

Quiz: Are You a Closet Christian Road-Rage-Aholic?

Matthew 5:44 says, "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (NIV). Romans 12:20-21 says, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink." Luke 6:27 says, "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

There it is, pervasive in the philosophies of Jesus in the New Testament: We are admonished to love our enemies.

I grew up in church. My grandfather was a minister, my father was ordained, and my mother played the piano. We were in church every time the doors were open. I really had nobody that I would characterize as an enemy. So I was generally pretty smug about any Scripture that admonished this type of behavior—until one day when I was pondering this mentally adhered-to wisdom.

I began thinking about who would be someone I could consider my enemy. I piously even asked the Lord, again pretty confident in my handling of this matter. However, what came to my mind was somewhat unexpected. I was made aware that I had engaged in a "road rage" outlook my entire adult life. It was at this juncture I was keenly reminded of my vulnerability in this area and came to the awareness of who my "enemies" have actually been all these years.

You see, when I got in the car, my tendency seemed to be that the road became my personal universe. I was the center of this particular arena, and everyone and everything must be aware and respond accordingly. Yes, that means stop lights, other drivers, the availability of passing lanes and pedestrians.

Are you getting the drift?

This was my pitifully skewed assessment of traveling from point A to point B. To further incriminate my distasteful immaturity, I must admit to you that though at that specific point I no longer aggressively pursued confrontations with other users of the highway, in my mind I still persisted in berating my antagonist to nearly the same degree. When traveling, I felt irritated at best and too often moved to exasperated fury.

So, how was I to adhere to the Scriptures with this recognition now staring me in the face? How was I to love these adversaries, my enemies, who drive in such a way as to infuriate my infantile sensibilities? First of all, I could find nowhere in Scripture where God commanded feelings, so I concluded that He didn't necessarily expect me to feel love toward them. However, He does command me to act loving toward them, regardless of what they do to me.

As noted above, Matthew 5 says to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." I suppose somehow in my slanted assessment, these enemies of mine were persecuting me by their unruly behavior, whether they knew it or not. So as I began thinking about strategies to love my enemies, I recognized a few situations, listed below, which are examples of what seemed to me to be an appropriate loving response to these various "persecuting" behaviors. To me, these could be characterized as "loving my enemy."

1. When someone cuts me off in traffic, I will:
 - a. Back off and will not tailgate to show my irritation
 - b. If I do eventually pass them, I will not stare them down
 - c. Not mouth any words that I hope they can make out
 - d. Not make any gestures with any body part

2. When someone stays in the passing lane on a two-lane highway, going the same speed as the traffic in the right lane until the passing lane ends, I will:

- a. Not tailgate while they are in the left lane, mindlessly going slower than necessary to pass cars in the right lane
- b. If I do eventually pass them, I will not stare them down
- c. Not mouth any words that I hope they can make out
- d. Not make any gestures with any body part

3. When someone tailgates me, I will:

- a. Continue driving the appropriate speed and not tap my breaks
- b. If there is a place to pull over, I will do so
- c. Not stare them down when they pass
- d. Not mouth any words that I hope they can make out
- e. Not make any gestures with any body part

I could go on and on, but you probably get the concept. In my mind, the above responses are loving reactions regardless of what is done to me by those who feel like enemies.

When I implemented these new strategies, my initial approach was to be very intentional in my preparation for each trip I took—to organize myself mentally and emotionally to strategically respond to any acts of hate or “persecution” with acts of love.

So, what has been the outcome of this experiment in obedience? My “loving” actions have significantly diminished my stress levels. Do I feel love for these participants in the commute? No, I can’t really say that yet, but I do not view them as the enemy any longer.

I don't feel intense anger-rage, if you will-and I no longer feel hatred for those whose actions I formally characterized as idiots. I used to take it personally when someone invaded my rightful space, as if they were intentionally trying to disrespect me by their foolhardy actions. This stronghold was very difficult to make adjustments to for quite a while and is now a bit humiliating to acknowledge, as I'm sure it sounds rather senseless to many of you, yet I have discovered that there are large contingents of you who seem to fully understand and commiserate with this way of thinking.

If you are a closet Christian road-rage-aholic, I invite you to recognize, admit and be intentional every day toward an obedience you may have been unaware of and to a much healthier personal life style of "loving" your enemy!

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