

Heart-Softening Prayers You Can Use to Obey Matthew 5:44

That pesky commandment to “love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44) has a tendency to play in the back of my mind during conflict. There are very few people I cannot get along with. My default is enjoying people, even if we don’t have much in common. Still, occasionally I must interact with someone who rubs me the wrong way.

I recently watched “Eternal Salvation,” a film on . In the film, one character, Paul, is consistently the odd man out and the object of ridicule. This sort of environment would wear on anyone, but Paul always has a kind word and a smile. I don’t want to give away the story, but let’s just say that as it progresses, the reason behind Paul’s attitude becomes clear.

In one scene, Paul mentors the protagonist, Jonathan, and together they pray for a coworker who has stabbed them both in the back repeatedly.

I found this simple part of Paul’s character to be incredibly convicting. I can’t say my first reaction to someone I dislike is to pray for them. I am brought back to Matthew 5:44, though, “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”

As the credits rolled, I thought about how I could better put this commandment into action. I reflected on situations where I should have prayed for my “enemies,” and God laid on my heart some key principles to put in place in the future.

Admit Your Dislike

This one might seem counterintuitive, but for me it was important. Acknowledging the problem is the first step to

correcting it. Genuine communication with God is an important part of living in relationship with Him. Admit you've been hurt and bring that hurt to the foot of the cross.

Pray for Wisdom

One of my favorite verses is James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and without criticism, and it will be given to him." This is a promise from God, that if we ask for wisdom, we will get it. Wisdom, I think, is a key part of handling any situation well.

Read Also: "Making Time For Prayer: Why Putting God First is Best"

Pray for a Softened Heart

Ask God to soften your heart toward the person you dislike. Looking for the best in someone can be hard when there is conflict or hurt. Choosing to believe someone has good intentions may be your ticket. Practice empathy, and try to view things from the other person's perspective. Doing this intentionally will help you soften your heart and approach this person with grace.

Read Also: "Looking for Peace? Change Your Perspective"

Listen and Look for the Answer

When you pray, expect God to show up—in your life and the other person's. Be attentive to what He teaches you. You might be surprised how a negative situation can be used for good.

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