

# Bite Size Bible Study

Loving your Enemy #85

By Pastor Lee

These Bite Size Bible Studies are good for “head knowledge”. They bring out principles and hopefully understanding of the character God desires to be growing within each of us. But knowledge and understanding don’t always lead to the “feet on the ground” way of living.

I would like to share one way that I use to help me see the purpose of these attitudes God has written down for us.

As I watch movies, TED talks, TV News, documentaries, I like to make them help me put some real meaning on the principles God is teaching me. Let me explain.

As I watch one of these, I try not to get too caught up in the story line, but to look at the actions of people. Sometimes they will act in a good way when handling a situation, and other times it’s an epic fail. Either way I can learn something from their performance. What to do and what not to do. It gives me an opportunity to judge their performance against God’s teachings.

Example: I watched a documentary on the “Accountant of Auschwitz”, a 24 year old German man who was one of the officers at the camp during WW2. Millions of Jews died in this camp. After the war he led a somewhat normal life for 50 some years, until he was found and brought to trial for the murder of the millions of Jews at the Auschwitz site.

Many of the people were outwardly hostile toward him, feeling that the heinous crimes he had committed, when he was young, during the war was guilty of a death sentence – even now some 50 years later. Whether that was justified or not, I cannot say. However, at the trial there was a Jewish woman who as a little girl had survived Auschwitz but had lost most of her family and friends there.

She however had a much more Godly approach to this man who had been her enemy. She had every worldly reason the hate this man and wish him all the hurt possible. But during a break in the proceedings, she walked over to the man and forgave him. She had no malice toward him and by forgiving him was a living example of living out God’s instructions.

Jesus said: *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.*

*He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*  
Matthew 5:43-48

One might argue that this was a Jewish woman and what Jesus said was not important to her. But that would be incorrect. The Torah (Old Testament), the covenant, she should be living, tells her: *Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.* Leviticus 19:18.

The command to love one’s neighbors is explicit in this verse. But notice that it defines “neighbor” as among ones own people. This man was not one of her people.

The command to hate ones enemies, while emphasized by some was not explicit in Old Testament Scripture but was extrapolated from examples in the Psalms such as:

- Ps 31:6 *I hate those who cling to worthless idols; as for me, I trust in the Lord.*
- Ps 119:113 *I hate double minded people, but I love your Torah.*
- Ps 139:21 *Adonai, how I hate those who hate you! I feel such disgust with those who defy you!*

I would imagine that during the 50 years after the war, this man had many regrets over what he had been involved in. Whether he was sorry for those acts or afraid that someone would find out about his involvement, there must have been times that he knew in his heart that this was a dark time in his life.

What I learned from this documentary was not about the atrocities that occurred at Auschwitz but the love one woman had for her enemy. That it is humanly possible to forgive even the worst of offences and treatment and still have the love for your enemy. In her forgiveness, this man experienced a glimpse of the love God has for him. Whether he recognized it or not – she presented it to him.

Try watching your favorite movie and see whether the characters live in ways that God would approve of or not. Either way you might learn some “feet on the ground” principles of living in relationship with God.

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