most philosophies, religious systems, and even secular worldviews promote basic decency, kindness, and love. But only Jesus is serious about the countercultural, counterintuitive command to love our enemies. Consider what Jesus says in Matthew 5:38-48:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Jesus shatters our cultural norms and our conceptions of love. He strikes against our human tendencies for retaliation, revenge, and apathy toward those who mistreat us. In response to persecution, he calls for prayer, active initiative in reconciliation, and costly generosity. This kind of love is not natural and not normal. It can only flow from the Father who loves those who dishonor Him, the one who sends good gifts to the just and the unjust. This kind of love can only flow from a person who truly understands the love that Jesus has for us even when we were once His enemies. Jesus underlines the way in which this way of love is so fundamentally different than the love of the world. Everyone loves their family and friends. Everyone loves the people who are easy to love. Even sinners, Gentiles, and the rest of the world do that. But sons of the heavenly Father are different. Those who are light in the world go beyond what is expected and normal.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the *doorposts* of your house and on your gates." --Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Disciples love and pray for even those who do not deserve it. Disciples do not pat themselves on the back for simply refusing to retaliate against mistreatment. Disciples actively seek to love the unlovable. Why? It is because it is what our Master does, and we are his followers. We do not settle for random acts of kindness; by His grace, we pursue intentional acts of sacrificial love. Followers of Jesus do not respond to hatred with bitterness and resentment. We respond with faithfulness and compassion in the name of Jesus. This is what will shine God's glorious light into the world. This is what will reveal the mercy of God, when we choose to trust in Jesus and live in the way of otherworldly enemy love. Jesus shows us the way forward in this. It involves praying. It involves nonviolence and reconciliation and forgiveness. It means doing more than what is expected for those who do not deserve it. It includes giving generously to those who do not seek our good. And when we do these things in Jesus' name, the world we see and give glory to our Father in heaven.

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