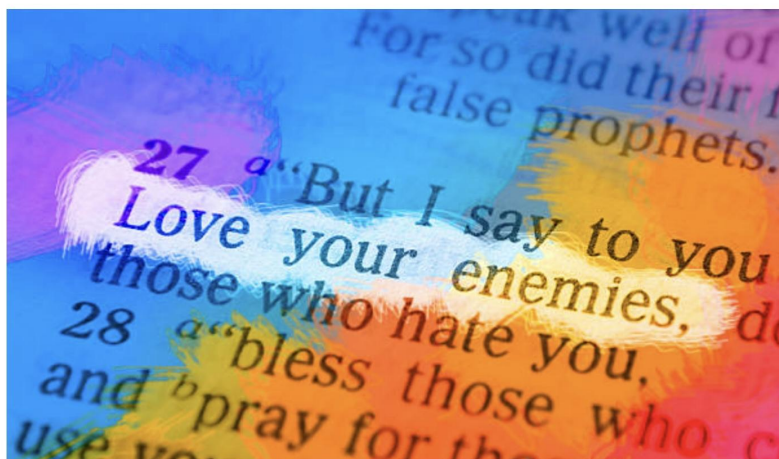


Loving Our Enemies

Moving Beyond 'Turn the Other Cheek'



Bible Study of *Matthew 5:38-48* and many related verses,

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West Richmond, West Elkton & Muncie Friends Meetings, Wed. Oct. 18, 2023

Friends, fellow Quakers, today we gather to explore more deeply the profound teaching of Jesus concerning *loving our enemies*. ***It is timely and fitting that we do this, because we are living through an age of extreme polarization, and hostility*** not only in our nation and world, but also in our local communities and often among our neighbors and sometimes even within our families.






What I am sharing with you today are ways in which the teaching of Jesus to love our enemies goes far beyond the phrase “turn the other cheek” a term with a specific cultural and historical context. That phrase “turning the other cheek” when it is used as synonymous with “loving our enemies” can hinder us in fully engaging with this teaching. In as much as “turn the other cheek” has become the best known example of loving our enemies, it might make this practice seem nearly impossible for many people.

I believe that the teaching of Jesus to *Love Our Enemies*, which I also call ***Enemy Love***, calls us to expand our understanding and practice of enemy love, embracing a broad continuum of actions. Each and every one of us, I believe, can find ways to incorporate enemy love into our lives.

Today, we will delve into three important aspects of this teaching: the Biblical ***context*** of enemy love, the ***breadth*** of enemy love along a continuum of actions, and ***our capacity*** both as individuals and as a community of Quakers to engage in loving our enemies. So, Context, Breadth and Our Capacity for Enemy Love are my topics today.

I also urge you to consider a broad understanding of *enemies*, including adversaries, opponents and rivals, as well as persons with whom we each have experienced brokenness, hostility or hardness of heart. *Take a moment to recall an adversarial situation or situations in your life.*

Five Biblical Patterns of Ethical Conduct Described

1. Unrestrained Vengeance	2. An Eye For An Eye	3. Neighbor Love	4. Loving Care	5. Enemy Love
				
This ethic involves disproportionate force in response to wrongdoing, escalating the violence.	This negative ethic dictates exact proportionate retribution in response to wrongdoing.	This positive ethic involves reciprocity , treating others as we would like to be treated.	This ethic involves care and protection for those who are less able to reciprocate .	This ethic involves maintaining ones moral truth, not reciprocating hostility , threats and violence, while seeking ways to transform the relationship.

THE CONTEXT OF ENEMY LOVE

Let us begin, Friends, by examining five Biblical relational ethics or patterns of conduct which provide a comparative basis for better understanding enemy love. Notice I will often mention the word “**reciprocity**.” *In the passage we are grappling with, Matthew 5:38-48, Jesus astutely contracts three of these, **An Eye for an Eye, Love for Neighbor and Love for Enemies**, urging us to consider the third of these. I find it helpful to contrast five ethics, all of which occur multiple times in both the Old and New Testaments. Through the contrast among them we can better appreciate Enemy Love.*

The first Biblical ethic is a shocking one, that of **unrestrained vengeance**, which involves responding to wrongdoing with disproportionate force, hitting back harder and escalating the violence. And yes, examples of this ethic appear multiple times in the Bible.

The second ethic is "***an eye for an eye***, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life" which represents exact proportionate retribution in response to wrongdoing. It is an ancient ethic of ***negative reciprocity***, found in Babylonian cuneiform text in the Code of Hammurabi, and later on three times in the Old Testament. It is very harsh, yet a reform over the first ethic.

The third ethic is Loving our Neighbor, or ***neighbor love***, often also known as the "Golden Rule," which emphasizes ***positive reciprocity***, loving and treating others as we would like to be treated. Jesus calls us to practice this ethic, but he also calls on each of us to go further.






The fourth ethic is ***loving care***, which entails providing care and protection for those who are more vulnerable, such as widows, orphans, and foreigners, as well as those who are disabled and poor - and others less able to reciprocate in kind.

Do you see how reciprocity, negative and positive and lack of reciprocity is one way we compare these biblical relational ethics?

I have to confess that over the course of any particular year of my life, if I am fully honest with myself, I can point to times when I have lived all five of these these relational ethics, not only neighbor love, and loving care, but also negative reciprocity in my words, but behind the wheel on my car, being startled by a horn and a car cutting me off, I have honked back twice or three times longer than I was honked at. The ripples of my wrongful escalation may well spread beyond the highway to other situations. It's this kind of human habit of just reacting to perceived hostility that makes the fifth ethic so crucial.

Enemy love is the fifth ethic, which involves maintaining our dignity, our moral truth, while ***refraining from reciprocating hostility***, and seeking out opportunities to transform a broken relationship. Jesus calls us to do our best to live this way, even if we sometimes fail.








Five Biblical Patterns of Ethical Conduct - with Verses

1. Unrestrained Vengeance	2. An Eye For An Eye	3. Neighbor Love	4. Loving Care	5. Enemy Love
				
Genesis 34; Judges 19-21; Joshua 6: 20-21; 2 Kings 2:23-24; Revelation 19:11-21	Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:17-22; Deuteronomy 19:16-21; <i>Life for Life:</i> Genesis 9:6 Revelation 13:10 <i>Response of Jesus:</i> Matthew 5:38-42; Luke 6:27-31;	Leviticus 19:18 Tobit 4:16 Matthew 7:12 Luke 6:31 Galatians 5:14 Colossians. 3:12-14	Widows, Orphans, Strangers, Poor, Disabled, Aged and others: Deuteronomy 10:18-19 Leviticus 19:14 Job 29:12-17 Psalm 82:3-4 Psalm 146:9 Zechariah 7:9-10	Matthew 5:43-45; Luke 6:27-28; Luke 10:25-37 "Return your enemy's ox. Exodus 23:4-5;;2 A feast for enemies 2 Chronicles 28:8-15; 1 Samuel 24:12 Proverbs 25:21-22; "A gentle answer turns away wrath" Proverbs 15:1 "When your enemy falls"

THE BREADTH OF ENEMY LOVE

Moving from the **context of enemy love**, let's now explore the **breadth of enemy love**, envisioning love for our enemies as a continuum of seven forms, with increasing degrees of difficulty.

Seven Levels of Enemy Love

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Prayer	Patience	Help	Care	Blessings	Forgiveness	Dignity
Pray for Your Enemy; love them and don't hate them	Be patient, slow to anger and hostility, do not gloat	Help your enemy when they experience misfortune	Provide for your enemies basic needs - food to eat, and water to drink	Bless your enemies directly; break bread with them	Forgive your enemy like God forgives you	If your enemy harms you, maintain your Dignity; Give vengeance to God
						
Job 31:29-30: "If I have rejoiced in my enemy's ruin, or exulted when evil befell him—I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life with a curse."	Proverbs 15:1 "A gentle answer turns away wrath." Proverbs 24:17 "Do not gloat when your enemy falls."	Exodus 23:4-5 "If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to return it."	Proverbs 25:21-22: "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat"	Psalms 23:5 "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."	Genesis 35:4 "Esau ran to Jacob, embraced him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And they both wept."	Leviticus 18:18: "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge."
Matthew 5:44: "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."	James 1:19-20 "Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger"	Luke 10:30-37: Parable of the Good Samaritan "Go and do likewise."	Romans 12:20-21: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him"	1 Peter 3:9 "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing"	Matthew 18:21-22: Peter: "How many times shall I forgive?" Jesus: "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."	Romans 12:19-21 "Do not avenge yourself... overcome evil with good."

These forms are drawn from examples in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, and they offer each of us a wide range of possible actions to embody enemy love.

The **first form is prayer**—loving our enemies through prayer and refusing to harbor hatred towards them. This is a crucial foundation for all that follows.

The **second form is patience**—being slow to anger and hostility, as well as abstaining from gloating over an adversary's misfortune.

The **third form is help**—assisting our enemies when they experience hardship and misfortune. The Book of Exodus tells us: "If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to return it." A few years ago I returned a dropped wallet to its owner, a person whose political views I deplore, yet when we met we managed to

speak cordially and even in a small way lovingly, each of us speaking our church communities before saying goodbye. In the Gospel of Luke we find the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*, a member of an despised adversarial group, who helped a Jewish man who had been robbed and badly injured.

The **fourth form is care**—providing for our enemies' basic needs, such as food and water, as described many times by Jesus and emphasized in verses Proverbs and Romans.

Continuing along the continuum, the **fifth form is blessings**—directly engaging with our enemies, blessing them instead of cursing them, as exemplified in the verses from the Psalms and Peter's first letter, where we find examples of sharing meals and breaking bread with enemies.

The **sixth form is forgiveness**—extending forgiveness to our enemies and showing mercy and compassion. Jesus teaches us to forgive not just seven times *but seventy-seven times!* In other words, Jesus strongly urges us to *forgive as freely and profusely as God forgives*.

Lastly, **the seventh and most challenging form is maintaining dignity in the face of open hostility**—refusing to let an enemy or adversaries **hostile glares, threats, shaking fists, or brandishing weapons, or harmful actions** cause us to respond in a parallel fashion by reciprocating their hostility. Furthermore, if we are harmed, we are called to **give vengeance to God**, while remaining secure in our own moral truth, and responding with grace and love, confident that nothing can separate us from the love of God. (*Romans 8: 38-39*).

Finally, let's briefly consider how in a hostile verbal interaction, we might metaphorically **“Turn the Other Cheek,” with our words and capacity for listening**. When a person is speaking to us in a way that verbally attacks us, we might allow ourselves to move beyond simply not reciprocating their hostile words, but cultivating within ourselves a genuine curiosity about what is at the root of their hostile words toward us. Therefore, when they are anticipating us to reply to them with parallel hostility - instead we might ask them if there is more they want to say. This may change nothing, but it might just create the possibility of a change in the interaction, or **plant the seed of change at a future time**. I believe that is what Jesus was suggesting in his culturally specific examples in the verse from Matthew which we heard today.

OUR CAPACITY FOR ENEMY LOVE

As we embark on the path of enemy love, we must anchor ourselves in the assurance of Christ's eternal love. Christ Jesus is the Eternal Word made Flesh as well as the Inbreaking of the Eternal into the Temporal. In that sense the eternal Christ is present with us here and now within each of us. In this opportune Kairos moment, Christ is here in our worship and fellowship together today.

In the Gospel of John (15:11-15), Jesus calls us Friends. Jesus shares his teachings with us and asks each of us to love one another as He loves us.

In this intimate friendship, we can find the profound joy and the strength to embrace the difficult path of loving our enemies. **Let's begin by greeting each other as Friends.**

Turn to the person sitting nearest to you, take their hands and say to them: *"Jesus calls us friends."*

Turn to the other side, take someone else by the hands, look them in the eye, and say it again. "Jesus calls us friends."

What's important is not so much the words we speak, but the intention of our hearts because God knows what is in our hearts. We must also fully acknowledge that Jesus calls **our** enemies and adversaries his friends.

Imagine someone standing before you. Perhaps the face of someone with whom you have experienced brokenness, hostility or hardness of heart or an adversarial interaction. Imagine yourself taking their hands, looking them in the eye and say to them as well: "Jesus calls us friends"

Jesus Calls Us Friends



CONCLUSION

Beloved Friends, my hope for us here today is that each of us find a renewed understanding and commitment to love our enemies.

We now appreciate numerous ways in which Enemy Love goes beyond "turning the other cheek," how it encompasses a broad range of actions - many possible actions, including many actions which each of us can do in our own lives.

Through prayer, patience, help, care, blessings, forgiveness, and maintaining our dignity amidst hostility, we can embody the transformative power of enemy love.

Remember that Jesus the Eternal Christ loves each one of us. *Jesus also loves our enemies*, our adversaries, our rivals, our opponents and those with whom we have experienced brokenness and hardness of heart.

As we hold onto this truth and stand firm in Christ's eternal love within each of us and present today within this community, I am confident we can find our own capacities and the abilities as well as practical ways to engage in enemy love in our own lives.

Let us go forth, Friends, and be instruments of Christ's love, overcoming evil with good.

Seven Levels of Biblical Enemy Love - with more Verses

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Prayer	Patience	Help	Care	Blessings	Forgiveness	Dignity
Hebrew Scriptures	<p>Psalms 35:13: When they [the enemies] were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting."</p> <p>Job 31: 29-30: "If I have rejoiced in my enemy's ruin, or exulted when evil befell him—I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life with a curse."</p>	<p>Proverbs 14:29 "A quick temper displays folly 15:1: A gentle answer turns away wrath; 15:18 One who is patient calms a quarrel. 16:32 Better a patient person than a warrior; 17:14 Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; 20:3 Keep aloof from strife; 24:17 Do not gloat when your enemy falls 25:15: A gentle tongue can break a bone. Psalms 34:14 seek peace and pursue it.</p>	<p>Exodus 23:4-5 "If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to return it."</p>	<p>Proverbs 25:21-22: "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink."</p> <p>Isaiah 32:17: "Righteousness will bring peace."</p>	<p>Genesis 26:26-31: Abimelech, the king of Gerar, shared a meal to make a covenant with Isaac. 2 Samuel 9:7-13 "King David invites Mephibosheth, the grandson of his enemy Saul, to eat at his table" 2 Chronicles 28:15 They provided enemy prisoners with clothes and sandals, food and drink, and healing balm. All those who were weak they put on donkeys." Psalms 23:5 "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."</p>	<p>Genesis 35:4 "Esau ran to Jacob, embraced him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And they both wept."</p> <p>Zechariah 7:9: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion"</p>	<p>Leviticus 18:18 "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge."</p> <p>1 Samuel 24:12 "May the Lord take vengeance on you for me, but my hand will never be against you."</p> <p>Proverbs 20:22 "Do not say, 'I will avenge this evil!' Wait on the LORD, and He will save you."</p>
Gospels	<p>Matthew 5:44: "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."</p>	<p>Matthew 5:9: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."</p>	<p>Luke 10:30-37: Parable of the Good Samaritan "Go and do likewise."</p>	<p>Luke 10: 33-35 "But a Samaritan had compassion... He paid the innkeeper, and said, 'take care of him.'"</p>	<p>Luke 6:27-28 "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you; Luke 6:35: "But love your enemies, do good to them Luke 19:1-10 Jesus eats with Zacchaeus, a hated tax collector for the Romans</p>	<p>Matthew 6:14-15 "Forgive other people when they sin against you."</p> <p>Matthew 18:21-22: Jesus: 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'"</p>	<p>Matthew 5:39 Turn the the other cheek; God the second mile; cloak</p> <p>Luke 6:27-29 . If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them."</p>
New Testament	<p>1 John 3:14-15: "Anyone who hates is a murderer" 1 John 4:20: "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar."</p>	<p>James 1:19-20 "Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" Ephesians 4:26-27 "Do not let the sun go down on your anger 1 Peter 3:11 "Seek Peace and Pursue It" 2 Timothy 2:24-25 "Be patient with difficult people."</p>	<p>Galatians 6:10: "As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people."</p>	<p>Romans 12:20-21: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him"</p>	<p>Romans 12:14: "Bless those who persecute you" 1 Peter 3:9 "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing"</p>	<p>Acts 7:60 Stephen forgiveness his murderers Colossians 3:13 "Forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone." Ephesians 4:32 Forgive as God Forgives</p>	<p>Romans 12:19-21 "Do not avenge yourself.. overcome evil with good."</p>