

## STUDY UNIT 8

Matt. 28:18-20 / Lk. 6:27-38 / 1 Pet. 4:1-5:10

### LOVING THE LOST AND OUR ENEMIES

We have already climbed the steep and narrow path of giving our lives to one another. But up higher yet, and only reached by the few, is the top of the mountain of selfless love.

Standing there are the unsaved and your enemies, some who deserve to be punished for what they have done, even to you and yours. We are to carry our cross of self denial up to where they stand, along with gifts for them and even our jewels. We are to speak blessings to them in the sincerity of our heart and live our life for them.

*"And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."  
Mark 16:15*

*"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."  
Luke 6:27*

Jesus loved those who did not love Him. He loved the lost. He loved His enemies. He gave His life in self denial for them. Now He asks us to do the same thing, in His name, for His glory, that the light of His selfless love might shine brightly through us.

*"You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."  
Matt. 5:14-16*

#### I. Living For the Lost in Self-Denial

*"For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish"  
Matt. 18:11*

*"Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."  
Matt. 20:26-28*

## How Can We Give Our Lives for Those Who Are Lost?

- We could leave everything and go be a missionary to the lost somewhere in the world. That would mean giving up much of our life for others.
- We could provide for the financial support of those who are giving themselves to reach the lost.
- We could diligently pray for the lost in every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

To what extent are we doing this?

## Does Our Church Give of Itself to Reach the Lost?

- Do we have ministries to reach and disciple unsaved people? Are you involved?
- Do we organize mission trips and train church members to go? Have you gone?
- Do we give much financially to reach the lost at home and abroad? How does this compare to what we spend on our own interests and desires?

## II. Living For My Enemies in Self-Denial

*“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them....*

***But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.”*** Luke 6:27-35

“In 1567 the King of Spain was a bitter enemy of the Protestant Reformation. His rule is called the Reign of Terror, and his governing council the Bloody Council because it ordered the slaughter of so many Christians. One man was sentenced to die for his biblical faith but managed to escape from prison in the dead of winter.

As he was being pursued by a lone soldier, the man came to a lake whose ice was thin and cracking. Somehow he managed to get safely across, but as soon as he reached the other side he heard his pursuer screaming. The soldier had fallen through the ice and was about to drown. Although he faced recapture, torture, and death – or drowning himself – this man went back across the lake and rescued his enemy. He gave his life for him. He knew he had no other choice if he was to be faithful to His Lord.” (Cyclopedia of Illustrations, 1877, pg. 296)

A recent edition of The Voice of the Martyrs magazine tells this story: “Can you imagine living openly as a Christian in a radical Muslim country and culture today? Here is the story of one Christian who is. God allowed him to hear the gospel and be saved there, where he grew in his faith, hope, and love. He began to live his life for his fellow Christians and Muslims.

And then opposition and persecution began. Not surprisingly, the cost became great. Many hard things happened, but he did not grow timid and stop sharing his faith. But then, he was ambushed and shot multiple times, and was left paralyzed from the waist down.

Who should he live for now – with what is left of his life? Well, he is back in Iraq, having decided to give his life away. He is willing, and expecting, to die. Many are hearing and responding to the gospel because he is. His wheelchair speaks volumes.”

*"But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to 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 in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.**"* *Matt. 5:39-45*

### III. Clarifying Some Related and Confusing Truths and Issues

#### 1. Loving an enemy does not mean ignoring or accepting sin.

How we do this is not simple or easy, but we are to both love sinners and hate sin. God is doing this for us. He hates sin, but He loves us. And He wants us to do this for Him, by His power, for others.

Agape love for an enemy, who has sinned against us and hurt us, both forgives him and also declares that his sin is awful and grievously wrong. Only the grace of God enables us to take up our cross and follow Christ in loving sinners – like He does for us.

Our God is characterized by BOTH love and holiness. He defines righteousness (what is right) and unrighteousness (what is wrong). When He told Adam and Eve what was right in the garden and the consequences for doing what He considered wrong (sin), He also told them how serious it was to violate His holiness. They would die spiritually, physically, and eternally. Hell will be filled eternally with unrepentant sinners who are facing the wrath of our God.

However, our God is also characterized by self denying love. So **both** a hatred of sin and a love for sinners are part of His nature. His hatred of sin and the wrath that it evokes shall never wane, but His selfless love sent His Son to die as a substitute for sinful man that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ—and live eternally, being free of His wrath.

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him."* *John 3:16-17*

#### 2. Do we give our life to just anybody and everybody?

No. God chooses who. God chooses how. God chooses when.

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, **which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**"* *Eph 2:10*

*"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and **was led about by the Spirit.**"* *Luke 4:1*

Asking God who to love, how to love them, and how much of our life to give to them is important. We are not able to give our life to everyone. God already has a plan.

*“And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God.... And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.... And departing, they began going about among the villages, preaching the gospel.”*  
Luke 9:2-6

#### **IV. God’s Strategy for Times of Apostasy in the Church and Persecution from the World**

The verse below is among the many instructions and examples found in Scripture that guide us in our responses to the tests and sacrifices that come in such a day as we are facing and the love that is required to be pleasing to God in them. What are we to do in selfless love for the lost and our enemies?

*“I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but **join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.**”* 2 Tim. 1:6-8

Paul had already taught Timothy over some time about what he had faced well as a disciple. But now he was about to face something new, something he had never really had to deal with. He had done a good job so far – but the things ahead would try his faith and test him beyond anything he had faced. He was becoming timid in sharing His faith in the fear of what it would cost him. He was afraid of sharing the gospel in a culture that hated God.

Where was Paul when he wrote these final words which we have from him? He was in a Roman prison, awaiting his execution. “The time of my departure has come.” (2 Tim 4:6-8)

“I have fulfilled my ministry” You do so as well my son.

“I have finished my course” You finish yours as well my son.

“I have fought the good fight” You go fight your battles well also my son.

“There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord will award to me on that day”

Paul ends this letter to his spiritual child by mentioning two men. Both had been with him for some time, and had come with him to this awful place where the costs of being a committed Christian had increased dramatically. Now, as the going had gotten tough, and with the full possibility that they could also be executed, one of them had taken a different path.

Luke was still there with him, giving his life to serve him and the gospel, even given what this might mean for him, being associated with Paul. But Demas, who had been with him until now, had deserted him, “having loved this present world.” (2 Tim. 4:10-11)

Which one will we be like, as the going gets tough?

## **UNIT 8 STUDY SESSION #1:**

In preparation for the group study, read and study the material on loving the lost and our enemies and then complete the following self-evaluation.

### **Evaluating My Own Self Denying Love for the Lost and My Enemies, and the Maturity of My Church Regarding this**

1. My concern for the unsaved and getting the gospel to them is:  
 A dominate focus of my life  
 Important, but is not high on my goals or to do list  
 Takes up very little of my time and thoughts  
 Is not what I consider to be my responsibility
  
2. The concern of my church for the unsaved and getting the gospel to them is:  
 A dominate focus of our church life  
 Important, but is not high on our goals or to do list  
 Takes up very little of our time and thoughts  
 Is not what we consider to be our responsibility
  
3. My concern for those I consider to be my current enemies is:  
 I really don't have any  
 I have not sought revenge  
 I have given my enemies the opposite of what they deserve \_\_\_Some\_\_\_No  
 I am committed to loving those who persecute me as a Christian in the future
  
4. The concern of my church for our enemies, current and future is:  
 A dominate focus of our church life  
 We have plans on how to respond together  
 Important, but is not high on our goals or to do list  
 Takes up very little of our time and thoughts

### **Discussion Questions For Study Session #1**

1. Perhaps we can discuss the study material section by section.
  - Do you have questions or comments on Section I: Living for the Lost?
  - On Section II: Living for our Enemies?
  - On Section III: Confusing Truths and Issues
  - On Section IV: God's Strategy for Tough Times
  
2. How accurate is the following statement regarding immature Christians:  
"Immature Christians love what they should hate and hate what they should love."

### **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 8 STUDY SESSION #2:**

In preparation for Session #2 consider pursuing one of the following application projects and come prepared to share about it.

### **Preparation For Session #2: Application Project**

1. Read *Walking His Trail* by Steve Saint, with its many amazing stories of the far-reaching effects of his father's death trying to reach a lost tribe in the jungles of South America.
2. Get some past copies of *The Voice of the Martyrs* magazine and read them.
3. Give one hour a day this week to pray for the lost.
4. Witness to at least three people this week.
5. Write out a list of those who have rejected you in some way for being a Christian and ask the Lord how you can bless them.

### **Discussion Questions**

If you were able to pursue one of the projects this week, can you share with us about it?

### **Prayer Together**