

Love Your Enemies

Matthew 5:41 But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Matthew 5: 46 But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;

3 Nephi 5:30 For verily, verily I say unto you, He that hath the spirit of contention, is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger one with another;

Betsy's Testimony: When I was much younger, I took a summer job as a cashier at Sears. Most everyone who worked there was helpful and kind to me showing me how to use the cash register and our other responsibilities. After a week of training, I was scheduled to work the weekend with another girl named Angel.



First thing Friday morning I introduced myself to her as I was getting my cash drawer ready for the day. She turned her back to me without saying a word. I just got busy with my work. As the day wore on, we got a break with the two girls working at the two other registers. They sat at one tiny table with two chairs and I sat at the other table with two chairs. They were chatting with me. Then when Angel came in, she took the empty chair from my table and pulled it to their table blocking me from them and putting her back to me. I sat by myself and ate my lunch, but inside I was so hurt.

Why would she be so rude to me? That night in bed I prayed but then I started planning all the mean things I would say to her to put her in her place. In the morning I woke up thinking of a scripture **“turn the other cheek.”** (Matt. 5:41.) I wondered why I woke up thinking that verse, and then I remembered how I wanted to be mean to Angel. I felt like God was telling me to be kind even when she was being mean. I didn't want to be kind, but I love God so I would try it.

When I saw Angel, I said a friendly “hi” like we had no problems. That Saturday there was a big sale so we had long lines of customers the whole day. As we sold the clothing, we were to remove the hangers and put them in a large box that happened to be behind where I was standing at my register. Suddenly, I got hit with something. I looked down and it was a hanger. I didn't think anything about it and just picked it up and put it in the box. A second time I was hit with a hanger, I looked quickly at Angel. She was facing her register and working, but I saw a smirk on her face and knew she had done it on purpose. When I was hit a third time, I was fuming mad but I remembered the verse and took a deep breath. I calmly took a breath and dragged the box over by Angel. I said in as a calm a tone as I could, “This will help you get the hangers in the box. I'll be careful not to hit you when I put the hangers in the box.” I wasn't hit again that day.

The next Thursday night I kept replaying what had happened the previous weekend when I had to work with Angel, and I thought of clever jabs I could have said. I got myself worked up and so angry I couldn't sleep. I finally fell asleep; but when I woke up, I was thinking “...do good to them that hate you....” (Matt 5:46). I knew God was reminding me how I should treat Angel even if she was mean to me. Again, I didn't want to be kind to her, but I love God so I would do my best.

So, I greeted Angel like I did everyone, with a smile and a “hello.” Angel still didn't talk to me, but she stopped doing mean things to me. That was some relief to me. Then in August one night after closing the store, I couldn't get my cash drawer to balance out, which is big trouble. I was getting panicky about it because each time I counted the money it didn't come out right. It was Angel who came over and helped me. She spotted a check I

had forgotten to add in. I was so grateful for her help, and I told her so. She became my best friend there at Sears after that.

I realized that if I hadn't listened to what God was prompting me from His Word (John 14:26), that things between Angel and me probably would have gotten worse instead of better. If I had said something mean to her, she would have done something even meaner to me, and it would have continued to escalate till it was an awful work situation. Instead, God blessed me and her with a friendship by doing things His way.



Connie's Testimony: A few years ago, I had an opportunity to travel to West Virginia with two other women. Each of us had agreed to teach a class and bring ministry at a women's retreat being held in Parkersburg, WV. We made our preparations, including fasting and prayer for each other and the retreat.

When I looked up where Parkersburg was located, I was very excited. It was an hour and 15 minutes away from where my mother-in-law lived in Hamden, OH. I was filled with joy. There is a cabin close to Mom's that would cost us \$10 per person per night to stay in if we chose to do that. The location of the cabin was a secluded place nestled in the Hocking Hills. I viewed it as a place for the 3 of us women to rest from the long travel and a chance to pray together and make our final preparations before reaching Parkersburg. It would also give us an opportunity for additional ministry in gathering at my mother-in-law's home to share testimonies and pray with her, as she is a widow and was once a member of the church but had become discouraged years ago over the condition of the church. Plans were made and we headed out Wednesday after I got off work, spending the night in Illinois and driving to Hamden to spend the night there at the cabin Thursday.

As we left Missouri, it became apparent to me that one of the ladies was upset with me about something but refused to share what was bothering her. Thursday this contention continued with bouts of anger being directed at me. Every time I tried to talk to my friend she replied with anger. This contention escalated at the cabin. We ate dinner at Mom's house and retreated back to the cabin. I can say at this point I was more that frustrated. I honestly didn't know what more I could do. Everything I had hoped for...drawing apart from the world in this beautiful setting in nature and rustic beauty, praying together (something we had wanted to do prior to leaving on the trip but had been unable to accomplish), sharing ideas, praying for the women coming in from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, bringing ministry to Mom...all gone and replaced with contention, anger, harsh actions and words. By Friday morning I was angry! We left that afternoon and drove to our host's home in Parkersburg.

That evening, Friday, we met with the woman who was the director of the Women's Retreat. As she shared with us the schedule and her opening devotional material, the Holy Spirit touched my heart. Her devotional was a perfect lead in for my class, which was to go right after the opening devotions. It was the first time since we left Missouri that I had felt the Lord's Spirit and it was comforting. It gave me hope.

The retreat began Saturday morning as we all gathered to the Parkersburg church. The people were so pleasant and the atmosphere so inviting. Still, nothing had been resolved between me and my friend. I prayed earnestly, "Dear God, How am I going to teach a class when there's all this anger and contention? Please help me! All my attempts to resolve things have failed. I don't know what else to do. In Jesus' name, Amen." It was a simple prayer but so earnest and desperate.

About 20 minutes before the devotions were to start, my friend came up to me and grabbed my arm and began to pull me toward a doorway. She said, "We need to talk." I went with her even though my heart had become so hard toward her. However, I knew I would not be able to teach under the influence of the Spirit unless we had a

reconciliation between us. I followed her into a room where we could be alone. With tears in her eyes and a softening of her countenance, she apologized for acting the way she'd been acting. She still would not tell me why or how she had been offended but knew we needed to "make up". She suggested we pray together. Inside of me was doubt and anger. But I knew she was trying, so I relented and she prayed. It still didn't change my heart toward her. I had been deeply hurt and offended and mistrust had crippled my heart.

When she finished praying, I knew I had to pray. I didn't feel like it, but was compelled by the Spirit to pray with her, for her and for us. As I began to pray, the Holy Spirit flooded me and brought to my remembrance the years that our families had been friends...close friends. Our children grew up together, we got together often at each other's houses, we rang in the New Year for years together. I was reminded of how much I loved her and cherished her friendship. Right there, in that little room, my heart was softened and love and peace replaced the bitterness and the spirit of contention fled. I was able to participate in the retreat with a healing in myself and between my long-time friend and I; for she really was my long-time friend who had shared so many wonderful times with me individually and as a family. I was able to teach my class and enjoy the rest of the weekend.

On our return journey, we were able to laugh and enjoy each other's company. I'd like to say things went well all the way home, but 10 minutes from where I live, this friend made a very contentious and judgmental statement to me that plunged our trip back into darkness. I wasn't having it and set her straight on her misguided comment. She quickly apologized and tried to smooth things over. I really didn't know at this point if our friendship could survive all the contention and drama that had taken place. When I got home, I was very upset and knew I needed to seek the Heavenly Father on why all of these things had happened.

Over the course of the next several days, I made this a matter of earnest prayer. I prayed for healing between my friend and I and for answers on how to avoid something like this in the future. Even though she had apologized quickly I found myself not completely forgiving her. I hated the way I felt.

A week or two later, on a Sunday morning, Karl Anderson, shared something during Sunday School class. As he spoke, I knew this was God's answer to my prayers. Karl brought up the scripture about Jesus fasting 40 days and 40 nights (Matthew 4). Christ had been led into the wilderness to be with God. After this 40-day communion Jesus was left to himself. Despite this mountain top experience, Satan came tempting Him. How could this be?

Another account is given of Moses being taken up into an exceeding high mountain and seeing God face to face. Afterwards Moses was left in his own strength. He too experienced an encounter with satan. Karl had pondered this and warned us about being over confident in assuming that Satan can't enter in a situation because we are "praying and fasting and doing the Lord's will". Satan seeks to destroy our ministry and effectiveness through various temptations, just like he did with Jesus and Moses. We are vulnerable and must be ready at all times to rebuke the adversary.

It was an eye opener for me. My enemy was satan, not my friend. I realized how much God had blessed me and the other ladies that weekend. God rescued us, He rescued the retreat. God showed Himself as our protector and help in delivering us through His mighty hand.

We must be vigilant and stay close to the Heavenly Father. We must know His word and claim it and live it. Jesus responded to satan with the Word, "It is written..." Moses discerned that the spirit commanding that he worship him, had no glory and he rebuked satan.

I have continued to ponder over the years how easily it is to offend people or to be offended. I came across this scripture in *Psalms 19:12-13 Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous acts; let them not have dominion over me.*

This scripture addresses errors, secret faults, and presumptuous acts; in other words, blind spots. Presumptuous acts are acts of pride and assuming your thoughts, desires and often actions are more desirable than others. It's an

air of self-righteousness and pride. These things are easy to see in others but not so easy to see in ourselves. I have had to evaluate my own actions and presumptions. Concerning this trip to West Virginia, was I presumptuous in assuming my friends would want to draw apart at the cabin? Did I clearly give each lady an opportunity to express her desires or did I just run over them? My friend had expressed a lack of desire to go there but I tried to convince her it would be good for us as a group. It would be good for me to have some time to rest from my busy life's schedule. I was the only one of us ladies who was working at a full-time job plus helping with my single mom daughter and our grandson. My plate was full and the thought of collecting my own thoughts and spending time worshipping prior to the retreat with my fellow co-laborers was very desirable. But there we were, being consumed with contention. I believe that my over zealousness in this situation did contribute to the contention that arose.

John the Baptist's message is for me and for each of us. *Matthew 3: 29, 35 For I am he who was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord and make his paths straight...35 Repent, therefore, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance.*

We are commanded and admonished to walk humbly before the Lord and one another. Alma taught his sons these words: *Alma 17:66-67 Preach unto them repentance, and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ: teach them to humble themselves, and to be meek and lowly in heart; teach them to withstand every temptation of the devil, with their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; Teach them to never be weary of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart: for such shall find rest to their souls.*

God truly is the restorer of the breeches and a healer of friendships, families and the nations. My friend and I are still good friends. I enjoy her company and look forward to seeing her when I can. I hope this testimony sheds light on how easily we can be tempted, even at the height of spiritual endeavors and brought into contentious situations. I hope that we can recognize who our real enemy is as well as who our true God is. He is merciful and kind. My heart will rejoice in Him and I will lift up my voice in praise and adoration to my Rock, My Everlasting God! Amen!